

THE BINDING OF SATAN

(Discourse given by Robert Alexander in Buffalo, N.Y., April, 1970.)

There are six pictures of Jesus establishing the Kingdom found in the last three chapters of Revelation. The binding of Satan is the first of these six. The restraint of Satan's power is the keynote of Rev. 20:1-3. Jesus is here correlating things that he had told the apostles and disciples before. We will consider some of these in discussing this passage. In reading the passage we see several important points. In verse 1 we read about the angel which comes down from heaven "having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand." The angel is Jesus, who has the keys to hell and death. (Rev. 1:18) The key is to the bottomless pit, and represents power to release and confine anything or anyone in the confines of its door. The bottomless pit represents oblivion. The Diaglott translates it as the deep abyss. It certainly represents a condition of complete restraint. The second thing the Lord has in his hand is a chain. We will examine this symbol later.

In the second verse the symbols continue. The person referred to by the four symbols emphasizes Lucifer, God's archenemy, in all his various disguises and forms. In Vol. 4 foreword, pages V to VIII, Bro. Russell identifies the Dragon as Rome, the world civil power. This is elaborated in Reprint article, page 4609 (The Binding of "The Strong Man"). The serpent identifies him as the father of lies and evil associated with deception. (John 8:44) The word "Devil" in the King James Translation is translated "accuser" in the Diaglott. Satan has accused God's people of various dishonesties, wearing them out in their stand for righteousness at any cost. He is also the accuser of God Himself—"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:4, 5) Rather than "Satan" as in the King James version, the Diaglott renders it as "Adversary." Remembering God's curse on Satan in the Garden of Eden, we see here the early stages of the execution of that curse of Gen. 3:15—"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

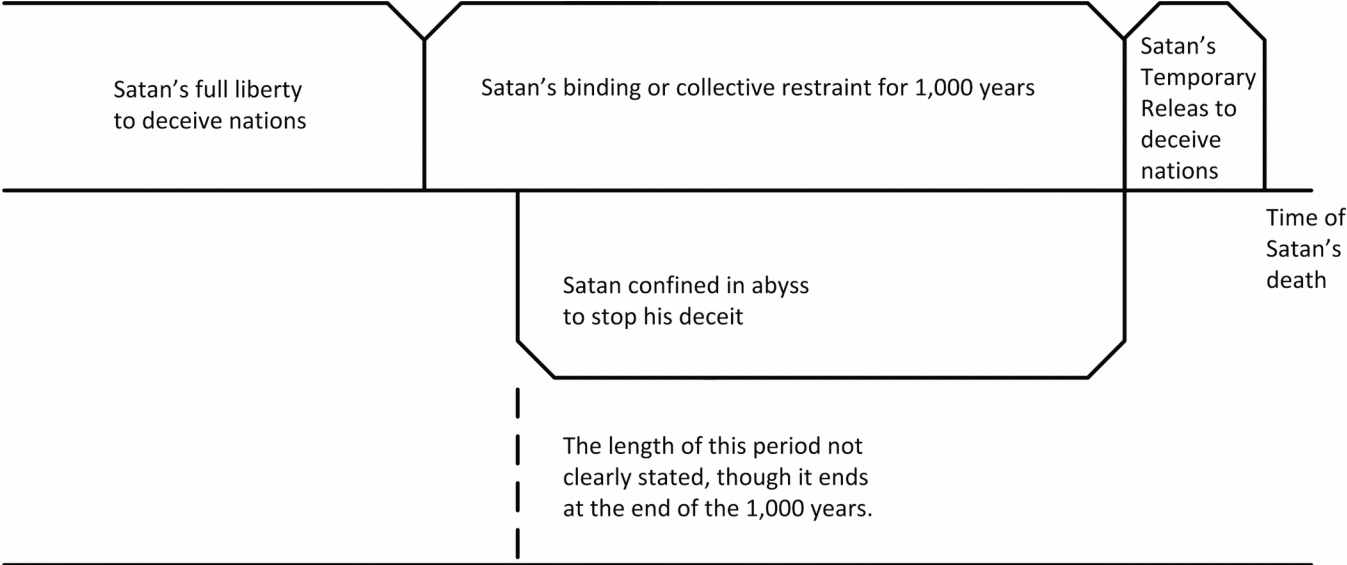
The rest of verse 2 (Rev. 20) says that God's archenemy is bound 1,000 years. Two very important elements are here, for an incorrect thought on either the binding, what it is what it is not, or the 1,000 years will give us the wrong thought entirely.

Binding here comes from the Greek word, "*de'o*." It means to bind, fasten, tie when translated literally. Vine's commentary on the Greek text says that when used symbolically, it implies a restraint or collective process. Arndt and Gingrich suggest that it is used metaphorically. Remembering that we are reading Revelation as signs, or symbolically (Rev. 1:1) we will do ourselves harm to read only the literal meaning out of "bound" and ignore its symbolic significance. We will examine other uses of the word

“*deo*” in the symbolic sense and will see the appropriateness of the thought of restraint in a collective way. The 1,000 years here, as in other uses, refer to the length of time Jesus is to bind or restrain Satan, not less and not more than 1,000 years. The time periods and numerical values or Revelation should evidently be understood literally to be consistent with other Scriptures about the same measures. Thus, the emphasis of verse 2 is that Satan is restrained in a collective sense, a period or 1,000 years.

Verse 3 (Rev. 20) also tells us that Jesus also puts Satan into the abyss. And there he shuts him up, absolute confinement from humanity, and sets a seal on him, without hope of anyone without the “key” releasing him. The purpose is to keep the devil from the deception he had practiced for over 6,000 years. It is important to recognize here that even though Satan is spoken of as being restrained by the chain (bound) for 1,000 years, the Scriptures are not saying that he is placed into the pit (absolute confinement from humanity) for the full 1,000 years. This distinction is very important for the Lord is telling us that Satan is restrained (bound) for the 1,000 years and that for the latter part of the 1,000 years, his restraint is so complete that it is likened to solitary confinement, (in the abyss). The purpose of the abyss confinement is to stop the deception Satan has practiced on the nations previously. It is not until he is put into the abyss, then, that he stops the practice of deception on the nations. This distinction makes it clear that Satan is permitted to deceive the nations during the early part of his binding period, the part that is not also the time he spends in the abyss. However, the binding of the first part of the 1,000 years when he is restrained, but not to the extent of absolute confinement, restrains him to some degree from the license he exercised prior to the 1,000 years. So we have three conditions identified: 1) Satan being fully at liberty to deceive the nations before the 1,000 years, 2) Satan having his liberty to deceive the nations restrained, with his deceptions permitted only to the extent Jesus saw it could be used to destroy its own influence, and 3) complete restraint and confinement, that the nations would not be deceived by him until the end of the 1,000 years. The last part of verse 3 tells us that he will be released from the abyss, complete confinement, to again serve the interests of righteousness by practicing deceit on the nations. This condition is elaborated in verses 7 through 10. We are assured there that his final loosing will serve the purpose of exposing the dishonest among the human family in the Kingdom, and finally end in Satan’s own complete destruction.

The chart below may assist in clarifying the relationship of the sequences in the binding of Satan:



Satan's Liberty and Restraint

Verses 4 and 5 (as corrected by the removal of the spurious part) are not part of the description of Satan's binding, but serve to emphasize the condition of the Church during that time. They show that the 1,000 years is coincident with the period of the first resurrection.

So we see that the power struggle of the two great enemies, Jesus and Satan, is described in a capsule. The 1,000 years is the time when righteousness is being exercised to restrain the power and influence of Satan for the eventual destruction of evil practices and finally Satan himself. But to understand the process by which this is achieved we must investigate the doctrinal statements relating to the working of good and evil during the 7,000 years, and the triumph of Jesus' power during the last of those 7,000 years.

First we must recognize that Satan's power is restrained in varying degrees for the entire 1,000 years, though it is not eliminated until some time after the 1,000 years have started. The Scriptures tell us the magnitude of Satan's power before the 1,000 years have started. They say that he had great power. 1 John 5:19 tells us that the whole world lieth under the evil one (Diag. translation). Eph. 2:2 calls Satan the prince of the power of the air, whose spirit works in the sons of disobedience. Both these Scriptures emphasize that Satan's power included the domination of the world as well as controlling the evil spirit beings. It is very significant that both apostles recorded the power of Satan over the world and evil spirits but not over the true church.

Satan's power is referred to in symbol as darkness. This refers to the darkness of the mind enchained by ignorance, dishonesty, superstition. As noted above, John 8:38, 41, 44 refer to Satan as a liar from the beginning and the father of lies. 2 Cor. 4:4 refers to him as the god of this world who has blinded the minds of the human family, to keep them from recognizing God. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 tells us that Satan is transformed into an angel of light. The word here translated "transformed" is a very different word from that of Rom. 12:2. In the Romans reference the word comes from the Greek *metamorpho* meaning an orderly change, as in the change of a caterpillar to a butterfly, and a justified, spirit begotten human being into a New Creature. The word in 2 Cor. 11, referring to Satan's change comes from the Greek *metaschematizo*, meaning to change in fashion or appearance. It is not a real change that Satan makes, into an angel of light, only an appearance of a change. He is really an angel of darkness, and is content to appear only as an angel of light. The Scriptures carry the thought of false angels of light over to Satan's associate angels. They too only appear as angels of light, while really remaining as angels of darkness. Paul tells us, in 2 Thess. 2:1, 10 that Satan's power and signs and lying wonders exercised with all deceivableness of unrighteousness extended to those under his influence. The devil's power, dishonesty and deceit of the people, are referred to as that of a sorcerer, producing a child of the devil, full of subtlety and mischief.

Satan, joined by the consortium of evil angels, is a prince over his household. (Eph. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:4) The great organizations of Christendom are his masterworks of deceit. He has put the administration of its various religious, political, economic and social institutions under the authority of his loyal, evil angels. Jude 6 tells us that Satan's disciples are confined in chains of darkness. Satan's superior control, through the chains of darkness, has kept the institutions loyal to his designs. The chains of Jude 6 are translated from the Greek word *desmos*, meaning bonds. The close association of *deo*—meaning bound in Rev. 20:2—and *desmos*—meaning chains in Jude 6, emphasizes the restraint of the victim, though in both cases the restraint alone does not mean immobilization. In the Revelation Scripture, the complete immobilization is referred to by the abyss condition. Therefore we see that Satan's power is represented by darkness and is literally deceit, dishonesty (in their various forms) and ignorance, even over his own household.

However, great as Satan's power is, it is not supreme. The Scriptures record our need to be armed with the righteousness of God and exercise it as our faith. (Eph. 6:11, 12; 1 John 5:4) In so doing we will be free of the power of the evil one. Satan's power has always been restrained from doing injury to the New Creation. Jesus reassures us of this in John 14:30 where he tells us that the prince of this world has nothing in him. Paul also warns us that we wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with Satan and his minions, to be victorious if we keep on the whole armour of God. And we are delivered "from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son." Thus we see that Satan held virtually complete power over the people of the world, the nations. But when it came to his power over the church, he is deficient because of Jesus' righteousness and our growth in the truth, the light.

In reviewing Satan's power, we note three conditions of its restraint: 1) by God's power, 2) at God's time and by His discretion, and 3) by the use of the truth—as may have been specified. We recall the experience that Job had, due to his faith in the Lord, and Satan's jealousy of that faith. God's permission to Satan included the restraint of Satan's power to take Job's life. God here literally restrained Satan's power. Just how He did it we do not know. But we do know that His restraint was sure because Job's life was saved. Satan's power is also restrained by Jesus and the Church. The Scriptures tell us that both use the truth to destroy sin, with the symbolism of light destroying darkness. In Matt. 4:1-11 we learn about Jesus rejecting Satan's influence, or restraining his power by a "thus saith the Lord;" Jesus' use of the truth. In 1 John 3:8-12 the apostle John is telling us that Jesus' power destroys the works of the devil. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the restraining of Satan's power over even the weak ones in the Truth because the power of the Holy Spirit in Bro. Timothy was strong enough to recover the weak "out of the snares of the devil." In Rev. 12:9-12 the Apostle John sees the Christian overcoming Satan by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of the Testimony. Again Satan's power is thwarted by the greater power of Jesus' sacrifice and the power of the Truth to overcome evil of

any kind. In 1 Pet. 5:8, 9 the apostle tells us to resist the devil by steadfastness in the faith. Again the devil's power is restrained by the Truth and its faithful use.

Our Lord had a very important experience with the scribes when they accused him of casting out devils by Beelzebub. (Mark 3:22-27; Matt. 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-26). Reading these passages gives us an important insight into the relationship of Jesus' and Satan's powers. The element of time is clearly shown as a vital part of their relationship. And the delay of Jesus, to exercise his power over Satan, is in itself a special power. In reading the passage in Luke, we note several points. First, Satan is not casting out himself when his scheme is failing. Second, the casting out of demons indicates the exercise of a greater strength than Satan's, for if he seems to rise against himself, it means his schemes are failing and his defeat is near. Also, the Lord said again that Satan's empire would be near its end when his house was divided. And he stressed Satan's fall again by saying that when Satan's kingdom was divided it meant its fall. Jesus established the point of Satan's loss of power three different ways. It must be very important for us to understand our Lord to repeat it three times. After the emphasis of three references, then Jesus explains that in order to break up Satan's house, he, Satan, must first be bound. The word here of bind is the Greek word *de'o*, meaning to bind, fasten, tie and thus to restrain. Then Jesus explains that the binding would occur as a surprise, that it would be done by one who was stronger than Satan and one who would have the authority to restrain Satan. And then, to make the timing of the binding very clear to us, Jesus said that the binding would occur before the spoiling of Satan's goods. It is important to note here something that Jesus did not say. Jesus said that he would bind Satan, restrain his power. But he did not say that we could recognize that restraint by a lessening of evil in the world. He said that we could recognize that restraint by the dividing of Satan's kingdom and his house. The lessening of evil would have been an obvious sign of the dividing of Satan's house, if it were a valid sign. And the parable would have been an appropriate place for Jesus to include the lessening of evil as a valid sign, if it were. But, we believe, the fall of Satan's kingdom and house means greater evil than when Satan was in full power, not less. The Luke passage adds a portion of Jesus' advice not included in the other passage. Verses 23-26 of Luke 11 seem to allude to Satan's minions of evil angels who revolt from Satan's power and now, for their own evil purposes, start using the part of Satan's empire they formerly controlled for their evil prince. In both cases their control is against Jesus (V. 23), but when they control the evil institution for their own benefit, rather than Satan's, the evil seems to be uncontrolled. It also seems to degenerate to an even lower level than when under Satan's own power.

Recognizing that before the disintegration of Satan's empire can start Jesus must have begun his restraint over the evil one, let us examine some Scriptural bindings where the Greek word *deo* is used. In Matt. 16:19 our Lord commissioned Peter with power to restrain or loose as he was directed by the Holy Spirit in promoting the Kingdom message. He told Peter that his actions would be recognized and honored in heaven. And

we see Peter explaining the freedom from the law and the liberty and bondage of Christ not only to the Jews but also finally to the Gentiles. Paul was bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:22) A wife is bound to her husband (Rom. 7:2) by the law until her husband dies. In Luke 13:16 the beloved physician tells us that Satan bound a woman to her infirmities. There are many other general statements of binding. They, as these, refer to restraint in some manner or form, and to a greater or lesser or unspecified degree. As in the case of the married woman, she was to reserve certain rights to her husband only. But the law did not prescribe that she had no rights of her own. It did not incapacitate her as a person by binding her to her husband. The binding in each of these cases of the use of *deo* refers to a definite restraint of the one bound but not the incapacitation of the bound one.

Now let us consider the binding of Satan in the context of what we have already considered here. First we recognize that the parable Jesus gave about the binding of the strong man refers to the same binding as in Rev. 20:1-3. We note that there is only one binding of Satan by Jesus because there is only one destruction here. Secondly, we recognize that the act of binding of Satan began very early in the Lord's second presence (Matt. 24:43) for if Satan had realized our Lord's presence he would have avoided his own binding and the consequent binding of his goods and house. Thirdly, Satan's binding is symbolic (Rev. 1:1) and represents restraint in some form, symbolized by the chain. The chain representing the restraining force, must include more than one thing. We do not know the actual description of everything used to restrain Satan as a spirit being. But whatever it is, it binds Satan to permit the collapse of his empire. As Bro. Russell points out, the chain includes the truth. We have seen references of its power are symbolized in Isa. 27:1; Psa. 74:13, 14; 2 Thess. 2:6-10. As these symbols of the sword, strength and brightness of his presence, Jesus uses the truth to destroy Satan's power. 1 Thess. 4:16 refers to the shout of the archangel (Dan. 12:1) in establishing the Kingdom of righteousness to replace Satan's empire. Isa. 42:13-16 prophesies that the Lord will use jealousy, pain and discomfort, neglect and starvation, and disclosure of the truth as part of the chain to keep Satan from stopping the destruction of his house and goods. These are all things that our minds can grasp as tools, or as the Revelator puts it, chains which the Lord uses to restrain Satan's power. There are probably other restraints of a strictly spiritual nature which our natural minds would find difficult if not impossible to comprehend. We do not know what they are but leave it with the Lord to apply them as they are needed.

The fourth consideration about the binding is that it results in a divided Satanic house that falls. It results in the evil angels working against Satan and his stratagem, Christendom and its orderly structures. It appears reasonable to view the evil angels as using parts of Satan's goods to their own selfish purposes, now opposing Satan as well as Jesus. Nihilism, communism, socialism, humanism, the clergy challenging their hierarchical authority; people questioning all religious and other forms of authority, wanting more and

more education, only to promote the decrease of faith in God and the imbalance of technological achievement versus the sociological values—these continue to disrupt Satan’s evil, but organized empire, precipitating an evil and chaotic revolution and the empire’s final destruction. The structure of society is collapsing in disarray. Bro. Chester Sundbom used to illustrate the chaos of Satan’s house now by three pictures of lines. The first represents Satan’s supreme power over his own house. The second represents the chaos within his house now. And the third represents the promised destruction of his empire.



The shouts of liberty, to be free of Satan’s burdens, are being wrongly used to promote chaos and their own eventual destruction. The false claims issue from the evil organizations only draw them to the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16). Zech. 8:10, Rotherham’s translation, tells of the time when God looses every man’s hand against his neighbor. Then the four winds of Revelation, loosed after the church is complete, will turn men to yearn for the higher authority. Then the binding’s early stages, just enough restraint to bring chaos within Satan’s house, will have served its purpose and will completely enclose God’s archenemy in the bottomless pit, where he will have no influence at all. That is the time, of course, when Jesus will have suppressed all evil in all the evil angels too, and all men are drawn to Christ (John 12:32). It seems very important to recognize the difference between just the binding, or restraint of Satan, and the combined binding and absolute confinement in the bottomless pit. The latter is completely restrictive while the former is restrictive only to the extent that it best serves the Lord’s purposes.

Before summarizing the thoughts of this study it is important to mention the keys from the Pastor used to gain the understanding here presented. The following Reprint articles were most helpful: THE BINDING OF THE “STRONG MAN” (Reprint 4609); BINDING OF THE STRONG MAN (Reprint 3784); THE WHEAT AND THE TARES (Reprint 4635); THE DISPUTED CLAUSE (Reprint 501); NOT IN VAIN (Reprint 877); THE BINDING AND LOOSING OF SATAN (Reprint 1233;1687, par. 2); The Binding of Satan (Sermon Book, pages 94 to 106) was also most helpful. Volume References include B 353; A 324; E 18 and 20; C 57 and the Foreword of Volume Four. Also the notes from Brother Chester A. Sundbom’s talk on SATAN’S HOUSE DIVIDED helped in gaining the perspective of God’s viewpoint of Satan’s binding.

Now to summarize: Satan’s binding of 1,000 years began at the Lord’s second presence. And the binding started then, is continuing progressively more restrictive until he is fully restrained, being placed in the bottomless pit. Sin is everywhere worse than before.

Therefore it means that he is more active, but less in control of the evil angels who are now active on their own behalf. The binding of Satan exposes his power as error. It does not eliminate all sin. The destruction of the nations and institutions is the restraint of their lies and methods by the truth and righteous methods and the use of evil against evil, as in the revolution of Satan's house. The increased activity of sin in Satan's chaotic empire means that Satan is being bound rather than indicating that he isn't being bound. The binding of Satan permits the destruction of his house rather than the preservation of it.

As applied to our own lives, this truth should make us the more rejoicing Christians, that we may lift up our heads as we see these things coming to pass. (Luke 21:28) "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Isa. 52:7-12.