

Text: Rev. 20:1-3, 7-9

Title: "The end of the dragon" - Part Two

Time: 10/21/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: I mentioned last week that one of the major truths we learn from the Revelation the apostle John received from the Lord on the Island of Patmos in A.D. 95 is that our non-physical enemy is very real indeed.

This is true in spite of the poorly reasoned denials of unbelievers like Carl Sagan. This dragon prefers to remain deceptively hidden, and Sagan's essay about invisible dragons in the garage was undoubtedly helpful to him in that regard, but God's Word shines the light of truth upon him, and he cannot hide from those who believe.

Our passage is Revelation's mention of the millennium, a thousand-year period in which Jesus Christ rules the world from Jerusalem on the throne of His father David. Yet its mention of this glorious period is in some way incidental. There are fuller treatments of the millennium elsewhere in Scripture, and we will look more carefully at this future period in the coming weeks.

But the primary focus of the ten verses under our consideration this morning is the end of the dragon, and I have said that we need to notice three things it says about his end: (1) the dragon will be arrested and imprisoned, (2) the dragon will be released, and (3) the dragon will be cast into eternal torment.

Last week we spent some time in the first three verses understanding what it means that the dragon will be arrested and imprisoned. We saw that the text gives him 4 shameful

names in verse 2, in much the same way the text gave us 4 glorious names of the coming Christ in chapter 19.

1. He is the *dragon*, meaning that heaven views his political power as ugly and dangerous. We recognize that he is in control of political entities in our dark world. We are a people of the kingdom not of this world. Our hope lies there.

2. He is the *ancient serpent*. He helped Adam and Eve destroy God's creation in the garden with the first sin. His serpentine nature means that he is worldly wise, a brilliant tactician, and tragically effective.

3. He is the *devil*, a word that refers to his goal of ruining the reputation of God in the eyes of man with lies. We are under his influence to the degree we have an unbiblical concept of the living God, and so we need to be faithful Bible students and diligent theologians.

4. He is *Satan*. That word means *adversary*. He will want to convince us that he is on our side, but his goal is always the destruction of our lives, our marriages, our homes, our churches, and our nation. Where there is destruction, the adversary had succeeded.

But we also saw last week that Jesus Christ, who is more powerful than the dragon, sends His angel to arrest it and to put it into the prison of the abyss for 1000 years. The Scripture is clear that this power of our Lord is available to us in our daily lives. We can put our armor on and stand, resist the enemy steadfast in the faith, come forth as gold, refuse to give him an opportunity, and never be ignorant of his devices. This is our victory in Christ, our blinders are off, and we have no excuse to allow the dragon the many victories he still achieves over us.

This morning we will finish our look at the end of the dragon. We have seen how he will be arrested and imprisoned. This morning we will see that he is temporarily released and eternally tormented.

I. The dragon will be arrested and imprisoned (vv. 1-3).

II. The dragon will be temporarily released (vv. 3b, 7-9).

Illustration: In our sinful world we have learned to talk about what we call “necessary evils.” I saw a newspaper article authored by a college student titled, “The Necessary Evil of Technology” [http://www.kentwired.com/opinion/article_4c6e7474-d5b0-11e8-bfef-175585a1f0d8.html; accessed 10/27/2018].

Its young author aspires to be a feature writer, and so he recognizes that social media is going to be necessary to the success of his career. But he also mentions the evil of social media. He writes, “I have spent way too much of my life on social media. I’ve had a Twitter since 2011, and in that time, I’ve sent almost 28,000 280-letter quips into cyberspace.” That is the equivalent of 11 Tweets on average, every single day, for 7 years straight. He asks a good question in the article, “But at what point are you living your life for social media?”

Application: It turns out that the idea of a “necessary evil” is a biblical idea. The release of Satan in this passage is certainly an evil. Many are deceived and destroyed by the renewal of his work among men (vv. 7-9). There is deception, rebellion, and destruction here. A significant part of the evil is the quantity of people who are deceived into destructive rebellion in this way. It is a revival of the broad way that leads to destruction down which most go.

But the release of Satan is also called “necessary” for some reason (v. 3b). What makes Satan necessary to the plan of God? That is a difficult question, but I think the Bible gives us at least 3 answers.

1. Satan is necessary in God’s plan for man’s redemption (John 8:40-44). Jesus’s words in this passage echo the first promise made to Eve of man’s salvation. Satan’s seed would bruise Jesus’s heel as Jesus crushes his head, and this would happen so that man could be saved from his sin.

A sinful world without Satan is a sinful world that seems to know better than to crucify the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8, “Which [wisdom of God] none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”). If all of human history were like the millennium, with Satan bound and the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord, the crucifixion of Christ may have been impossible.

We do know that Satan’s hatred for Christ, which executed the crucifixion, ultimately resulted in Satan’s defeat and man’s salvation. He was very happy to see the crucifixion happen, but in the end that violent bite of the serpent was his undoing and man’s redemption. In this sense, Satan was necessary to God’s plan for man’s redemption.

2. Satan has a role in God’s plan for the believer’s sanctification (Job 23:8-17). It was when Job was tried and purified that he would come forth as gold. What was necessary for the trying of Job? God gave Satan permission to touch him. Wherever there is evil that tries good men, God has given this enemy permission to do it. Job’s faith tells us that God has a plan for our spiritual strengthening in Christlikeness in mind when He allows this enemy to do what he does.

Joseph understood this truth as he looked back on having been sold into slavery by his brothers, and perhaps also reflecting on the treachery of Potipher's wife, whose lies about him were so very effective and destructive. He told his brothers in the end, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20).

3. Satan is in some sense necessary to God's work of judgment (Matt. 13:34-43). Wheat and tares dwell together in God's world. This is true in our age, and it shall be true in the age of the millennium even when Satan is bound. The wheat looks very much like the tares in the world, and this is especially true during the millennium, when the Lord Jesus shepherds the nations with a rod of iron. The final rebellion that Satan executes exposes the true nature of the tares of that day (vv. 28-30). Satan, in spite of his great hatred for God, is one of the angels that gathers the tares for judgment according to His will.

So we are told that Satan must be released for a short time at the end of the millennium in the sovereign purposes of God. We are also told that he must be someone we face in our day as well.

How many young people grow up looking like wheat, and then when they go out on their own Satan's work in their lives exposes the true nature of their tare-like heart? How many of life's trials can we look back on and say, "The enemy meant that for evil, but God meant it for good," and "When I am tried and purified, I shall come forth as gold"? Can we see that Jesus suffered all He did at the hands of this enemy so that you and I could be redeemed? Have you repented of your sin and turned to this wonderful Savior for salvation? Satan is necessary for all these mighty works of the Lord among men.

III. The dragon will be cast into eternal torment (v. 10).

Illustration: We have already seen some parallels between the parable of the wheat and the tares and Satan's end described in Revelation 20. In the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 25, the Lord Jesus describes the end of the world as a separating of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46).

Application: The everlasting fire our Lord mentions in this passage is Revelation's lake of fire and sulfur. It is a place prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). It is everlasting punishment just like eternal life is everlasting blessedness (v. 46). It is a place of ongoing conscious suffering, for the beast and false prophet are still there after 1000 years.

Why would Jesus mention a place like that? Why would He give the apostle John a revelation of a place like that? There can be only one answer – He does so because it exists and because He wants us to be forewarned. He wants us never to go there. It was not prepared for us, but for the devil and his angels, and yet we can make the choice to follow this enemy there.

What is the difference between the sheep and the goats of this final judgment? The difference is their treatment of the brothers of Christ. Jesus says that the way men respond to His brothers is the way men respond to Him.

In the millennium, those who follow Satan in the final rebellion will have failed to respond to the offer of salvation from the brethren of Christ who rule and reign over them. They will fail to respond to the overtures of a restored and redeemed nation of Israel to worship the true Messiah as their own Savior in Jerusalem.

In our age of the church of Jesus Christ, goats who follow Satan fail to respond to the brothers of Christ in the witness of the church. Are they hearing that witness? Do we care that they need to hear and respond? Do they know that we are the brothers of Christ, members of His body, the church? We must let them know.

Conclusion: Our passage began with the truth that the day is soon coming when the dragon will be arrested and imprisoned in the abyss. The abyss will be sealed, and the dragon will not be able to get out.

Do you remember the day that Satan tried to do that to Jesus? (Matt. 27:62-66). That was the day that Satan tried to arrest Jesus, throw Him into Sheol or Hades, seal the stone on the tomb, and set a watch so that He could never come out again. And what happened? (Matt. 28:1-7). And the risen Christ has been ascended on high ever since, fulfilling His promise, "I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

The end of the dragon is coming. Do not let his end be yours as well. Instead, call upon the name of the Lord and be saved; submit to baptism and become a part of the church He is building; and get busy making disciples of the nations as the brothers of Christ, so that our neighbors and families can avoid this end too.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching