

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

VOLUME 3

MAY 6, 2018

ISSUE 45

WHEN SATAN WAS BOUND?

By Andrew Dow

Near the end of the book of Revelation John shows the suffering church that their enemies would be defeated. God would be victorious over their physical enemy (17:1–19:10) and their spiritual enemy (19:11–21:8). To illustrate their relief from Satan’s power John describes

“an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed” (Rev 20:1–3).

This description—and the whole of Revelation 20—has been the source of much speculation and debate. What exactly does it mean that Satan would be bound? When was Satan bound? Is he presently bound or will he be bound at some point in the future? Let’s attempt to answer some of these questions.

In my experience the most common interpretation of Satan's binding goes something like this: Satan is presently bound and his powers are limited; however, Satan remains active as he tries to pull people away from God. While this may be case, look carefully at how extensive the binding of

Satan is in the text. The angel performs five actions against Satan: he “laid hold of,” “bound,” “threw,” “shut,” and “sealed” Satan in the abyss. This does not seem to describe a limitation of Satan's abilities. Rather it looks as if Satan has been totally stripped of his ability to harm the original readers.

The book of Revelation was written to a group of people who were suffering at the hand of Rome (see 1:9; 2:2–3). Furthermore, they are assured that more suffering is on the horizon (see 2:10–11). As John reaches his grand conclusion in chapter 20, he explains that if his readers hang in there they will receive total relief from Satan's actions. Why? Because he will be rendered completely powerless for a period of time.

Revelation 20 indicates that Satan's power was completely stripped from him. This, however, does not describe what we are presently experiencing. We are warned in Scripture to be wary of the devil's power to tempt us to work against God. **“Be of sober spirit,”** Peter warned, **“be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”** (1 Pet 5:8). Paul also warns to guard against Satan's **“schemes”** (2 Cor 2:11; Eph 6:11).

Satan is not bound today. Of course, this is what John foretold would happen: **“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth ... to gather them together for the war”** (Rev 20:7–8). This is the world in which we live. A world in which Satan deceives people to reject the truth of God. The Bible frequently warns us not to be deceived (e.g.,

1 Cor 6:9; 1 Cor 15:33; Gal 6:7; James 1:16; etc.). The reason for these warnings is simple: Satan is **“is a liar and the father of lies”** (John 8:44); he is **“the serpent of old ... who deceives the whole world”** (Rev 12:9).

John’s vision does not end with Satan rampaging against God’s people. To the contrary, John is allowed to see a time when Satan will be completely defeated:

“the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

This event appears to be in our future. After all, Satan has not yet been cast into **“lake of fire”** to be **“tormented ... forever and ever.”** In this even we, along with God’s people from all ages, experience the greatest kind of hope. The hope of an existence without the deceiver able to interfere with our devotion to God.

What does all of this mean in a practical sense? Let me offer a few thoughts. *First, be leery of those who look for some future time in which Satan will be bound up for a thousand years.* This text was penned for the benefit of the original readers. John foretells a time in their future when Satan would not longer be allowed to harm them. That reprieve has taken place and Satan has (I believe) been released to deceive the world again. *Second, be wary of Satan’s ability to deceive today.* All one must do is look at our sin-obsessed society to realize that Satan’s power to deceive God’s creatures is alive and well. *Therefore, finally, we should find comfort in and be encouraged by God’s plan to bring a total end to Satan’s power in the future.*

BE A WISE SON

By Andrew Dow

“**The proverbs of Solomon**” begins with this pithy saying: “**a wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother**” (Prov 10:1). This is the first proverb after the father’s advice in chapters 1–9. There the father encourages his son to pursue a committed relationship with woman wisdom while rejecting the temporary pleasure that woman folly offers. This first proverb encourages the reader to take the advice of the proverbial father—i.e., to be wise.

This general truth is easily observable: the choices of a child speaks to the upbringing that the parents provided. It is true that we should act wisely in order to bring our parents joy. But this proverb is about more than our relationship with our physical parents. Be wise—not because it will make your mom and dad happy—but because it will make your heavenly father happy.

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:

Universal vs. Local

PM LESSON:

Parable and Their Purpose
(Mark 4:1–34)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)