

# *A Short Exegesis of Revelation 20 & 21*

*J. Scott Sheridan*

20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

**The Greek word for “angel” (aggelos) simply means messenger. Sometimes it is a heavenly messenger, sometimes earthly. The context determines what kind of messenger it is. This angel is quite probably Jesus Himself because He holds the key. The key represents control (power, authority) and the chain is the Gospel (see Rev. 1:17, 18; 3:7).**

**“Unfortunately the Church of today does not realize the power that Christ has given her. Christ has placed in her hands the chain by which she can bind Satan. She can restrain his influence over the nations. But today the Church bemoans the fact that evil is becoming stronger and stronger. She bemoans the fact that the world is coming more and more under the control of the Devil. Whose fault is that? It is the Church. She has the chain and does not have the faith to bind Satan even more firmly. Satan is bound and the Church knows it not! Satan can be bound more firmly and the Church does it not!”**  
*An Eschatology of Victory. J. Marcellus Kik, p. 196.*

2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

**Satan has four names in this verse. Dragon: Whenever we see paganism trying to crush the people of God in the OT we see Satan referred to as a dragon (e.g., Ez. 29:3; Jer. 51:34). Serpent: See Gen. 3:15. Devil: “the Accuser.” Satan: “The Adversary” or “Opponent.” Satan is bound (limited) in what he can do - See I John 5:18; Jas. 4:7. Also Mt. 12:26-29. 1000 years is an indeterminate length of time. See II Peter 3:8 & Ps. 50:10.**

3 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; after these things he must be released for a short time.

**Jesus bound Satan for 1000 years. He was bound in order to “not deceive the nations any longer.” The “nations”, which always means the Gentiles, had been deceived by the devil up to the coming of Jesus. It was only through the Jews that anyone could have salvation which meant that all other nations belonged to Satan. With the coming of Jesus the Gospel, which is what bound Satan, also allows the Gentiles into a covenant relationship with God. Through the Gospel, even Gentiles can have salvation – the Hebrews were no longer God’s exclusive people. This is the way it is for the duration of the 1000 years, which is a symbolic number representing the total time of the Gospel age.**

**The phrase “after these things” (v. 3) is a poor translation. It should read, “at the end of these things.” The difference can be explained like this: Chapter 22 of Revelation is at the end of the Bible. We would not say that chapter 22 is after the Bible. Satan will be bound but then released “at the end” of the 1000 years and he will do what he had been kept from doing – deceiving the nations. The time of the very end will be a very wicked time in which evil will pervade everywhere.**

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

**Who are “they” that are sitting on the thrones? John lets us know in the second part of the verse – Christians. Notice they reign during the 1000 years. “And we must not forget that the thrones exist during the thousand-year period. After this period gathers Gog and Magog to oppose the saints. Surely this would not happen on the ‘renewed earth’! Surely this would not happen in heaven! No, the scene is upon the present earth. That is the location of the thrones.” Kik, p. 211. Christians reign with Christ NOW – II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10; Rom 5:17; I Cor. 3:21, 22. The Beast was Domitian (emperor of Rome).**

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

**The first resurrection was when “they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” When those who were dead in sin came to life – Eph 2:5, 6; Col 2:12, 13; I John 3:14; John 5:24-29. The word “until” is used in the sense “to the time that,” i.e., they did not come to life at all. Similar wording is found in I Sam 15:35 and Is 22:14. The contrast is between those who came to life (v. 4) and those who didn’t.**

6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

**The 2<sup>nd</sup> death is the Lake of Fire (see v. 14). During the 1000 years Christians priests of God and Christ. It is through the proclamation of the Gospel that Christians mediate between God and man.**

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

**At the end of the 1000 years Satan will be released from the abyss. This should be understood as he will be released at the end time of the 1000 years. Satan's release does not come AFTER the Lord's return. I Th 4:16; II Th 1:7-10. Satan's loosing will be that period just before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.**

8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

**Gog and Magog has reference to Ez 38 & 39. These are representative of the enemies of Israel. Since Satan will be released toward the end of the 1000 years to deceive the nations, they turn on the Church, and their number is countless**

9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

**The camp of the saints is the Church. The fire is the same as the fire that destroys Gog and Magog in Ez. This is the final outpouring of wrath of God upon the enemies of the Church. See I Th 1:6-10 "6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed--for our testimony to you was believed.**

10 And 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.

**We must always keep in mind that John wrote this to the people of his day. The most awesome power that could be conceived of in the world (besides the devil) was Rome. Here we see the devil, the beast (Domitian) and the false prophet (the secret police that Domitian organized to enforce emperor worship) are thrown into the lake of fire**

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

**Here we see the throne of Christ. Judgment is about to begin. See Jn 5:22, 23, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil 2:8-11. Earth and heaven have no place. They will be replaced – II Pe 3:13.**

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

**After everything evil is gone, now we are given some insights into the new home of the redeemed. The old corrupted heaven and earth, tainted so much with sin that Paul said it groans and suffers (Rom 8:22), is now gone.**

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

**This new city is the Church, which is the bride of Christ. This is a city, not of buildings, but of people. and it came out of heaven. They were in heaven for that is where Jesus took them when He came the Second time, and He kept them there while He destroyed the creation. The heaven that the redeemed came from is the new heaven, for verse one says that the old heaven had passed away.**

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

**In Acts 3:21 Peter mentions that through Jesus a "restoration of all things" would occur. This restoration was to restore the universe to the way God had intended in the beginning. Remember that in the Garden of Eden, Adam, we're told, that God walked in the coolness of the Garden with them (Gen 3:8ff). When sin and it's consequences are gone, God will restore that face to face relationship that He intended to have from the very beginning. The tabernacle, i.e., the dwelling place of God is among men. No mourning, no death, and no tears. Sin was responsible for all of that. and the first things, i.e., the things that were before this, have been done away. God's people are not affected by sin. They are His people and He will now dwell among them as He once did with Adam and Eve. What a tremendously exciting privilege that will be!**

5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

**He who is on the throne is Jesus. As He ascended He said that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18). Colossians teaches us that through Jesus everything was created (1:16, 17). Peter tells us in Acts 3 that Jesus would restore all things. In verse 5 Jesus leaves no room for doubt – He is making all things new. He also wants John to rite this down, for just like all the rest of God's word, it is faithful and true.**

6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

**After giving us a glimpse of what lies ahead, he tells John to write, and it is directed to those still living on the old earth, for what Jesus has revealed has not yet happened. But it will, so God's people must be overcomers.**

8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

**If a person is not an overcomer, his fate will be the same as the devil and his followers.**

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

**This angel is going to give us another glimpse of the Church, picking up where Jesus left off in verse 5.**

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.

16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.

**The city is a cube, which throughout the Bible is a sign of perfection and God's presence. The Holy of Holies was a cube and so was the throne room of the Temple. God's people have been measured, i.e., closely inspected, and they are a beautiful and glorious lot. God's presence is with them. Three gates on each side of the city means easy access to God, who dwells in this perfect place. But this place is actually God's people, the Bride. The angel said he would show John "the bride."**

17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.

18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

**Once again we are informed that we are not talking about literal structures in this text but the structures are symbolic. The holy city is the bride of Christ, the Church, and here we have God and the Lamb as the Temple. Of course there is no need for a literal Temple for God is not confined to the Holy of Holies, He is amongst His own people.**

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

**Nations in the Bible always refers to the Gentiles. After mentioning that God and the Lamb are the Temple, which would have meant more to the Hebrew Christians than the Gentile Christians, John lets us know that the nations will also be there walking in the glorious light of God.**

25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed;

26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.