

Pentecost 3
June 10, 2018

Revelation 20:1-6
368-753*-538-250

*CW-S – “Father, God of Grace, You Knew Us”

See What John Sees!

- I. The ugly reality of the devil.
- II. The power and plans of our Savior.
- III. The blessedness of the Christian.

Dear Christian friends,

Today we look at one of the **most** CONTROVERSIAL chapters in the Bible. Because of the “1000 years” mentioned here some churches teach what’s called the Millennium. The word millennium means one thousand years. According to these millennialists Jesus will visibly return to earth for a LITERAL 1000 years – a time of glorious peace and **prosperity**. That’s NOT what these verses teach.

“And I saw,” John writes three times here. Looking more closely at these verses SEE WITH JOHN 1)the ugly reality of the **devil**, 2)the power and plans of our **Savior** and 3)the blessedness of the **Christian**.

I. The ugly reality of the devil.

We have here SYMBOLIC or PICTURE language. Throughout Revelation there are STRANGE and striking visions. God **did that** 1)to get our attention and 2)to make an impression on us. **God wants** us to see this and NOT FORGET it.

HOW do we know this is **symbolic** or **picture** language? The rest of the Bible makes that clear. The devil is not literally a **“dragon”** or a **“snake.”** The devil is NOT AN ANIMAL but a good angel GONE BAD. He is the leader of some **angels who rebelled** against God and who have been eternally condemned to hell by God. The Bible doesn’t FILL US IN on **all the details** – it just reports the UGLY REALITY of the devil.

“I saw ...the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil.” By picturing the devil as a **“dragon”** God wants to impress on us that the devil is FEROCIOUS – terrifying – **powerful**. He’s NOT a cute little puppy you play with. Peter made the **same point** when he wrote, **“Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”** You don’t try to pet a **roaring, hungry** lion. You AVOID them! That’s God’s point. We are to AVOID the devil – not chum around with him.

“That ancient serpent” reminds us of the OT reading – the devil tempting Eve and getting her and Adam to DEFY God and eat the forbidden fruit. Learn from that HOW SNEAKY and sly the devil is. He’s one SMOOTH-TALKER! Don’t ever think you can OUTSMART the devil – that he’ll never fool you. **Again, God’s point** is to AVOID the devil **at all costs**.

The name “devil” means SLANDERER and **accuser**. Look how the devil SLANDERED GOD to Eve – making God the BAD GUY **who takes all the fun** out of life with all His **miserable rules**. Look how the devil gets us to sin and **then accuses** us before God demanding that we be damned to hell.

The name “Satan” means ADVERSARY – **enemy**. He is God’s enemy and our enemy. The devil can’t stand God and he can’t stand us BEING LOVED by God. He’ll try to convince us that **God** is our ENEMY. The devil will tell us HE ONLY WANTS us to enjoy ourselves and **have some fun** but ALL HE REALLY WANTS is for us to end up in hell with him.

We need to see this UGLY REALITY of the devil. We need to have a HEALTHY FEAR of the devil. He’s sneaky – he’s determined. We need to AVOID him.

Thankfully there's MORE TO SEE here! See with John...

II. The power and plans of our Savior.

"I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand." This angel is our Lord Jesus. Jesus is not literally an ***"angel."*** Jesus is God Himself – the eternal Son of God. The word "angel" literally means messenger. John calls Jesus ***"the Word."*** Hebrews tells us that ***"in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son."*** Jesus pictured as ***"an angel*** (messenger) ***coming down out of heaven"*** pictures the truth that Jesus comes to us from God the Father with the message of God's **love** and **forgiveness**.

"Having the key to the abyss" pictures the RIGHT and POWER to open and **close** hell. ***"Holding a great chain in his hand."*** It's a ***"great chain"*** because IT'S USED for chaining up ***"the dragon"*** – the devil. You don't use string to tie up a dragon!

See with John the POWER of our Savior! ***"He seized the dragon, ...bound him for a thousand years, threw him into the abyss, locked it, and set a seal on it, so that he could no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years come to an end."*** GET THE PICTURE? We're no match for the **devil** – the devil is no match for **Jesus!** Jesus has total power and control OVER the **devil**. We need to see the UGLY REALITY of the devil and oh how we need to **also see** the POWER of our Savior!

HOW do we know these ***"1,000 years"*** are not literally 1,000 years? EVERYTHING ELSE here is picture language. Jesus "an angel" – the devil a ***"dragon/snake"*** – the ***"key – great chain,"*** etc. That ALL PICTURES important truths. SO TOO the ***"thousand years."*** They picture a LONG time with a beginning and an end.

These 1,000 years picture the NT ERA – from Jesus coming as our Savior to Jesus coming again in glory on the Last Day. ***"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's works,"*** John wrote. Jesus spoke of His death by saying, ***"The prince of this world*** (the devil) ***now stands condemned."***

Adam and Eve's fall into sin had DEVASTATING **consequences**. Sin and death entered God's perfect world. Ever since then we're all born sinful cursed with a **sinful nature**. We've followed in Adam and Eve's footsteps – falling for the **devil's lies** and **empty promises** – ignoring and defying God's **clear will** for our lives. Our lives had become a DEATH MARCH to the **grave** and **hell**.

But see the PLAN – the LOVE! – of our God! Jesus came here NOT SYMBOLICALLY but as a real baby and took our place under God's law. Jesus was solely tempted by the devil but He NEVER ONCE gave in. Jesus lived a life of PERFECT **love** and **obedience**. Jesus gives us the credit for His life while He took the blame and punishment for the sins of the whole world. **On the cross** Jesus endured the hell we had coming – Jesus died the death that FULLY PAID for all our sins – that ***"takes away the sin of the world."*** Jesus TOPS it all of with His stunning Easter victory over death and the grave. TRUSTING in Jesus we enjoy God's **forgiveness** – we are reconciled with our Creator – we are children of God – heirs of heaven. Or as Paul put it, ***"God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."***

With Jesus' victory over the **devil** – with the preaching of that victory ***"in all the world"*** – God is "binding Satan" – souls are rescued from Satan's **grip** – Satan's power to ***"deceive the nations"*** is restricted. GOD'S PLANS are succeeding NOT the devil's. God IS IN CONTROL – not the devil.

These **1,000 years** don't picture a time of PEACE AND PROSPERITY with Jesus visibly reigning here on earth. Oh, Jesus is reigning OVER ALL things – but not visibly for ALL TO SEE. We see Jesus' reigning ***"by faith and not by sight."*** During these 1,000 years of the NT era we are not to expect peace and prosperity. Countless passages warn against that. ***"We must through much tribulation***

enter the kingdom of God.” Read Jesus’ descriptions of the last days – and especially of the VERY LAST days when the devil ***“will be set free for a short time.”*** Yet AS BAD as things get be sure to see Jesus IN CONTROL and carrying out HIS PLANS.

III. The blessedness of the Christian.

Revelation shows that it WON’T BE EASY **being a Christian**. Revelation pictures the Church UNDER ATTACK **on all sides**. Humanly speaking it OFTEN LOOKS **as if** the Church is about to go down in defeat. **With Revelation God tells** His SUFFERING, STRUGGLING people, “You are so blessed to **be Christians**. You are ***‘more than conquerors.’***” So John sees here.

“Then I saw thrones, and those who were sitting on them were given the authority to judge. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast and his image, and they did not receive his mark on their forehead... They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ...This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them. Instead they will be priests of God and of Christ. And they will reign with him for a thousand years.”

Perhaps some of these Christians had witnessed fellow Christians **being killed** for their faith. Perhaps they had seen their heads rolling on the ground. WITH JOHN they needed to **see this!** We need to see it. LOOK at those supposedly dead, LOSER Christians! They’re in heaven reigning with Jesus. They literally LOST THEIR LIVES **for Jesus** but look what they ALL GAINED **with Jesus!**

The ***“first resurrection”*** is God bringing us to **faith in Jesus** as our Savior. We ***“were dead in sin, but God made us alive in Christ.”*** Trusting in Jesus the soul of the Christian goes straight to heaven when we die. SO JESUS promises us and so Jesus shows us here. See how blessed we are to BE CHRISTIANS - to have Jesus as our Savior! Life here may STINK. It can be a real struggle to LIVE AS and STAY a Christian in a world that’s more and more ANTI-Christian. But the problems and **pains** and **struggles** of this life are ONLY TEMPORARY. With Jesus we have ETERNAL LIFE in heaven!

Not only that – there’s the coming ***“second resurrection.”*** When Jesus returns in glory on the Last Day He will raise our dead bodies back to life ***“transformed to be like His glorious body.”*** Then body and soul we will live forever with God in that ***“new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”*** John shows us that in the next two chapters. Read them in your devotions this week. WHAT A SIGHT they are! God promises us SO MUCH MORE than a MERE **1,000 years** of peace and prosperity here on earth!

“And I saw.” Seeing what John all saw we say, “WOW! ALRIGHT! WHAT A SIGHT!” Amen.

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