

It's kind of funny how you can spend many minutes or even hours on the water, but you won't see or hear a single fish. You can cast a line many times but never know what is really taking place under the surface. I was in a boat once that had fishing radar equipment. It didn't help me much. I wish I could have said it was the lake's fault and there were no fish. But there it was on screen. It was a little hard to believe there were as many things swimming under the water as it said. That's what it is like with many other things in life. We don't always get to see it all. **There are many things which we can't see in the spiritual realm.** Aren't we really left like someone just staring at the surface of a lake, not really knowing how things are playing out beyond our vision? In the book of Revelation John describes for us how things are playing in the spiritual realm. He shares some striking images help us to grasp heavenly truths. And in chapter 20 we learn that things are very different from what they appear upon the surface. This vision leads us to see behind the surface of this life into what has happened in the struggle between Satan and the saints of God. SATAN IS BOUND; THE SAINTS REIGN.

Satan led the world astray from the very start. Taking the form of a serpent in the garden he fed lies to Adam and Eve. He told them that they could be like God –if they only they disobeyed him. And the devil led them astray. They ate from the fruit of the tree which God had forbidden. They were painfully afflicted with the curse of sin and the rebellion which Satan led them into.

He has been working ever since then to lead the whole world astray. He seeks to destroy whatever good God has done. And he's found much success. In the book of Revelation Satan is described as a dragon. He is waging war against all who love and trust in the Lord. In desperation and deception, he gives his authority and power to a beast and to a prostitute which both use his power to lead the world astray. This vision is strikingly portraying the devil's control over godless rulers and over false teachers. Consider what we see in our world's history. Just how many believers and worshippers of the true God were there 2000 years ago? Hardly any outside of the nation of Israel –if at all. The non-Jew, gentile-world was completely lost in darkness and under Satan. How many were there in all the world who didn't worship Satan at the time of Noah... at the time of Abraham... at the time of Elijah? All the nations of the world were lost in darkness and sin. Kings, rich, poor, young and old alike all were led astray. Ancient Egyptian worship of the Pharaoh and the Nile, the Mayan sacrificial system that included human life –all ancient and modern religions are the result of Satan's deception. The Canaanites and their worship of sex and offering infants as sacrifices. The wars and evil poured out and spurred on by sin and Satan. The godless killing of millions in wars over the centuries.

What about ancient Israel? Were they safe? Satan's lies constantly duped ancient Israel. Though that nation knew God and had his Word, Satan's lies held sway. In the ancient world Satan's power was displayed in the demon

possessed. Jesus had to so often deal with false teachers in his day. Jesus knew their source. He said, “you belong to your father, the devil.”

Still today death by war, hostility, and greed is spurred on by the enemy. He’s turned the world to worship of self and to false religions. He’s blinded the world today, for example, to the horrors of abortion. He’s turned God’s beautiful creation into a horrifying playground for immorality, and evil. **And don’t think he doesn’t target you today!**

On the surface he appears the winner, God’s saints the losers. John describes those who worship Satan’s beast and the image of the beast as having the mark of the beast on their head and hands. Who can avoid this marking? Who has escaped what terrible bondage Satan has imposed on his followers? The results of Satan’s deceptions are seen in our world and lives today. Suffering, sin, guilt, despair, and death. And there’s more which is unseen: the final consequence of eternal punishment in hell. No wonder John laments about Satan “deceiving the nations” and leading people to “worship the beast or its image.” **The world’s history shows far more than the garden of Eden, it shows the world wrapped around Satan’s finger,** dead in sin, doomed to hell.

But Scripture reveals to us what is otherwise often unseen. This is the seventh and final vision sequence in Revelation. Previous visions revealed the destruction of the beast and the whore, next is the destruction of Satan.

John sees an angel sent from heaven. He comes down with full authority **from the throne of God.** This angel holds two things in his hand: a key to the abyss, which represents hell. And he also holds a great chain, which obviously represents the power to bind and subdue. This angel seized the dragon, who John interprets for us as the Devil. He is bound for what is called a 1000-year period. The door is locked. And God’s seal is placed over it. No one can let him loose, it is by the authority of Christ that Satan has been bound and chained. John sees who is ***really in charge***. Satan is not the warden of hell, he is an inmate. Satan is not in charge of things, he is chained. Satan cannot change his situation, he is sealed and locked. Satan is bound!

The result of Satan’s binding? He is no longer able to deceive the nations. For a duration of time (represented in the vision with a 1000-year period) he is bound and under lock. His power is taken away.

When did the ancient serpent lose his grip on all the nations? Recall what we read earlier in Genesis 3? We read of the **one born of the woman who would crush the serpent. This vision shows that fulfilled.** **Jesus Christ came** to this earth for this very purpose. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that the reason Jesus became like us was to destroy the devil’s work. Satan met more than his match in the man Jesus. He sought to led Jesus into sin. He tempted him in the **wilderness of 40 days.** But he failed. The serpent sought to exercise influence and power over Jesus, but he lost. When Jesus encountered those who were demon possessed, he showed his power and authority over Satan.

He spoke, and they fled at his command. He drove out demons because he came to destroy the devil and the devil's work. When Jesus neared the cross he also made his battle plan known. John records for us in his gospel account Jesus saying as he nears the cross: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." (John 12:31) On the cross Jesus gave the defeating blow. He freed the sinner and covered our sins with his blood. He defeated the enemy at last. The holy Son of God bound Satan.

Some might argue, "You have to take the Bible literally. 1000 years must mean a real 1000-year reign on earth." To say that the thousand years literally means a 1000 year of reign of Christ on earth is as far off-base as saying 10 pixels on the fish finder screen means the fish is ten years old. That's not the way the author intends us to read the vision. Revelation uses numbers figuratively. The 1000 years begins when Jesus first comes and binds Satan. This is also consistent with Jude and Peter who both say that Satan is already chained. The apostle Paul records that Jesus has already triumphed over Satan and his forces by the cross. This morning we read that Jesus' act of driving out demons was a sign that he has come to bind up the owner of the house, Satan.

Brothers and sisters look not to the future for hope, this is today! These words are for you now! Look around and consider the history of the world! Satan's power was undone. The gospel has been preached. Wherever the good news of Jesus has been shared the power and authority of Satan has been limited. And whenever you and I speak the gospel, Satan's chain grows all the shorter. Not even the gates of hell can withstand the gospel. Jesus opened the good news to go beyond the Jews to all nations. He who defeated Satan says he holds all authority and we are to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation!" Satan can no longer lead all the nations astray.

But isn't there a **statement here which give you a little concern?** Satan will be released after the 1000 years has ended. When God has determined that his gospel has accomplished all he desires, then Jesus' saying will come true: "***There will be a time of great distress in the last days.***" (Mt 24:21) Many will once again follow Satan and be deceived. Can we say that those times are not now upon us? The pure gospel is being lost in many parts of the world. Liberal scholars have distorted the truth of the Word of God and lead people astray. Churches that once bore the name Christian are now the centers of false teachings. Satan has always prowled around like a lion looking for someone to devour. But today there is every indication that his chain has been loosed and the end is soon to come. We are told near the end of time the love of most will grow cold and people will be lovers of self rather than those who love God. ***Isn't that what we see today?*** Speaking of the last days Jesus said there would be a great time of distress. "***For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.***"

But the vision reveals, "after that, he must be set free for a short time." The devil is already judged. The deed is done. The 1000 year time is the era which

begins with the binding of Satan, and it ends with his being loosed for a relatively **short time**. Regarding the terrible time near the end Jesus says, “...for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.” (Mt 24:22)

What does this mean for us? While we wait for Jesus’ second coming we are reigning with him. Just as Satan’s defeat is the opposite of what one sees, so is our victory. During the thousand year period –that is the New Testament era— John also sees the saints who have died. But they have not died as lost. They are sitting with Christ in heaven as part of his royal kingdom. They are given authority to judge the enemy and reign over the enemy Satan. The saints reign!

John says that **we reign with Christ for the 1000 years**. That’s time from Jesus’ first coming till his return. And once again don’t be fooled by those who say this reign is a future event. This 1000 years is now! Through faith we already reign in victory with Jesus! The resurrections he speaks of here are not the start of some future kingdom on earth. It is the kingdom of God right now. John speaks of being made alive (spiritually) to reign with Christ as the first resurrection. In the gospel of John, Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; **he has crossed over from death to life.**” (John 5) Paul writes, “you were dead in sin, but God made you alive with Christ.” (Eph 2) This is the first resurrection, a spiritual new life of faith. We reign with Jesus through faith! (John 5:24ff)

The outward surface shows the saints of God murdered and martyred for their faith. And we are fooling ourselves if we believe that Christians are not persecuted today –even to the point of death. Yet Satan has already lost. For all the saints have taken part in the first resurrection. They live and reign with Christ in the heavenly realms. And the second death, hell, has no power over them. They are blessed, and they are holy. They belong to God.

You are in this vision. You were once dead, subject to Satan. But God made you alive through the good news of Jesus our Savior. He gave you a new birth by water and the Word. You reign with him. The second death has no power over you. All your friends and relatives who died will face the judgment. And we can’t say that everyone will automatically escape hell. But we can say that those who are part of the first resurrection, who were called to faith in Christ, already live and reign. And after the resurrection the second death of hell will not touch them.

Seeing on radar how many fish there were did make me excited to continue fishing. Seeing in Scripture just how victorious we are should spur us to continue in fishing for people lost under Satan’s sway. The first resurrection is freely given to all who are made alive in Christ through the gospel we preach. God’s saints live and reign with him. This is the period we now live in. And after God’s gospel has been to all the world and has accomplished his purposes, after enough have suffered and died for their testimony, the reality of the situation will be made clear to all. **Things aren’t what they appear on the surface.** SATAN IS BOUND; THE SAINTS REIGN.