

# 1,000 YEARS AND THE LAKE OF FIRE

---

The millennium is a subject that has for years arrested the attention of people world wide. The word itself does not appear in the Bible, but comes from a compound of two Latin words "mille" and "annum," which means simply "thousand years." This thousand-year period, called the millennium, is mentioned six times in the first seven verses of Revelation chapter twenty and refers to that period of time in which Satan is to be bound and perfect peace and happiness will reign in the universe.

There are many various theories regarding the millennium which have been based largely upon speculations and fictitious novels. Some have even claimed that the devil has already been bound and we are now in the millennium. To this insanity a minister once replied, "If the devil is bound, he must be tied with a rubber chain that stretches from Paris to Bombay and from Washington, D.C. to the Kremlin." All we need to do is look about us to see that the devil has never been more active than he is today. This is why the Word of God warns us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

There is no reason for anyone to experience confusion or uncertainty in regard to the millennium, for the Bible speaks quite clearly and in much detail on this subject. In Revelation 20:1-9 we find the most clear, concise, and concrete statements pertaining to this thousand-year period to be found in all the Scriptures.

The Bible clearly shows that when Jesus returns it will be a visible, audible event which will be witnessed by all. He will descend from heaven in a cloud, with all the holy angels accompanying Him. The heavens will be lighted by their glory as a summer night is lightened by an electrical storm. As He descends there will be "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." "And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Then a trumpet will sound and the Lord shall call out to His sleeping saints and "the dead in Christ shall rise first." His people who are still alive when He returns shall not die, but "shall be changed...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Then all are caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. All of the wicked who have not perished from the plagues of hundred pound hailstones the Lord "shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Sinful man will not be able to stand in the presence of our glorious Saviour without being consumed "for our God is a consuming fire" (Matthew 24:27; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 25:31-32; Revelation 11:15-17; 16:17-21; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:51-53; II Thessalonians 2:8; Matthew 13:37-43; Revelation 19:11-21; Hebrews 12:29).

In Revelation chapter twenty we find that we are carried on past the above events and are shown what is to take place after Jesus returns. In the first three verses we find reference to a "bottomless pit" into which Satan is cast. This "bottomless pit" is identical to the one mentioned in Revelation 17:8 and refers to this earth as it exists in a desolate state with all of the trees uprooted, vast caverns and jagged rocks scattered over its surface, cities laid waste, and all life destroyed (Jeremiah 4:23-27; 25:30-33). The word translated "bottomless pit" is the same as found in Genesis 1:2 to describe the earth in its chaotic state when it "was without form and void." Thus, we have before us here Satan being bound to this earth for a thousand years while all of God's people are in heaven where John says, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). But the wicked who have just been destroyed by the brightness of His coming "lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (verse 5). During this period Satan will be restricted to this devastated earth to behold the results of his workings and to contemplate his eventual annihilation.

While Satan and his angels are chained to this dark and desolate earth John says he sees the righteous in heaven, and "judgement was given unto them." This judgement is not to determine the

punishment of the wicked which shall be the "second death" (Revelation 20:14, 21:8). One purpose of this judgement is to vindicate the character of God when He must finally destroy all sin and sinners. This thousand-year period will be spent reviewing the books of heaven and seeing for ourselves why certain ones are not there and why God cannot allow them to enter heaven. But even more than this will be the awesome responsibility of sitting with Jesus in determining the degree, or duration, of punishment that each of the wicked, as well as the devil and his angels, are to endure in the "lake of fire."

"In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death." White, E.G., *The Great Controversy*, p. 661

This is what the apostle Paul was referring to when he said that we are to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Corinthians 4:5). It will be at this time that the Scripture will be fulfilled that "the saints shall judge the world" and that "we shall judge angels" (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

When this judgment is completed, "the wicked receive their recompense in the earth (Proverbs 11:31). They 'shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts' (Malachi 4:1). Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch--Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah." White, E.G., *The Great Controversy*, p. 673

At the end of the millennium reign in heaven John saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven" (Revelation 21:2). This event marks the end of the thousand-year period which both begins and ends with a resurrection. These two resurrections were referred to by Jesus in John 5:28-29 where they are called "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of damnation." Those who had part in the first resurrection have reigned with Christ in heaven for a thousand years, but at the end of this period the wicked are resurrected and Satan is "loosed out of his prison." Once again he has souls to tempt and deceive and therefore immediately sets to work. As soon as the vast number of wicked, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea," are resurrected, Satan gathers them together and they encircle the new Jerusalem in one last effort to overthrow God and His people.

The great controversy between Christ and Satan has now reached its climatic end and as Satan and his wicked host are gathered in open defiance and aggression against God, the prophet says that, "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9). And everyone whose name was "not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." "This is the second death" (Revelation 20:15, 14; Ezekiel 28:14-19; Malachi 4:1-3; II Peter 3:10-13).

This fire will not only destroy Satan and the wicked, but "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Our earth will be purged, purified, and destroyed by this fire; "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:12-13).

The apostle John saw this beautiful "new earth" (Revelation 21:1) where God's people shall dwell in peace and prosperity throughout eternity (Isaiah 65:17, 21-25). The beauty of the place is far greater than we can even begin to imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9), but the most marvelous thing of all is that Jesus Himself will be there with us (Revelation 21:3-5).