

## INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION - PART TWENTY

With the destruction of the harlot, the church that tried to have it both ways by having an affair with the state while 'married' to God, in chapter 18, and the total and final defeat of the beast, every false ideology, and the false prophet, the men who promoted such ideologies, in chapter 19, it would seem as if all our problems were solved. But the greatest problem remained. Behind all other enemies of God is the Devil who started our difficulties in the first place in Genesis 3. How will the Lord eventually deal with Satan?

He is to be thrown into a jail where he can no longer practise his techniques of deception.(20:1-3) His prison will be the abyss from which he released his attacks on man which were calculated to destroy.(9:1-11) He will be the victim of his own schemes. Liars eventually trap themselves in a lonely prison of their own design.

The puzzle is to understand why this will be for only a thousand years rather than for ever. Why would God solve our final problem only to let him loose on the world again? Be patient, the answer is coming! Let us consider first what will happen during the thousand years.

The first feature of the thousand years without the Devil is that Christ will reign. For the first time since Adam and Eve rebelled against God and took over, the Lord, not Satan, will be unmistakably in charge of events on earth.(20:4-6) Reigning with Him will be Christians, firstly those martyred for their faith, and secondly those who have not taken on the thinking of the world, the mark of the beast. Jesus had already promised this to those who shared in His overcoming.(3:21; Matt.19:28) We will presumably have areas of responsibility under His authority,(Matt.25:21; Lk.19:17) which will not be able to be challenged by Satan and his agents as they always have been previously.

Those who have died without Christ will not be part of this time. Their resurrection is yet to come.(20:12) Again we will play our role as priests of God.(1:6; I Pet.2:9) Since the work of a priest is to bring men and women into a relationship with God there presumably will still be a task of world mission. If so, the intriguing question is whether without the Devil interfering there will be any who refuse the gospel. I suspect there will because even in the absence of Satan, the problem of our rebellious human nature, the flesh, remains. The other problem which will still be there so long as the flesh is present is the world of other people with their human natures. Earth without the Devil will still not be a sinless place. The thousand years without the Devil will be the answer to those who say that if God was good and wise He would not have created Satan in the first place. It will become apparent that our real problem is us!

The second death has already been mentioned,(2:11) and will be described again.(20:14) The first death ended our physical life but the soul and the spirit remain. For those without Christ, the spirit is already dead.(Eph.2:1) The second death can therefore only be the end of the soul as a rebel against God.

The release of the Devil will lead to one final confrontation between believers and unbelievers,(20:7-10) proving that the flesh and the world are still very much in business. The Devil's approach will be the same as always, deception. He is a liar with a very persuasive message. Magog was one of the descendants of Japheth, a son of Noah,(Gen.10:2) and is still associated with the founding of a city in southern Russia. Gog, in Ezek.38:2-16; 39:1-11, was portrayed as king of Magog and an enemy of God's people who will himself ultimately be destroyed. Before any battle takes place God will intervene with fire from heaven as He has done before.(Exod.14:19-25; I Kgs.18:38; Acts 2:3) The outcome is the final defeat of the Devil who will join the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire, and the victory of God's people. For the suffering Christians of the first century this certainty of ultimate victory was great news. Even better, they were to share inwardly in this victory whatever their outward circumstances. And so are we!

In the last few verses of this chapter,(20:11-15) the final scene showing the consequence of Adam's rebellion against God was played out. At long last after thousands of years of patiently reaching out in love to man, God will act in judgement. His verdict will be based on 2 kinds of book. In one set of books is the record in terrible, accurate detail of the lives of all those who have rejected Christ. In the other book are the names of those who accepted His offer of life. The group named in the first book will inevitably share the same fate

as the Devil and his allies. The second group will escape not because their record was better but because Jesus had already accepted responsibility for their equally vile record and taken the punishment Himself.(Jn.5:24)

Now what? Two concluding chapters describe a new world without sin, just as the first two chapters of the Bible describe a beautiful world before sin.

21:1-2 Q.1 How was verse one a fulfilment of II Pet.3:10-13? Who was the bride of Christ? What did she look like? How is a bride prepared for her husband?(Eph.5:25-27)

21:3-8 Q.2 After the marriage where will the bridegroom live? What will be the effect of the wedding on those who belong to Christ? What is the significance of Him being the Alpha and Omega in our lives? Who will enjoy this new world? And who will not? Does verse 8 mean that being there depends on our performance?

21:9-14 Q.3 The angel whose previous task was a very unpleasant one in chapters 15 and 17 now has a happier role. What was it? What was the first and most striking feature of Christ's bride? Write down step by step a description of the heavenly Jerusalem. How was the city similar to the plan for the twelve tribes around the tabernacle in Num.2? What groups of people were linked with the twelve gates? What was this saying to the people of Israel? What were special about the twelve foundation stones? What are they saying to Christians?

21:15-21 Q.4 What size was the city? Why was it so big? Why would God send an angel to measure it?(11:1) What was this telling us? What was the city made of? How was it similar in composition to the breastplate of Aaron?(Exod.28:17-20) What were the gates and the streets made of? What significance do these materials have in the Bible? What is their message to us?

21:22-27 Q.5 What important differences were there between the old Jerusalem and the new one? Why was this? How should this affect our lives today? Who will get to live in the new city?

22:1-5 Q.6 The new city will not be a concrete jungle? What extra feature of the city was now described? How was it similar to Genesis 2? Why was there no city in the Garden of Eden? Why therefore was Gen.3 to Rev.19 worthwhile? Who will be in charge of the city? What will be our relationship with Him? How will this affect our lives? Why will there be no need for the sun? What clue does this give us as to how the first three days of creation in Gen.1 could have light but no sun?

22:6-7 Q.7 Why do you suppose John repeated the opening words of the book at this stage? What important principle was he reminding us of? How can the picture of the heavenly Jerusalem help us today in our various problems?

22:8-9 Q.8 How did John repeat a mistake he made before?(19:10) How can we make the same mistake?

22:10-15 Q.9 Why was John told not to seal up the words of this book? What warning and what choice did he place before us? Once again who will be inside and who will be outside?

22:16-17 Q.10 How did Jesus repeat the description of Himself in chapter one? What was the point of this emphasis? What this time was His invitation to those still hesitating about Him?

22:18-21 Q.11 Revelation ended with one more solemn warning. What was it? Why is heeding this warning so important? What two deep impressions should be left in our minds as we end this study, according to verses 20 and 21?