

THE BINDING OF "THE STRONG MAN"

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

WE believe that there is a personal Devil and that he will be literally restrained in some manner; but in the expression in the above text it seems that the names "Devil" and "Satan" refer not merely to the person of the Adversary, but to all that system of things of which he has stood as the representative or head or center; for instance, in Revelation 12:7-9, a great religious system is apparently spoken of as the Devil.

As to when this binding began, and how it will proceed, and when it will end, the Lord's parable respecting the binding of the "strong man" seems to imply that it will begin in a sudden manner. He says that if that "strong man" knew at what time the thief would come he would watch and not suffer his house to be broken up. He thus intimates that Satan would not know at what time the catastrophe would come upon him and his arrangements and that therefore he would be taken somewhat at a disadvantage.

As to what constitutes the "house" of this "strong man" would be another matter. His "house" here would stand for his household, which at the present time would include the fallen angels. These fallen angels, who have been subject to Satan as their prince, will in some sense of the word be thrown out of harmony with him. The time at which we might expect this would be in the second presence of our Lord, and it would seem that, from about the time of our Lord's *parousia*, disorder began to operate in Satan's household and that these different endeavors that we see in many quarters to carry out certain schemes more or less antagonistic the one to the other, might be the result of this disorganization. It would further seem that there are different

bands of evil spirits working upon humanity. These various hostile bands may work a great deal of havoc, perhaps equally as much as could have been done had they all remained in organized relationship to Satan himself. But still the undermining or overthrow of his authority, seems to be in progress. We believe that every advance step of light and knowledge is that much of a restraint upon darkness and evil and superstition. We properly enough speak of the chains of superstition, the chains of darkness, which bound mankind for a long time; and very properly we say that these are of the Adversary.

Now, have we anything to indicate that *light* will serve as a "chain"? Did we ever hear of light being a chain? We answer that there has never yet been a manifestation [R4610 : page 155] of that kind. There is nothing in the past operation of light that served as a chain, but it seems that now it should operate thus. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is *light*," and that which makes manifest is a "chain," is a restraint upon that which is *darkness*. So here are the two – *light* and *darkness*; the Prince of Light and the Prince of Darkness. The Prince of Light has only recently invaded, as it were, the land of the Prince of Darkness to commence his work. This work is first, chiefly in the Church and in the restraining of the "winds" and the "powers" and the troubles coming upon the world; but meantime the whole world is getting awake, not necessarily to the light of *truth*, but getting awake to the chains of darkness which are upon them and of which they are striving to rid themselves. We might notice as an example the Higher Critics and Agnostics in large numbers in the high places. Many of the most intelligent people of the whole world have arrayed themselves, not on the side of Satan to do some evil work, but in opposition to all the darkness and blindness. They have not, indeed, the "true light" as we have it, but they are exercising an influence that is antagonistic to the darkness that Satan has heretofore used for the restraint of thought, etc. We will not say that Satan is not operating to quite an extent through these various

evil agencies, but we do believe that these agencies are not willingly being operated upon by Satan; but, as they strive to become loose from him and his power, they go to another extreme and he seeks, as far as he is able, to corral them again and hold them with some other form of error.

It seems to be clear that in this time in which we are living, and since the presence of the Lord, great influences have been let loose in the world that are breaking many of the shackles of superstition and ignorance. These influences are not merely those that are being exerted amongst the consecrated, but we refer chiefly to those influences which are being exerted amongst those with whom we cannot be in accord – the "Higher Critic" class. We believe they are doing a great deal to restrain the Adversary and his authority over the people, etc.

In connection with the binding of Satan we read that he shall be "bound for a thousand years, that he might deceive the nations no more till the thousand years be finished" – implying that deception was one of the main things in which he had been previously engaged and that henceforth he would be so restrained or disabled, whether by the light of "Present Truth," or by light of science, or whatever it might be, that he would not be able to deceive the world in the same manner as formerly.

We believe that the restraining of his influence is in operation. As we look about the world we see that many of the various inventions, etc., are apparently being put to good use. The telephone, the telegraph, etc., for instance, are not generally used for wicked purposes. They are used for good purposes, or at least for business purposes. In many cases where the attempt has been made to use the telephone and telegraph for gambling, the State laws have stepped in and forbidden the use of wires for such purpose. In respect to the temperance question, also, we see that enlightenment is proceeding and people are making rapid

advancement in the knowledge that alcoholic liquors are dangerous.

And so the education of the world goes rapidly on. People are no longer allowed to be vicious or idle. Children are compelled to attend school; the truant officer looks them up if they are derelict. The knowledge that is spreading is wonderful. And the thought that practically all this is being accomplished by the *world* itself, and that we have little or nothing to do with it, makes it appear still more wonderful. This work is being done by people who do not believe in the true religion; they do not know God aright; the majority of them, so far as we can gauge their own testimony, repudiate the Bible. They believe in a vague way in a God of some kind, perhaps in a fanciful God, found in every stone and piece of wood. Nevertheless they are free from the shackles of the darkness of the past and apparently have no desire to go back, but forward. It would appear, then, that all of the things peculiar to our day in the way of restraining error are part of the binding of the Adversary. We may be doing our little mite in that direction by advertising sermons, giving out literature, etc.

As to the question when the great Adversary's binding will be accomplished, we believe that it will not be brought about until the time that the "great company" class is completed. It would not surprise us if Satan would make a great commotion in the world all through the time of trouble. It does not seem that all that terrible trouble will come about without the Adversary. We think he would enjoy being in the fray, such as we expect it to be – world wide, "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

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