

THE BINDING AND LOOSING OF SATAN.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 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." – Rev. 20:2.

The careful consideration of this scripture gives rise to several important questions, the answers to which can be apparent to those only who have a general knowledge of God's revealed plan. And to such the text gives a clear insight into its deep philosophy. These questions are, first, Why was Satan, the great deceiver and enslaver of mankind, ever permitted to have any power? secondly, Why, when, and how, is he to be bound, cast into the pit, shut up and sealed? and finally, For what conceivable purpose is he to be loosed again prior to his destruction? Or why is he not destroyed at the beginning of the thousand years, instead of being bound and then loosed again for a season?

As the first of these questions has already been considered at length in MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., Chapter VII., which the reader will do well to review, we here simply call attention again to the fact, that while Satan, in the exercise of his own free will, has been for the past six thousand years endeavoring to accomplish his own designs as a rival of the Almighty, he has really unwittingly been serving a great purpose in the accomplishment of God's plan. God is able to, and does, make even the wrath of both men and devils to praise him – in the manifestation of his superior power, wisdom and skill in so overruling their evil deeds as to actually accomplish his own purposes, while they suppose they are thwarting God's plans and accomplishing their own. Under the long dominion of Satan's

power, the world has been receiving its necessary experience and discipline, and the members of both the earthly and the heavenly phases of God's kingdom have been tried, developed and proved worthy of their future high exaltation. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., Chapter XIV.) During all this time evil has held high carnival, and evil doers – Satan and his followers – have been intoxicated with this seemingly lasting triumph. Nor do they even now, when the hour of their fall is so near, presume that their triumph is so shortly to end in ignominious defeat.

The time for the binding of Satan is fixed at the close of the Gospel age, prior to the thousand years' reign of Christ, and is to be accomplished by the "Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in," and who "has the keys of death and hades" – our Lord Jesus, at his second advent: – "And I saw an angel [messenger – "the Messenger of the Covenant," Christ Jesus] come down from heaven [his second advent], having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And *He* laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:1,2; 1:18; Mal. 3:1.) The object of his binding evidently is that the world may be released from his bondage and brought under the favorable conditions of the reign of Christ, with nothing to oppose, hinder or obstruct their progress toward full restitution to the divine favor and blessings.

According to the above scripture (Rev. 20:1,2) the binding of Satan could not begin until the Angel had come down – until 1874, the date of our Lord's second advent, nor indeed until 1878, the date of the assumption of his power as King of kings. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. II., page 235.) Mark the binding process since that time. The power of Satan is the power of darkness, of ignorance and superstition. (Luke 22:53; Col. 1:13.) As the light of truth advances, the power that can only work in darkness is to that extent curtailed. Hence it is that truth, on every subject, but especially divine truth, has always met with

opposition from the deceived and unwitting agents of the great adversary. Truth, therefore, is the great agency which is eventually to accomplish the complete binding of Satan. To some extent truth has for many centuries obstructed the course of error, of Satan's influence in the world – truths both of nature and religion – but they never bound Satan and rendered him powerless. If they obstructed his course in one direction, he either battered them down with persecution of one sort or another, or, failing in this, branched out and flourished in another direction. But the truth which is to accomplish the binding of Satan is described by the Revelator as "a great chain" in the hand of earth's new and rightful King. Not only the truths directly relating to the plan of God constitute this chain, but to these are linked every feature of truth related to human rights and privileges. Soon this mighty chain will so thoroughly compass the devil's dominion and influence, and the Lord's great army will draw it so tightly, that the great enemy will lie prostrate in the dust. And the Lord will cast him and all his wicked deceptions into the pit of oblivion, sealed for a thousand years; – his power to deceive and enslave men being completely stopped by the clear knowledge then prevailing. This will be accomplished both by the lessons men will learn in the terrible trouble incident to the final overthrow of Satan's power, and by the great calm and refreshment of the reign of Christ which will follow. They will be completely disgusted with Satan's ruling and his deceptions, and glad to submit to the reign of Christ. (Isa. 2:3.) This public and world-wide realization of the causes of their degradation, and the great and sudden revolution of public sentiment in favor of the Lord's ways and rulings, will constitute the seal which will hold the great adversary in the pit of oblivion for the thousand years.

But here arises our third question, Why is he not destroyed at this juncture, instead of imprisoned? Surely there can be no hope of his recovery to righteousness and submission to God: he

has been a defiant rebel for at least six thousand years, and if not bound would still continue his nefarious schemes, which he will do as soon as he is loosed again; and moreover, his destruction at the end of the thousand years is clearly foretold. (See Heb. 2:14; Rev. 20:9,10,14.) The only conclusion, therefore, which we are left to draw is that God has a still further purpose to be served in his continued existence and in his loosing again at the end of the Millennial age.

What, then, is that purpose? is the important question. Let us reflect upon the principles of God's dealings and the answer will be manifest. We have seen that his plan has always been to respect man's free agency. Man, apart from the defilements of sin, is a noble creature – created in the image of God. Therefore, he is not a mere machine, but is possessed of a free will and intelligence. In dealing with man individually, God therefore respects his endowment and acts accordingly. And he always gives him knowledge before counting him responsible for the use of his will, the degree of responsibility being proportioned to the degree of enlightenment and ability to perform what he wills. Thus it has been in the cases of Adam, of the Lord Jesus as a man, of the patriarchs and prophets, and of the Gospel church – the only ones who have been on trial as individuals. All of these were first enlightened, and then tested to prove the loyalty or disloyalty of their wills toward God.

This established principle of God's dealings we must therefore expect to see carried out in the Millennial age, when the masses of the world will be on trial. And this line of policy we do see, from the descriptions God has given us, will be carried out. If Satan is bound in the beginning of the age so that he cannot deceive and mislead men, and the Kingdom of God is set up in power and great glory, and the knowledge of the Lord is caused to fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and if "the iron rod" forces all to at least an outward obedience, and justice is laid to

the line and righteousness to the plummet, we can readily see that all the circumstances will be most favorable for man's speedy advancement in the paths of righteousness.

When Satan is bound, there will be no more great counterfeit systems of Christianity, no counterfeit of God's Kingdom, no plausible and misleading presentations of error for truth, no rewarding of iniquity and persecution of righteousness, no snares and pitfalls of vice to allure the weak and wayward, no liquor saloons or other evils now licensed by law. The iron rule of justice will not [R1234 : page 6] bend with the slightest degree of favor toward any evil, however loudly the cravings of fallen, weak humanity may clamor for them. The way of righteousness and life will be made plain both to the understanding and to the ability of even the humblest; and all will be helped by wholesome restraints, seasonable encouragements, and the speedy rewards of righteousness at every step of the way, due allowance for their weaknesses being made until, under the wonderful educational influences and assistance of that golden age of blessing and opportunity, they may all reach actual perfection – moral, mental and physical.

When the whole world has been thus enlightened, trained and disciplined for a thousand years, all will have had full opportunity to reach actual perfection, and therefore actual perfection will be required of them. At the end of the thousand years Christ is to deliver up his finished work to the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24,25.) And when his work is finished, it must be complete and perfect, lacking nothing. Otherwise, it would not be acceptable to God.

So, in the end of the thousand years, when Christ has completed his work of reconstruction – restitution – the final test must be applied to prove the worthiness or unworthiness of each individual of the race to continued existence throughout the ages

of glory to follow. And for this purpose, the final testing and proving of all, is the loosing of Satan out of his prison for a little season.

How may it be accomplished? We answer, By relaxing the rigor of the hitherto iron rule which made obedience to divine law obligatory by *prompt* punishment of any deviation from it and *prompt* rewarding of every obedience to it. Here would be Satan's opportunity to again deceive any who desire to carry out plans in opposition to God's will or the principles of strict justice, into the idea that they could now do so with impunity, and that neither the penalties nor rewards of divine law are certain. Under such a delusion, those who at heart are not loyal to God, and who thus far have been controlled principally by the force and rigor of law, will manifest their real disposition; and likewise, those who have learned to love God's law and who delight in it, and who would not deviate from it to the slightest degree, even if there were no penalties attached to it – these will also be manifested. And these only, be they many or few, are those whom God by his law marks as worthy of continued life. Others, by preferring their own wills, shall thus prove their unworthiness of life, and together with Satan must be cut off – destroyed. – Matt. 25:41-46.

We are not informed as to the number of either class, and it is not our province to speculate, or to be wise above what is written. When some similarly inquired of the Lord, saying, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" he simply answered, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able, when once the Master has risen up and shut to the door." This was equivalent to saying, That is not your business, but God's; see that you make your own calling and election sure (the high calling), before your opportunity is past. We may run faithfully ourselves, and we may generously use all our influence to assist others, but must leave the result with God,

who doeth all things well, who will award the favor of life to [R1234 : page 7] every truly loyal and obedient soul, and just as surely the wages of sin, which is death, to every other. We know that Satan will endeavor to deceive all – the number of whom is as the sand of the sea – but he will not succeed in deceiving all, and we hope very few. But if we are loyal to God we will most heartily approve the final destruction of all the disloyal – all rebels against his righteous government, be they many or few, after all the privileges and opportunities afforded them in their thousand years of trial.

This work accomplished, the victory of Christ will be complete: He will see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied when he shall have brought all who desire righteousness and harmony with God to the glory of perfect and established character, in the divine likeness, and when all others, his enemies, are put under his feet – destroyed – ("He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet") and when a spotless universe of free, intelligent, righteous and loyal subjects of divine law, both human and angelic, will be presented to the Father and receive his reward of lasting life. Then follows the "world without end," with all the blessings and favors that heaven can bestow upon all the loyal sons and heirs of God – as well his sons of the human nature as the angelic sons and the little flock, the body of Christ made sons and heirs of the divine nature.

Observe carefully that the deception or delusion which Satan is permitted to introduce among men who are on their final trial for life will not touch the question of right and wrong; for the knowledge of God – of his righteous law, of the blessings which that law has brought, and the misery which disobedience to it entailed upon the whole race, and the great cost at which they had been redeemed – will then fill the whole earth. The deception, then, must be similar to the deception of Eve in Eden – a deception either as to God's ability or as to his willingness to

execute the already declared penalty of sin against divine law under full light and ability to keep it. And although God has clearly declared his intention to destroy such wicked ones (See Psa. 145:20; Heb. 2:14; 11:26-31), yet in their desire to do their own will, regardless of the will of God, some will be deluded into the idea that the penalty will not, or can not, be enforced against them, just as Eve was deluded. She first desired to disobey God, and that desire prepared her to believe the lie of Satan, that even if she did disobey, the declared penalty would not follow. And since she therefore deserved the penalty, because she regarded iniquity in her heart, God permitted her deception, which, so far from interfering with her *free will* to act out her real choice, really assisted it. She *willed* sin, and only fear hindered; and the deception permitted merely removed the fear and left the will free to act. But because she was so young in experience, God planned to redeem her life from destruction and to give her an experience of both the rewards and the penalties of his law, and a second trial for life in which that experience would be of lasting benefit.

But in the end of the Millennial age the world will have had all experience, as well as full knowledge of God's law and full ability to obey it. And therefore, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26), and those who then wilfully sin against full light and opportunity must die the second death, from which there is no recovery. Some, instead of *humbly* rejoicing in the favor of life and the vigor of health of mind and body then possessed for several centuries, will probably begin to feel independent of God, through whose favor they received it, and to cultivate a spirit of pride, possibly claiming that their grand attainments are the results of their own efforts and of a process of natural evolution with which the redemption through the precious blood of Christ had nothing to do, and that the life now possessed is of necessity eternal: that God himself either could not or would not destroy it. Even as some now do, they may presume upon the

love of God or underrate his justice, and acting upon such presumption proceed to carry out their own wills regardless of the counsel of the Lord.

Let the faithful children of God not overlook the fact that Satan has always held out the hope of life to the disobedient. To Eve he said, "Ye shall not surely die;" to those whom he is now leading to the denial of the redemption through the precious blood of Christ, he is diligently preaching universal salvation and spurning the idea of a second death. And the deception in the close of the Millennial age will probably assume the same form. And notice that as in the deception of Eve theirs will not be an interference with their free will, but an aid to the *manifestation* of their real desires.
