

Revelation 20:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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 loose... This verse from Revelation's vision of millennium, satan bound, final rebellion, great white throne - ultimate justice employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 20:3 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἔβαλεν	αὐτὸν	εἰς	τὴν	ἄβυσσον	καὶ	ἐκλείσεν
And	cast	he	into	G3588	the bottomless pit	And	shut
G2532	G906	G846	G1519		G12	G2532	G2808
αὐτὸν	καὶ	ἐσφράγισεν	ἐπάνω	αὐτὸν	ἵνα	μὴ	
he	And	set a seal	upon	he	G2443	G3361	
G846	G2532	G4972	G1883	G846			
πλανήσῃ	τὰ	ἔθνη	ἔτι	ἄχρι	τελεσθῇ	τὰ	
he should deceive	G3588	the nations	more	till	should be fulfilled	G3588	
G4105		G1484	G2089	G891	G5055		
χίλια	ἔτη	καὶ	μετὰ	ταῦτα	δεῖ	αὐτὸν	λυθῆναι
the thousand	years	And	after	that	must	he	be loosed
G5507	G2094	G2532	G3326	G5023	G1163	G846	G3089
μικρὸν	χρόνον						
a little	season						
G3398	G5550						

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 17:8 (Parallel theme): The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Revelation 20:1 (Parallel theme): And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Daniel 6:17 (Parallel theme): And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Revelation 12:9 (Parallel theme): And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Matthew 27:66 (Parallel theme): So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

2 Corinthians 11:3 (Parallel theme): But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

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