

Satan Bound and Set Free

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There are sincere people of God -and their number is legion- who believe that Christ can come now any day, and that He will come in such a way that He will be invisible to the unbelievers while the believers, both living and dead, will be caught up to Him in the air to reign with Him from there for a period of a literal one thousand years. The living will mysteriously have disappeared from among their unbelieving neighbors, and the dead will have been resurrected so that both will bodily meet Christ in the air. They further believe that during this one-thousand-year period Satan is bound so that he cannot deceive the nations into sin and unbelief, and as a result there are mass conversions, a wholesale acceptance of Christ, and Christianity will have come to its own.

Those who believe this do not deny the triune existence of God, the virgin birth of Christ, the divine nature of Christ, His resurrection and ascension into heaven. But if one holds to this idea of Christ's return and follows it through consistently, that one will deny many of the cardinal truths of Scripture, including some of those just mentioned. For that reason alone I would be grateful to the *Beacon Lights* staff for asking me to write on this subject. I do always appreciate these opportunities to write for you young people, and a subject such as this is certainly worth our consideration because of the widespread subscription to this erroneous view, and the danger that it poses today in our midst.

This view of the binding of Satan does not do justice to the very passage of Scripture in which it appears, namely, Revelation 20: 1-11. In these verses God Himself tells us in what way and to what degree Satan is bound. We are told this in verses 7 and 8. There we are told that, as soon as he is set free, he goes and gathers Gog and Magog to come up in literal, physical battle against the camp of the saints and brings about that great battle of Armageddon. It was in regard to this desire of Satan that he was bound these one thousand years. He could not get the pagan nations to come up in war against the Christian nations for a long period of time determined by God, and because of which he was bound all during that time in this respect. Scripture must interpret Scripture. And when God Himself in Scripture explains this binding of Satan, we may not ignore part of the passage to introduce our own ideas.

What is more, even if Satan was bound in the sense of which the Premillennialists speak of it, so that he could not tempt into any sin, even if Scripture did not tell us in what respect he was bound, we still could never come to such a view of it, if we let Scripture interpret Scripture. Granted that Satan is taken out of the way completely, he still has legions of servants who are free to go about and continue his work. The Premillennialist wants that binding literally, and the one thousand years literally, and he must therefore literally limit the binding only to Satan himself. And these servants of him, who are not bound, are willing servants who likewise hate God's church with all their being. Seeing their master bound, their hatred would not diminish, but they would only be stirred up to more activity and hatred because of those chains on their master.

Then, too, let us assume that Satan is bound so that he cannot move men to sins of any kind, that he is completely eliminated, removed from the scene and his evil works are stopped one hundred percent. Let us even assume that all his willing servants, though not

bound with him, are filled with such fear of similar punishment that they do nothing. Then the question arises, "How is it then that Gog and Magog are not converted and that Christianity does not take hold among them? How is it that they still hate God's church so fiercely that they can be stirred up so easily and quickly to war against the Christian nations? Did his binding really do any good?"

There is an even more serious objection. This whole idea that the removal of Satan from the scene will result in more conversions, and in Christianity taking hold, rests upon a denial of total depravity and the fact that we are all born dead in trespasses and sins so that we are spiritually *dead*. It is not simply Satan's power over us that keeps us from believing in Christ, that is, his power exercised over us in this life. He got the whole human race to die spiritually in paradise. And we must not deny the divine nature of Christ as though He cannot save us unless Satan is put out of the way. What we need is to be born again. And Christ has been doing that to His elect children all through time and while Satan was not yet bound. Satan does not make it harder for Christ to save us. His miracles of casting out evil spirits shows His complete control over them. He need not bind them with chains to make it easy to convert and save and bring to faith. Why, we would ask, did God not destroy him instead of chaining him for a time? Why does He let him loose later on?

No, we must insist that Satan is bound in only one sense, and that is to keep him from realizing that powerful assault against the Christian nations by the pagan nations that never embraced Christianity. Ever since God spoke those words of the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, Satan has wanted to wipe out all the seed of the woman, and has been working towards this. For a thousand years, that is, for a long period of time, God, because He decreed an universal church, and intends to gather in all the elect, so that He waits until all of them are born and reborn, prevents Satan from stirring up these heathen nations against the Christian nations. He is not literally bound with chains. You cannot hold a spiritual being that way. But God does not allow him to wake up the heathen nations in war against the Christian nations. Satan cannot realize a war that is truly a world war, and which pits all the heathen nations against the Christian nations, until God is ready to have him do so for the sake of the coming of Christ.

The question in your minds no doubt is, "When was he bound. Has he been already? If so, when will be the time when he is set loose?" One need but skim over the headlines of the newspaper, need but listen with one ear to the newscasts and news reports to realize that Satan is loose right now! Nations that will have nothing to do with Christ and His church, but worship their own idols and have their Society of the Godless, atheistic nations, nations who openly reveal hatred and opposition against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ are waking up, are already defying the Christian nations. Think of how the oil-rich Arab nations are defying the nations who depend upon their oil. Think of the hostage situation in Iran. Take into consideration the arms race with Russia, and the fact that China, which, although there are sincere children of God in her, does not herself want to be called a Christian nation, has the atomic bomb and is becoming a serious threat to peace in the world. The many riots and revolutions throughout the world are all setting the stage for a confrontation between what we call Christian nations (the camp of the saints, the camp wherein the saints are to be found in goodly numbers) and the idol worshipping nations. Dates and times we cannot give, and must not try to give them. But the binding we may in general say took

place after Christ's victory over Satan on the cross, after His resurrection and ascension into heaven. And some time in the past Satan was given power and the right to prepare the heathen nations for that confrontation which will be ended by Christ when He comes upon the clouds of heaven to save His church and to glorify her. And we may see that we are indeed in the last part of the last hour, and that Christ's return is not far away. He cannot come yet today. The Antichrist has not come. The sun has not yet been darkened; nor has the moon turned a bloody red; and the stars have not fallen. But all this can come very soon. And the gospel has been-or today by radio can be-spread to every nation, tongue and tribe.

Now we ought to note that God binds Satan through an angel. The whole situation is completely under God's control. And Satan does not work himself loose. Once again it is God Who decides the moment that actually sets him free. We read that he is loosed, not that he gets free. God determines what shall take place as far as Satan's actions are concerned as well as those of earthly kings, of whom Solomon says that God has their hearts in His hand to turn them wherever He wills as waters of the river.

The binding of Satan we can quite readily see is for the good of the church so that she can spread from corner to corner of this globe, so that she can develop in the truth? and so that all her members without exception may be born, come in contact with the truth and be brought to the faith.

It is also for the good of the church that God sets him free. Satan must serve the preparation of the coming of Christ. He must serve the filling up of the measure of iniquity not only, in that he produces the Antichrist, but also in the sense that he is used to drive the believer closer to his God and to look more earnestly for the return of Christ. And one of the reasons why this vision is given to us is that we by faith may see that all is well, that all is always well. God is in control; and all things work according to His eternal, unchangeable plan which ends in a glorious church in a glorious environment serving God in perfection. It is to assure us that Christ will come and that even Satan will be used to prepare His way. The exact number of one thousand indicates how in detail God has planned all, and that when His time is come, the enemy will be used as planned. Nothing is more sure than the coming of Christ to save His church and fulfill all God's promises to her.

Originally Published:
Volume 40, No. 3, January 1981