

Revelation 20:1-10

Satan defeated – the last judgment prepared

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Introduction

- ❖ This sermon outline is meant to encourage all Christians who live under difficult circumstances, as an oppressed minority or a persecuted minority.
 - A new(?) approach will be introduced, the use of semantic domains in determining the meaning of the thousand years. The conclusion seems to be that the millennium doesn't refer to a period in church history or to a literal period of one thousand years, but to the "time of God" in contrast to the "time of Satan." The main purpose is the preparation of the last judgment, which is described in Revelation 20:11-15.
- ❖ The application will focus on the unmasking of Satan and his deceit, as it is visible in this world.

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Revelation to John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone". You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.
 - This sermon outline doesn't discuss all the different views held by different Christian theologians concerning the millennium.¹

¹ This outline for sermons is brief and does not discuss all the (many) different theories about the structures and outlines of the Book of Revelation. Beale (1999) provides a detailed outline. For discussion see Garrow (1997) and Clouse, R. G., Ladd, G. E., Hoyt, H. A., Boettner, L., & Hoekema, A. A. (1977).

Context

- ❖ The book of Revelation is like a beautiful painting, depicting the promises of God with regard to the “end of time”, the victory and the judgment of Christ. It is impossible to study one passage, without looking at the book as a whole.
- ❖ A brief outline of the Book of Revelation:

Introduction (Rev 1:1-3)	
	The origin and the command to write this Revelation.
The Book of Revelation (Rev 1:4-22:21)	
Rev 1:4-8	The opening liturgical setting.
Rev 1:9-3:22	PART 1
Rev 4:1-22:11	PART 2
Rev 22:12-21	The closing liturgical setting.

- PART 1: The risen and exalted Christ sends his seven messages to the seven churches in the Roman Province of Asia.
- PART 2: The heavenly courtroom and the judgment of God, ending with the descent of the new heaven and earth.
 - PART 2: Three main stages can be distinguished in this part of the Revelation. Each stage is introduced by a vision of the heavenly courtroom where God resides as the Creator-King and Judge of all creation.

Part 2 (Rev 4:1-22:11)	
Stage 1	Rev 4:1-7:17 > the first six seals.
Stage 2	Rev 8:1-11:14 > (the seventh seal) and the first six trumpets.
Stage 3	Rev 11:15-22:11 > (the seventh trumpet) and the seven bowls of God’s wrath > the two cities: Babylon versus the New Jerusalem.
Stage 3 (Rev 11:15-22:11) – in more detail	
Rev 11:15-16:21	The war between Christ and the powers of Satan, the Beast, the false prophet, and Babylon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 11:15-19 > The heavenly courtroom, the kingship of

	<p>Christ announced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 12:1-14:20 > The war between Christ and Satan, the victory of Christ. • Rev 15:1-16:21 > The seven bowls of Gods wrath, the victory over and the destruction of Babylon.
Rev 17:1-21:8	<p>The destruction of Babylon and the final judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rev 17:1-19:10 > The fall of Babylon. • Rev 19:11-21:8 > The final judgement.
Rev 21:9-22:11	<p>The vision of the New Jerusalem and the New Creation.</p>

- Revelation 20:1-10 is the second part in which John describes the victory of Christ and his final judgment of the death and the living. This is important for the explanation and understanding of Revelation 20:1-10.
 - The final judgment can be divided into four parts. Each part ends with the execution of the judgment: **the fiery lake of burning sulfur**.

Rev 19:11-21:8 > The victory or Christ and the final judgment.	
Rev 19:11-22	<p>Christ and his Victory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The beast was captured, and with it the false prophet (...). The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (Rev 19:20).
Rev 20:1-10	<p>Christ and his Victory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown” (Rev 20:10).
Rev 20:11-15	<p>Christ and his Judgment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev 20:15).
Rev 21:1-8	<p>Christ and his Judgment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur” (Rev 21:8).

- ❖ Revelation 20:4-6 and Revelation 20:11-15 are thematically related:

Revelation 20:4-6	Revelation 20:11-15
Thrones (verse 4)	White throne (verse 11)
To judge (verse 4)	To be judged (verse 12)
To come to life (verse 4)	The dead (verse 12-13)
The second death (verse 6)	The second death (verse 14)

Form and structure

- ❖ Revelation 20:1-10 consists of three parts. Unfortunately, several translations separate Revelation 20:7-10 from 20:1-6 by introducing a new heading, but these verses are thematically connected with the preceding part.
 - **A.** Before the thousand years (Rev 20:1-3) – *(in a short time; the duration is not mentioned)*
 - **B.** During the thousand years (Rev 20:4-6) – *(thousand years)*
 - **C.** After the thousand years (Rev 20:7-10) – *(a short time)*

<i>Satan is imprisoned: (verse 1-3) – A.</i>	<p>And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.</p> <p>He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.</p> <p>He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.</p> <p>After that, he must be set free for a short time.</p>
<i>The preparation of the Last Judgment: (verse 4-6) – B.</i>	<p>I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.</p> <p>And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God.</p> <p>They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.</p> <p>They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were</p>

	<p>ended.) This is the first resurrection.</p> <p>Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and (they) will reign with him for a thousand years.</p>
<p><i>The defeat and judgment of Satan (= devil):</i> <i>(verse 7-10) – C.</i></p>	<p>When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.</p>

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

General remark

- ❖ Several hermeneutical questions can be asked with regard to the exposition and application of the Book of Revelation. This sermon outline focusses on the question, how can we understand the Revelation within the context of the end of the first century?
 - This outline based on semantic domains shows that the central theme of Revelation 20:4-6 is the Judgment of Christ and serves as a preparation of the Last Judgment which is described in Revelation 20:11-15. There are several connections between these two passages:

Verse 1-3

- ❖ Abyss = “**ἄβυσσος**”: 1. **an immensely deep space, depth, abyss**, generally, contrasted with sky and earth. 2. **a transcendent place associated with the dead and hostile powers, netherworld, abyss**; dungeon where the devil is kept.²
- ❖ Dragon = “**δράκων**”: often synonymous. with ὄφις, **dragon, serpent**, a sobriquet for the devil.³

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 2).

³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 261).

- ❖ Serpent = “ὄφις”: **serpent**. The ancient serpent = the serpent that seduced Eve.⁴
- ❖ Devil = “ὁ διάβολος”: 2. **one who engages in slander**. A title of the principal transcendent evil being **the adversary/devil**, already current in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) as translation of שָׂטָן (Satan - Job 2:1).⁵
- ❖ Satan = “ὁ Σατανᾶς”: title or name: **(the) Satan**, in a very special sense, the enemy of God and all of those who belong to God, simply **Satan, the Enemy**.⁶
 - There are four names or titles used for the enemy of God. This means that he holds great power over the earth. The four names are two pairs of synonyms:
 - Dragon = Serpent *and* Devil = Satan. His main weapons are lies and deceit (Rev 20:3, 8).

A short note on the symbolical use of numbers


- ❖ Numbers play an important and symbolical role in the Book of Revelation.
 - They have a numerical value but, what is more important, they have a symbolical value. The numbers which are used can be grouped as follows:

Group	Number	Meaning
Triangle numbers ⁷	3 = 1 + 2	Vertical axis: heaven, earth, and the waters beneath the earth. It is also the number of God.
	6 = 1 + 2 + 3	A number of near perfection or completeness.
	10 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4	A number of fullness.

⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, pp. 744-746).

⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 226).

⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 916).

⁷ Triangle numbers: 1, 3, 6 and 10: 

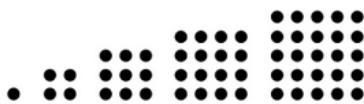
Square numbers ⁸	$4 = 2 \times 2$ $144 = 12 \times 12$	Horizontal plane, the four corners of the earth. This is often reflected in the use of four designations for the same noun : every tribe (1) and language (2) and people (3) and nation (4) (Rev 5:9). And: the dragon (1), that ancient serpent (2), who is the devil (3), or Satan (4) (Rev 20:1). This number can mean: the people of God (12) will inherit the whole earth.
Cubic number	$1000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$	The number of space and time of God. The holiest place was a cube (1 Kings 6:20). It is also the number of eternity.
Special cases	2 $7 = 3 + 4$ $12 = 3 \times 4$ $42 = 1260 = \text{times, time and half time}$ (Rev 11:2-3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5)	Number of a (true) witness The number of (holy) Fullness The number of the people of God This number refers to the 42 sites of rest of the Israelites during their wandering in the desert before they entered the promised land (Num 33).

- The number 1000 in “the thousand years” is often taken literally, meaning one thousand “calendrical years.” But given the context of Revelation 19:11-21:8 which describes the victory of Christ and finally the judgment of Christ, it is better to take it symbolically, denoting the time and space of God. (Compare Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8.)

Verse 4-6

- ❖ Throne = “**θρόνος**”: 1. **chair, seat** (...) of the 12 apostles as judges or rulers in the time of the final consummation **Mt 19:28b; Lk 22:30**; compare **Rev 20:4**.⁹
- ❖ To reign = “**βασιλεύω**”: 1. **to exercise authority at a royal level, be king, rule**. b. *of God and those closely united with him: faithful Christians, who have been called to rule*.¹⁰

⁸ Square numbers: 1, 4, 9, 16, 25: •



⁹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 460).

¹⁰ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 170).

- A king had several offices as a head of state and of the government:

1. He had supreme military power.
2. He held the high priestly office.
3. He had supreme legislative power.
4. He had supreme judicial power.

Within the context of Revelation 20:4-6 the Christians who share in the first resurrection receive the priestly office and judicial power.

Ezekiel 37:1-47:12 and Revelation 20:4-22:5

- ❖ The following parallel between the final chapters of Ezekiel and the final chapters of Revelation is striking.

Theme		
Valley of dry bones / first resurrection	Ezekiel 37	Revelation 20:4-6
The LORD's great victory over the nations / Gog and Magog	Ezekiel 38-39	Revelation 20:7-10
The new temple / the new Jerusalem	Ezekiel 40-46	Revelation 21:1-8 Revelation 21:9-27
The river flowing out of the temple	Ezekiel 47:1-12	Revelation 22:1-5

Exposition

General Remark

- ❖ A preliminary conclusion might be that Revelation 20:1-10 doesn't refer to a millennium as a period of peace after the great tribulation. As is shown below, the meaning of the used words (semantic domains) points towards the preparation of the last judgment of the dead and the living by God. This judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15.

Verse 1-3

- ❖ After God passed his judgment on "the beast and the false prophet" (Rev 19:20), he is now aiming at "the devil" (Rev 20:10). An angel will lock Satan in his prison. For a time set by God, he cannot deceive and accuse the nations. It is the appointed time (Mt 8:29). After his imprisonment, he will be set free for a short period of time before his final destruction in eternity.

- His four names refer to the Old Testament (Genesis 3:1-6, 14-15, Job 1-2). The number four also indicates that Satan has great power on earth (Rev 12:9). He wants to destroy the image of God (humanity; 1 Pet 5:8) and his creation.
- Other references to the prison of Satan are found in Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4. It is the “abyss.” This is a deep space in the earth, for humans not accessible, and otherwise not defined nor located.
- ❖ **“A short time”** stands in contrast to **“the thousand years.”**
 - As is noted below, this sermon outline doesn’t discuss all the different views of the thousand years. Given the context of victory and judgment, and the symbolical value of numbers in the Book of Revelation, it must probably be understood as the “time of God” in contrast with “a short time” as “the time of Satan.”
 - “A short time” is also used in connection with the serpent in Revelation 12:12.

Verse 4-6

- ❖ **“I saw thrones.”** Everything will be made ready for the last judgment. John doesn’t specify those who are sitting on these thrones. They receive from God the authority to judge. (Compare Mt 19:28; Dan 7:9-14, 18, 26-27.)
- ❖ **“And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded.”** Finally, God will avenge the blood of the martyrs:
 - “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, **‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’** Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed” (Rev 6:9-11).
 - Examples of these martyrs are Stephen (Acts 7:54-60; James the apostle (Acts 12:1-2), Antipas (Rev 2:13).
 - These martyrs are the faithful Christians who were not ashamed of the Gospel and proclaimed the Lordship of Jesus Christ. They probably belonged to the most prominent members of the Christian congregations.¹¹
 - “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what

¹¹ Aune, D. E. (1997, p. 1086).

to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt 10:16–20).

- These souls might be the same as those who are given the authority to judge, but this is not clear from the text. Christ had given his promise: **“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne”** (Rev 3:21).
- ❖ **“They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.”** This refers to Revelation 13:11-18.
 - **“To worship the beast or his image.”** At the end of the first century and at the beginning of the second century AD, Christians were forced to worship the Roman Emperor as their Lord and the image of (the goddess) Roma. People received a mark as a sign of faithfulness to Rome and the Emperor.¹²
 - **“They came to life.”** Their souls were not dead or asleep, but crying for justice (Rev 6:9-11). Now they receive a new body, a glorified body (1 Cor. 15:42-44) and they will be justified.
- ❖ **“(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)”** This (second) “resurrection of the dead” is described in the next part of the Revelation (20:11-15).
- ❖ **“The second death has no power over them.”** They had already been sentenced to death by the Roman magistrates (“**beheaded**”). Now there is no need for fear of a second death. **“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** (Mt 10:28).
 - Note the contrast between “the **first** resurrection” and “the **second** death.”
 - “The second death has (no) power over them” shows that there won’t be an end to the existence of the soul. If death means “annihilation”, then the word “power” is superfluous. The second death indicates an eternal separation from the living God. In that case “the second death” is a kind of custodian in a prison.
- ❖ **“Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection.”** In his seven messages to the seven churches, the glorified Christ summoned Christians to conquer and stay faithful to his word. Now he calls them “blessed” not by human standards, but by God’s. They are holy and fully devoted to God. (Compare Rev 1:5-6; 1 Pet 2:9 and Ex 19:5-6.).
- ❖ **“They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”** Does this reign extend to the earth or is it confined to the heavenly realm? The thrones are in heaven and John doesn’t explicitly mention a reign on earth.

¹² Pliny the Younger on Christians. (n.d.). Retrieved October 26, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pliny_the_Younger_on_Christians

- The former things refer to the world as we experience today (Rev 21:1; Isa 65:17-19).
“No longer will there be any curse” (Rev 22:3).

Verse 7-10

- ❖ Satan will be released by God¹³ for a short time (again) and this time to his own destruction and that of all who follow him. He will deceive the nations for a final attempt to destroy as much as he can. **“He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short”** (Rev 12:12). (Compare Revelation 16:12-14.)
- ❖ **“Gog and Magog”** are not specified as nations or as peoples. Both names refer to Ezekiel 38-39. There is no need to identify them with existing nations. They are generic names of peoples hostile to God. Previous attempts have failed against the background of the course of history.¹⁴
- ❖ Christians are a small minority compared to: **“In number they are like the sand on the seashore,”** and to: **“They marched across the breadth of the earth** and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves.”
 - This is also a reference to the camp in the desert mentioned in the Book of Leviticus and Numbers 1 and 2 (compare Revelation 7:1-8).
 - Amidst all turmoil, God assures: “I love the city.” This is a reference to Jerusalem, not the actual city, but the gathering of Christians. Perhaps some Christians had witnessed the besiege of Jerusalem AD 70 by the future Emperor Titus. The walls of the city and the temple were demolished (Mt 24). This won’t happen again to the people of God.
- ❖ There will be no war, because **“fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”** (Compare Genesis 19:24.)
 - This battle is not a battle between nations, but a final attempt to destroy Christianity.
- ❖ This is the end of Satan. He has already been judged. He will share the same fate as
 - the beast = political power,
 - and the false prophet = religious power.
 - **“They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”**
- ❖ Everything is ready for the last judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

Application

Remark

¹³ Divine passive.

¹⁴ Gog and Magog. (n.d.). Retrieved October 26, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gog_and_Magog

- ❖ This part of Revelation focuses on the preparation of the Last Judgment and it is meant to comfort and encourage all Christians who suffer due to injustice, oppression, and persecution.
- ❖ It is helpful to relate the deceit of Satan to actual problems and historical developments. How can we discern his activity and be prepared (Eph 6:11-20)? To mention some of his activities:
 - The glorification of the nation or the people. Examples from history are the Roman Empire and the Third Reich (World War II).
 - The glorification of power and wealth (status).
 - This leads to the abuse of labor and enrichment of the few. (Compare Matthew 4:8-9.)
 - The glorification of power and male sexuality.
 - This leads to a libertarian view on sexuality and abuse of children and women.
 - The glorification of the self.
 - This leads to individualism, egocentrism and eventually narcissism.
 - The denial of the only true God (Jn 17:3).
 - This leads to universalism: all religions are true, to religious pluralism, agnosticism, and atheism.
 - The denial of eternal judgment and of hell. There will be some kind of universal reconciliation.
 - This leads to the denial of the severe consequences of sin.
 - And finally by the denial of Satan himself. If people are made to think that he doesn't exist, there is nothing to be afraid of.

Verse 1-3

- ❖ God will put all these activities of Satan to an end in order to prepare this world for the last judgment.
- ❖ The time of Satan is short, the time of God is a thousand years.

Verse 4-6

- ❖ An encouragement to all Christians who proclaim the gospel and suffer persecution and oppression. God will do justice and avenge their blood (Deut 32;43; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:13).

Verse 7-10

- ❖ The camp of God, the beloved city, the Christian church will be protected by God himself in the final attempt of Satan to destroy the work of God in creation and salvation.

- “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor 15:58).

Quotes¹⁵

- ❖ “My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?” (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)

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¹⁵ Justice (n.d.). Popular Quotes. Retrieved October 27, 2016, from <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag?utf8=✓&id=justice>

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