

“Countdown to the End”

Of this and the following final chapters, Matthew Poole says *“We are now come to the darkest part of the whole revelation... what is meant by the ‘thousand years’ (etc)... is very hard to say... (we must each of us) judge what is most probable...”*

There are no easy answers to this and the final chapters. Who am I to be certain about matters that theologians have not finally concluded on over centuries? I would not presume! However, I will do as Matthew Poole suggests – I will leave it to “the divine providence to give us a certain and infallible exposition of what is contained in these last three chapters.” In so doing, I will propose certain interpretations, which are personally arrived at and by no means claiming to be infallible.

My conclusions are based on a variety of theological reasons, including predestination and election, and all that I know about God and what He says in the rest of His word. I have no time for those Christians (and those who claim to be) who affirm categorically that only they have the answers to The Revelation. I count them to be either liars or deceived... or arrogant. Certain facts are sure, but not all!

I have no time for the complex and wonderful theories of men concerning this Book, because they are fanciful and make claims to human inerrancy that cannot be substantiated by scripture. Often these claims are rooted in heresies and errors found within charismatic, Roman, and similar circles. So, I dismiss them out of hand as harmful.

Let us now look at this chapter with a sense of wonder, knowing that all we have to deal with is our own finite understanding, God will indeed give me guidance, but, after going through The Revelation to this juncture I am very sure about one thing – ***God did not intend for us to know the exact interpretation of this book!***

We are given sufficient to point us in the direction of future events, but not the exact details.

If you have read this book fully, you will see why I say this. Can you imagine what unscrupulous pseudo-Christians would make of the masses if they had exact details of the future? Even now, *without*

such details, they deceive and destroy true faith and plant seeds of error in people’s hearts and

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minds.

I know that this statement of mine will be contentious. I know that I was taught by my Reformed past (which may not be your own) that all of Revelation is open to the fullest of understanding. I beg to differ. I base this on a fresh examination of this book which, in many places, defies definite interpretation, except in the broadest sense. Only those who have been brainwashed by their past traditions will claim to know exactly, in detail, what this book is saying.

Onward we go, then, with humility and yet with assurance, that God will reveal to us what He wishes us to know at this time. I believe that when the final 'end days' come, we will be left in no doubt whatever that they have arrived. Already world events are propelling us toward a one world government and religion. This is very plain to those who have eyes to see. But, thus far, exact details elude us. For now, let us be content to know the broad sense.

We come to a text that has led many astray (it is their 'stumblingblock'), from true Believers down to cult members, such as JW's. They assert, without a shred of doubt, that 'thousand years' here means a literal thousand years. They link this with living on this earth, centred on Jerusalem, alongside Jesus Christ, for that thousand years. Yet, the text does not say that. What does it really say? And how may we interpret it? Let us examine it and see...

Verses 1-3

1.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2.

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

3.

And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

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John now sees another angel, carrying with him a key to the bottomless pit. This pit possibly does not equate with 'hell' in its general sense, nor with the lake of fire. It appears to be a separate place, where Satan and his demons are kept for a season by God. This is, of course, a personal view at this time, which does not coincide with the view of Poole, who sees the place as hell. To be fair, his view is as personal as my own, so either (or neither) could be correct.

The 'key' is not literal, because Satan cannot be kept in a prison by bars and locks. The 'key' denotes that (a) the user of the key has power and authority to use it and (b) Satan is bound to obey this authority because he is created and knows he cannot fight against God's judgement upon him, even if he defies God's authority to the very last, which he will do. The key, then, is figurative, meaning that God pronounces His judgement and Satan must obey, because he has no other choice.

Therefore, we can deduce that the pit and the key represent the absolute judgement of God upon Satan and his demonic followers. The pit is not necessarily literal... but it may be. Either way, God will stop Satan from his usual onslaught upon humankind, to the extent that his evil will not permeate society. This censure can occur when Satan is in his current abode, around and on the earth, but it just might mean he will enter an actual pit. Hell itself is an actual place.

The word for 'keys', *kleis*, is rooted in *kleio*, meaning to shut one off from Heaven and to not have pity on the one being barred. God has no pity or love for Satan or for those who follow him. The 'chain' refers to the ability of God to stop Satan from acting out his vicious and evil actions, by binding him hand and foot. As spirit, Satan has no physical hands and feet, so a physical binding is not what is meant here. Again, it shows us that God can bind someone merely by His word, which is stronger than any physical chains.

Satan (the dragon/serpent/devil) was bound a 'thousand years'. This time period may or may not be literal. Poole suggests that other time periods have been given in days or months, or a specific number of years, but this speaks of a 'thousand' years, possibly denoting a longer period of time than any of the others. I tend to agree that this time period is long, but indefinite.

It seems to say that the earth shall be under the influence of God and His word for a long time,

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just before the final day, whilst Satan's influence is kept at bay. This has not occurred yet, as we very well know. Will it mean total freedom from Satan? Possibly not, any more than 'everyone' in John 3:16 means 'all people'. It probably means that Satan's influence will be drastically and almost fully diminished.

Most of today's open evils* are *obviously* led by Satan and arise from his domain. There is no way that even fallen men can foster and maintain such wicked ideals, against all known morality and reason, unless their minds and hearts are under the command of Satan! (* These are many and varied... homosexuality, Islam, the many cults, Rome, 'PC', environmentalism, socialism, violence, murder, and so on. These are of such intensity, allowing no discussion or debate, that they prove human minds are blatantly overrun by demonic power. We witness that ordinarily intellectually endowed people have lost all sense and reason, and make decisions that are so plainly stupid or contrary to what benefits mankind. Added to this is the general collapse of morality, even though the alternative is vile, violent and distressing).

This inability to deceive the nations for a long time will be followed by a short period, when he will be allowed to deceive again. We can assume that Satan will, by this time, be incensed and will want to create more havoc than he has wrought at any time in the past, though he knows his time is very short. I have no idea why God should do this, but He obviously has His reason, which is part of His overall plan. (Note how predestination permeates every action and thought of God).

It is reasonable to say that during the time the devil is stopped from full flight, nations will enjoy relative peace. There is bound to be sin in the world, still, at that time, for when Satan is released from his bondage, the people will again be deceived by him. This cannot be, unless they have a predisposition to sin. Also, the absence of Satan will not remove the inborn sinful nature of men and women. And nowhere in scripture are we told that people on earth will enjoy a sin-free life until they are in Heaven.

This conclusion takes into account that all men are born in sin and need salvation. If sin was not present when Satan was bound, then we are saying that men will revert somehow back to a pre-Fall, Adamic state. It would also mean that men would not need to be saved at that time. Again, nothing in scripture tells us this will be the case. We must note that Satan will not be able to deceive during his containment. This does not affect man's original state of sin, which will remain whether or not Satan is about. However, Satan's imprisonment will bring relief to the world for a while.

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This is important to understand, for many Christians (?) today do not believe that they are inwardly and intrinsically sinful. That is, they are bound for hell because of this inward ('original') sin, which they cannot get rid of. They can repent of their everyday sins, but they cannot get rid of their original state. *That is why Christ had to die...* we sin daily because our very nature is sinful. Even if we did not commit a single sin in our lives, we would still be bound for hell, because of our original state before God. Thus, when Satan is bound, our own sin will continue to hamper us, but we will not have the added task of trying to ward-off Satan's continuous attempts to deceive.

Verses 4-6

1.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigneth with Christ a thousand years.

2.

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

3.

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

John then saw thrones and people sitting on them. Are these the thrones of the elders in Heaven, or of others who have achieved some kind of special reward from God? We cannot tell from the text. Those who sat on the thrones were given the authority and task of judging.

John also saw the martyrs who had been beheaded because they refused to obey Satan, or his many cohorts, including cults, the occult, or any of the vast, growing number of false Believers, or those governmental leaders who reject God's word. This does not mean they appeared before John without heads, for we will all arise again with perfect bodies. (2013 note: beheadings are now increasing in Islamic countries, especially of Christians).

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These lived 'with' Christ for the 'thousand years'. It is customary to think that this thousand years will be spent on earth, but the text does not say this. It simply says that Christ will reign. If He returned to earth before the time of Judgement, then He would break His own word, which says that He will return to collect His own, and then the Judgement. So, for Him to return to live on earth is a theological and Biblical absurdity. Also, Christ Himself told us that His kingdom was not of this world, but was spiritual. That ends the matter. (See O-148 for more details).

It means that as Satan is held back, Christ will have the pre-eminence in the hearts and minds of His Church, for the same period. We are told that all other believers will not live again until the thousand years is over. (Note; There are other views concerning who the 'rest of the dead' are). So, martyrs will have this special privilege, for obvious reasons. When they do rise again, this will be their 'first resurrection'.

No-one is sure what this 'first resurrection' means. However, if I may hazard a guess – that it refers to the resurrection of martyrs before the general resurrection of all others on the return of Christ. Thus, it would be the first resurrection, whilst the general raising could be the second.

However, I have no fixed view on this, and feel that not having the information makes no real difference to faith or understanding. This seems a reasonable assumption – and in studying Revelation and other texts the most reasonable and straightforward route is often the best... if such a route is made plain. Complex construction of theories tend to make me suspicious, for interpretation either 'flows' or it is forced. Forced constructions are man-made.

The martyrs who have the privilege of being raised specially to be with Christ are not affected by the 'second death' which clearly refers to the act, after physical death, that will decide where a person will be forever. The martyrs, by the very nature of their deaths and the reasons for them (i.e. obedience to the Lord), are guaranteed that the 'second death' or judgement to hell, will never affect them. Rather they are 'holy' and acceptable to God for their faithfulness. They shall be 'priests' of God – holy and devoted to Him, in a position of closeness.

Verses 7-10

1.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

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2.

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

3.

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

4.

And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

The thousand years or indefinite long period) will come to an end and Satan will again be let loose to do his damage, which will be far greater than any evil he has concocted before. He will go all-out to deceive the nations, not just religiously but politically and socially. In this respect we should note the rapid changes in world societies over the past fifty years. These texts appear to provide more details on what was given in the previous chapter, so are part of the same activity.

Of special note are the movements that are bringing nations together for ‘security’ reasons, and the huge drive forward of charismatic/Romish/Ecumenical groups to be as one. There are also vast changes in laws and in social acceptance of many great evils. Together, they herald something far worse to come, as true Believers face the time of their persecution and harassment. (2013 note: This persecution is now becoming very obvious).

This time is very close, so another question should be asked: have the ‘thousand years’ *already* come about, in the sense that the churches have had relatively few attacks for a very long time? And, has the ensuing freedom of Satan to come upon the world

already

started

, with the Roman plot of world government and world religious dominance through the charismatic and ecumenical movements, well on its way? We have not witnessed such a massive, fast deception of the whole world for centuries. (2013 note: Plus all the other

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wickedness we now see).

What or who are 'Gog and Magog'? Gog means 'mountain' as well as a personal name. Magog means 'covering', and is also a personal name, where Gog was the prince of a country or people named Magog, possibly the Scythians. Magog people represent warlike nations who hated God and His people in ancient times. In which case, the Islamic nations would fill this description, joining with the anti-Christ to oppose Christians and God. Rome is already in place in minds and plans as intermediary between Jews and Arabs, and has been named as the most likely 'ruler' of Israel if and when the safety of the region is handed over to someone 'neutral', who has stated his 'love' for both factions.

Gog and Magog will gather with the anti-Christ to oppose God's people everywhere. They will be so numerous as to be incapable of a count. We are told that the Church is a remnant, a very small one at that. So, by comparison, everyone else in the world will indeed be as uncountable as sand. These enemies of God will be all around, intimidating Christians and the churches, who, together, form the one Church of Jesus Christ (the 'beloved city' or heavenly Jerusalem). But, then comes the remarkable thing – God will not allow the Church to be destroyed! As the enemies of God are poised to inflict final damage upon the Church, so God brings destruction upon *them*. Christians can take great comfort from this and should not fear when they see such horrors and godlessness in the world. (Though I know how hard it can be when faced with a foul enemy. Even so, we must resist the urge to fear).

When this happens, God will remove Satan and all who helped him, from the earth. The beast and the false prophet will already be in hell. Now, Satan will join them, and they will all be 'tormented day and night for ever and ever'. That is, they will suffer grievous pain of mind, and possibly of body. Note that Satan does not have a physical body, but no doubt a spiritual body can suffer an equal torment as that of a physical one. They will be tormented by their own natures, which rebelled against God, and by the judgements of God Himself, for eternity.

Verses 11-15

1.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

2.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and

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another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

3.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

4.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

5.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

John then saw a great white throne, with God sitting on it. To be face-to-face with God is unbearable, as God Himself has said in other texts. So, symbolically, the physical heavens and the earth are said to flee away in terror. The day of judgement has now come, and everyone will stand before the great white throne of God to hear their fate. (The fate of Christians is assured, for they are promised Heaven, but others do not care, or they have no real conception of what God can do, so they do not know their fate).

At that time, when all are gathered, the ‘books were opened’. These contain every thought and action of every person who has ever lived. Another book was opened – the ‘book of life’. It seems that the book of life is not written in until the other books have revealed their contents. Yet, on the other hand, because God predestinates everyone to salvation or not, the book must, by definition, contain the names of all the saved in history. A conundrum, but a pleasant one!

‘Death and hell’ (e.g. the grave) were opened up and the dead arose from the sea and the earth. Death itself, that awesome and dreaded power, is at last got rid of, being symbolically cast into hell (‘hell’ in verse 14 meaning that final abode of Satan and all who are unsaved). This is the ‘second death’. The first death is physical and the second is eternal and spiritual. Then comes that terrible judgement – all who are not saved will be cast into hell. The ‘lake of fire’ appears to be an actual fiery furnace.

Notes

Gog and Magog. Magog was one of Japheth's sons. Japheth, or Yafeth bin Nuh, was a son of Noah. The name in Hebrew may possibly mean "from Gog". The difficulty with the names of Gog and Magog is that they are used in various ways – to describe places, or individuals, or whole nations. The names are found in Ezekiel 38 to 39, where 'Gog from the land of Gog' or 'Gog of Magog' tried to obliterate the returning exiles from Babylon, but were thwarted and beaten by God. God promised to build a new temple after their defeat. Thus, Gog and Magog, or Gog of Magog represents an implacable enemy who, though violent, foul, and plenteous in number, will easily be defeated by God, Whose control over all things is absolute. Thus, Gog and Magog, in history, has come to stand for archetypal enemies of God.

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