

SATAN BOUNDED: RANGE TETHERED IN RETRACTABLE LEASH

By David L. Burris

Popular culture has always portrayed the Devil as the great trickster. From pagan folklore to urban legend - transactional relationship cultures – have mysterious & cautionary tales of negotiating with supernatural powers for health and wealth. Many moderns of western society believe one can by way of right living - strike a deal with deity for physical blessings. Conversely, there are those who are not willing to pay the temporal price of Godly living for earthly gain but are willing to pay of eternal punishment for sinful living and temporal happiness; These spiritual market capitalists - explore what the competition has to offer - hoping to make a supernatural Deal with the Devil. Often these folklore myths & urban legends end most tragically because they missed the fine print that Mephistopheles embedded into the soul sales contract as in *Faustus & Dorian Grey*; Sometimes not, like when the U.S. Constitution was used to overrule the contract in *The Devil & Daniel Webster*. Sometimes as in a form of poetic justice, Satan comes himself in the guise of a lawyer as in *Devil's Advocate*.

My personal favorites are those related to the acquisition of musical talent. Giuseppe Tartini (1692 – 1770) was a violinist rumored to have made a deal with the devil so to compose “Devil’s Trill.” Nicolo Paganini (1782 – 1840) – master of both the mandolin and violin was also rumored to have sold his soul so to compose “Witches’ Dance.” The most famous rumored musical tradeoff with the devil was by Blues Artist Robert Johnson (1911 – 1938) who said he was instructed to take his guitar to a roadway intersection at midnight where the devil tuned his guitar; Johnson even wrote a song to mark the event entitled “Me

and the Devil.” This is the event of supernatural transaction recreated in the critically acclaimed movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?*

Although, all these fictions of folklore and legend are as accurate in terms of **Biblical Demonology** as the exchanges between apprentice and journeyman demon in C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters* – there are those that believe them true. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that the world still dances to the music of - The Devil’s Golden Fiddle!

Before our Revelation Twenty Exposition we need to Study Four Items: *Evil as a Force, Evil as a Person, Millennialism(s), Apocalyptic Literature*

EVIL AS FORCE. The Theodicy Triangle Argues Against God’s Existence.

Natural Evil (Insurance Acts of God), Physical Evil (Bodily Pain & Emotional Suffering), & Moral Evil (Man’s Inhumanity to Man) all call into question the Arminian Argument equating God’s Genesis 1: 31 affirmation as meaning this (original) earth being the *Best of Possible Worlds*. The unbeliever points to the perfect quality of God’s characteristics of omnipotence (all powerful), omniscience (all knowing), omnipresence (all everywhere), and omnibenevolence (all good) in non-congruence with Natural, Physical, and Moral Evils. This mutual incompatibility is referred to in theological circles as the Theodicy Triangle.

Augustine’s simple semantic solution to this exclusivity/inclusivity problem was in redefining *evil as the absence of good*. The Irenaean Solution to the puzzle of theodicy emphasized its cause-and-effect character-building instrumentality & in situations of seeming gratuitous outliers of these three type - the incomprehensible, intergenerational potentiality of simple (proximate) evils to create a complex (ultimate) good. In other words, these three evils are necessary to produce **Secondary Virtues** – Danger is prerequisite to Bravery; Hardship is prerequisite to Fortitude; & Neediness prerequisite to Generosity etc.

Middle Knowledge – The Christian Apologetic & Research Ministry (CARM) defines Middle Knowledge this way: “Middle Knowledge is that knowledge of God dealing with what individuals will do in a given set of circumstances. God has an infinite set of potential circumstances that could exist and knows all actual choices that would be made by individual in each set.” In other words, Middle

Knowledge is the theological term for the parental space given God's children. God knows us doubly as our Creator and in relationship as our Father.

The Three Moral Wills of God – *Perfect Will* or Decretive Will or God as Sovereign. God will not and cannot change His mind here because it would necessarily go contrary to His Divine Character and/or Conflict with His Foreordained Eternal Purpose; *Preceptive Will* or Prescriptive Will of God is another way of saying that it is God's Will that we react in a certain way even if we are free to choose. God's Will here is expressed clearly in terms of both principle & precept; *Dispositional Will* or Desiderative Will is that decision which gives God the greatest pleasure.

God's Will Intersects Man's Will – The *Intentional Will of God* would be what God would prefer to happen; The *Discerned Will of God* is our personal perception of God's Will for our life; The *Directive Will of God* (Arranged Coincidence) refers to God's personal guidance in our lives to sometimes put us at a certain place, at a certain time, doing a certain thing; The *Circumstantial Will of God* would be what God does due to the circumstances arising He did not intend.

EVIL AS PERSON. God Is Love & Satan Is Hate - Monotheistic Religions generally portray Supranatural Powers Contrasted Regarding Humankind from Its Inception – Altruistic & Malevolent – The Figure of Evil Devil is always as Hateful Trickster.

As Heaven only becomes real to us in its contrast to Hell - Faith in God's Existence and that of His Son Jesus Christ as Truth Personified - Lends Credibility to the Concept of the Dark Lord and His Demonic Minions as Liars and Evil Personified. According to a 2009 Barna Survey, only 35% of those self-identifying as Christians believe Satan exists. Charles Baudelaire said: "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he doesn't exist." As Evil as Force Is Not Social Construct, Evil As Person Is Not Mythology. Brethren We Must Take Satan Seriously!

The Story of Satan is in The Tension Between God's Perfect Vs. Permissive Will or What God Approves Versus What God Accepts. God's Permissive Will is what God allows even though it is sin. Even with such allowance, God remains in control - His multi-generational purposes all the while being accomplished. The definitive feature of God's Permissive Will is that it is never outside of His Perfect

Will. God's Perfect Decretive Eternal Will includes His Redemptive Plans for The Human Race, His *Specific Plans for both Physical & Spiritual Israel* and His *Intermediate & Ultimate Plans for the Fallen Angels & their Leader* – the Archangel Satan. These three threads of story line converge together in the first three verses of Revelation Chapter 20 – one at story start – one at mid-story – one at the end of their story.

MILLENNIALISM & METHODOLOGY. In terms of the **Apocalyptic Timeline** there are three choices: *Pure Preterist – Partial Preterist – Futurist*. **Pure Preterists** believe all the events referenced in the Book of Revelation have already occurred; **Partial Preterists** limit those events that have already occurred to those of the First Century - after the death of the Apostles – to the Roman Carnage During the Destruction of the Jewish Capitol – The City of Jerusalem & its city life center - the Last Literal Temple. Although, not all are agreed, most partial preterists believe those events only remaining are The Second Coming of Our Lord & Savior, The Resurrection of the Dead, and the Final Judgement; **Futurists** believe all events referenced in Revelation and most those contained in the O.T. Hebrew Apocalyptic Writings still have their fulfillment in the near to distant future.

In terms of the **Nature of the Apocalypse** there are – still another three choices associated with the previous three: *Post-Millennial – Amillennial – Pre-Millennial*. This categorization points to the grouping of thousand year millennial theories that either suggest - *Literally or Figuratively - The Thousand Year Interval as an Episode Either Over, Ongoing, or Off into the Distance*. **Post-Millennialists** of the Christian Reconstruction Movement - share a looser definition of the Thousand Years - The Symbolic Reign of Christ on Earth – Supposedly In Process - Still To Be Symbolically Completed. They reason that Christ's Reign increases in fact as His Theocratic Old Testament Blueprint for family, society, and government - under the title of "Theonomy" - are achieved by the Church Militant. [Note: Realizing these goals to the objective is also how Satan is overcome in real time.] Once Theonomy Will Be Completed. Once the Millennium Symbolically Completed and the world is made all good – then will *Usher in Christ's Second Coming in Final Judgment*; However, *Progressive Parallelism* proponents of an *Inaugurated Millennialism* or **Amillennialists** - equate the start of God's Kingdom with Church Beginnings - as it was established in Acts Chapter Two. Amillennialists believe we are *Currently under the Figured Thousand Year Time Regime Binding Satan*; **Pre-**

Millennials – known in the early church as devotees to the (Chilia)sm Doctrine - believe this “Church Age” is a substitutive because Christ was successfully resisted by the Jewish People & the Hebrew Nation (who will be given a second chance) from establishing His Kingdom & His Literal Thousand Year Reign on Earth. Although divided as to the *Rapture Doctrine* into Post-Trib, Mid-Trib, and Pre-Trib, they are without division that the Millennium is to be *Future Literal Thousand Year Fulfilled*. [Pre-millennialists never seem to have an answer for Revelation 1: 1 positioned before the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor and Revelation 22: 6 positioned after the last vision of the last chapter.]

Nature of The Kingdom & Nature of The Church – History of Kingdom Models: Tertullian taught it was Future, Origen taught it was Interior, Augustine taught it was Institutional, Monastics taught it was Counter-System, Calvin taught it was Theocratic, Ana-Baptists taught it was Utopian; Venn Models Church + Culture: Radicals teach Christ Against Culture, Dualists teach Christ & Culture in Paradox, Conversionists teach Christ Transforms Culture, Synthesists teach Christ Above Culture, and Culturalists teach The Christ of All Cultures.

If you can once get him to the point of thinking that ‘religion is all well up to a point,’ you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all – and more amusing. – Screwtape Letters

NOTE: It is worthy of mention to members of the Lord’s Church that there is a heresy unique to the churches of Christ taught by erring brother Max King – a fourth perspective to the millennial concept & methodological approach – sweeping through certain regions of the United States – that has been called by two names – Trans-millennialism and/or Realized Eschatology. Basically, it is in apocalyptic timeline & nature - Full Preterist/Post-Millennialist with minor modification.

Methods of Interpretation – In his classic work “Worthy is the Lamb,” Ray Summers writes of five options: The *Futurist* Method – The *Continuous-Historical* Method – The *Philosophy of History* Method – The *Preterist* Method – The *Historical-Background* Method. The selected methodology can be correlated directly to the combination of choices made previous as to the Nature & Timeline of the Apocalypse. Due to the fact that most members of the churches of Christ believe in some combination of the partial preterist & amillennial perspectives on

the Book of Revelation we shared with the author of “Worthy is the Lamb” his chosen interpretive method of Historical-Background. The Historical-Background Method of Interpretation is the only one of the five that contextually examines completely by questioning, per Summers - “authorship, date and place of writing, recipients and their condition, and the general condition of the world out of which the work came.”

Late Date or Early Date – In the churches of Christ this has been the only real Book of Revelation debate within the Brotherhood during the last century – When Was Revelation Written? It is either Early First Century Referencing the Fall of Jerusalem or Late First Century Referencing the Decline of Rome. Early 20th Century Bible Scholar Foy Wallace said it was the early date. Middle 20th Century FCC Bible Department Head Homer Hailey claimed it was the late date. Once late 20th Century Arthur Ogden published his book *The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets* - the Brotherhood seems equally divided. The brochure promoting his book – which I still have – was all I needed to tilt in opinion toward prophecy fulfillment within the early date. Only by way of the early date do you have parallel fulfillment of Matthew 24, 2nd Thessalonians 2, & Revelation Chapter 20. Those that reject the early date seem to hold two different past dates for the Matthew 24 Olivet Discourse & Binding 1,000 Years of Revelation 20: 1 – 3 & multiple past or future fulfillment of 2nd Thessalonians 2: 3 – 10 @“Lawless One” or “Man of Sin.” Arthur Ogden writes of the absence of documental support for the early date: “Why did these men write so boldly of a Domitian persecution and fail to substantiate it by historical documentation? There are two reasons why we would not document a claim. First, the matter is accepted as historical fact and needs no verification, or, second, there is no evidence by which to document the claim...THERE IS NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE THAT WOULD PROVE DOMITIAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF A SINGLE CHRISTIAN MUCH LESS THAT HE SLEW MANY THOUSANDS BATHING THE EMPIRE IN THEIR BLOOD. No historian current with Domitian’s reign records any evidence of Christians being persecuted though they did record the Neronian and Trajan persecutions. The evidence tends to suggest that the Domitian persecution is the creation of church writers late in the second and third centuries... Unless there is evidence to support a bloody Domitian persecution, which none of the many historical sources I have checked

reveal, then, the affirmation of such a persecution is the affirmation of an untruth.” (Promotional Pamphlet for Ogden Book)

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE & BIBLICAL NUMEROLOGY – Ferrell Jenkins said it best concerning *Apocalyptic Literature*: “This literature was highly relevant to the historical situations of the day. Daniel and Ezekiel wrote during the Babylonian exile to comfort people in their faithfulness, and to prepare them for trials even down to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and finally to the Roman Empire. The Book of Revelation was written when God’s Saints were being severely tried in the crucible that was called Rome. It served to reveal God’s power to overcome all enemies and His disposition toward His afflicted ones. This book should serve as an encouragement to God’s people, whenever they are persecuted, down to the end of time. In literature like the Apocalypse, one expects a great use of visions and symbols...” CARM’s Matt Slick writes of *Biblical Numerology* in both Hebrew & Greek: “It seems quite obvious that the Bible uses numbers in pattern. One of the interesting features of Hebrew and Greek is that in both written languages there are no numeric characters, where we have numbers and letters [In English], they have only letters. So, in each language the letters are also used as numbers. When they are used, the context tells us which is which. They knew when they were writing numbers and when they were writing letters.” Slick of CARM continues explaining that there is a number for Unity(1), a number for Division(2), a number for Divine Perfection(3), a number for Creation(4), a number for Grace(5), a number for Man(6), a number for Spiritual Perfection(7), a number for New Beginnings(8), a number for Judgment(9), a number for Testimony & Law(10), a number for Disorder(11), a number for Governmental Perfection(12), a number for Apostacy(13), a number for the Year of Jubilee Linked to the First Recorded Sermon of Jesus’ Earthly Ministry(444)... The number one thousand symbolized “multitude”, “immensity”, or “fullness of quantity.”

1,000 Number In Reference To Time – Days, Years, & Generations: “In every occurrence of such usage of the word ‘thousand,’ by itself, (1000) is not literal but symbolic. It represents a large (indeterminate) number or extended period of time.”

“666” The Number of a Man – [Referred to also as *The Mark of the Beast* @Revelation Chapter 13 Verses 15 – 18]. In my opinion, both Homer Hailey & Arthur Ogden present two strong arguments equally credible. In *REVELATION: An*

Introduction and Commentary Brother Hailey writes: “I believe, however, that the number does not represent an individual such as Nero, Domitian, or others per se, but the sum of that which is human... When John adds, ‘It is the number of a man,’ he omits the definite article before ‘man,’ thereby indicating that he has no particular individual in mind. He is saying that the number represents that which is human; it is therefore a human number... Since the Apocalypse abounds in the symbolic use of numbers which express ideas rather than persons or literal quantities, the same principle should be followed in the interpretation of this number. Throughout the book, seven expresses the idea of perfection or completeness: the seven churches, seven horns, seven eyes, seven spirits, and so forth. So six, which falls below the sacred seven, can never be seven or reach perfection; therefore, it symbolizes the imperfect, that which is human and destined to fail. It is said that to the Jews the number six was an omen or symbol of dread and doom, so when it was tripled, 666, it represented the completeness of doom and failure.” In his book *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets*, Brother Ogden makes a credible case for verse 18 as having application to a specific individual on the Throne of Imperial Rome: “This verse is intended to explain the significance of the preceding verse and to identify the specific administration in power at the time of the Apocalypse. The number of the beast ‘is Six hundred threescore and six.’ The reference is to an ancient practice of figuring the number of one’s name by adding up the assigned total for each letter in his name. Many ancient languages used alphabetical characters as numerical figures with specific values attached to the letters. The process is known as **gematria**. [The] number of the name *Neron Caesar* is 666 and identifies the specific emperor ruling Rome at the time of the Apocalypse. The explanation is simple, factual, and in perfect harmony with the subject material of the Apocalypse.” Similarly, the “Man of Sin” of 2nd Thessalonians 2: 3 – 10 corresponds in timeline. Both Thessalonian Letters were written by Paul while in Athens around 51 AD., Caesar Nero ruled the Roman Empire from 54 AD to 68 AD, and the Jewish Campaign began approximately year 64 AD. [However, a plausible argument for the Late Date & Roman Punishment of Biblical Proportion could be made based on the unnatural number and large magnitude of Volcanic Eruptions, Tectonic Plate Earthquake Shifting, and Tsunami Tidal Waves wiping out many major coastal population centers of the Roman Empire Late First Century.]

First Century Wisdom in Numerological Interpretation – Author Bruce Winter in his recent book *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians Responses in Section II: Playing the Numbers Game to Identify the Beast addresses how the original reading audience would have interpreted the meaning of Revelation 13:18. He writes: “A greater challenge was issued that would test the skills of his readership to undertake a more complicated form for numerical calculation – ‘this calls for wisdom,’ ‘here is wisdom,’ a term used in Greek for *skill* in various disciplines of learning including music, poetry, medicine, and divination, and here the author of the letter uses it of *gematria*. He further defines the person possessing this skill as ‘the one having knowledge.’ This clue is in the use of the imperative when he writes that ‘he must calculate the number of the beast,’ and then explains, ‘for the number of the beast is a man and his number is 666’ (13:18). The actual text does not have the Greek letter for six repeated three times but, i.e. 600, 60, 6. This followed the Greek convention of spelling each of the letters that were represented numerically – ‘six hundred,’ sixty,’ and ‘six’.*

What is the numerical value of the Greek letters for ‘beast’? It totals 247 (9,8,100,10,70,50). So he is not referring to a calculation of Greek letters of this term. However, ‘the same numerical technique was used in the Hebrew alphabet, and ‘beast’ in the Hebrew alphabet is 666 (400,200,10,6,50). The number of the beast is explicitly to coincide with another number. The writer explains, ‘For it is the number of a man’ and then discloses that number is ‘666’ (Revelation 13: 18). So the total number for ‘beast’ and that for ‘man’ are the same. There is an **official external evidence of the numerical value of the name of Nero** in the Hebrew-Aramaic Script on an official deed of debt in A.D. 55 declared to be the second year of ‘Nero’.”

II. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Book Chapter Verse Expository: REVELATION 20: 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 seized the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Tempter and Satan, who deceived the whole world, and bound him a

thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal over him, that he should no more deceive the nations until the thousand years should be past; after that he will be loosed for a short time. [Aramaic Eastern Text]

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.” – NIV or New International Version

G. K. Beale in his recent work as an installment in the New International Greek Testament Commentary Series entitled *NIGTC: The Book of Revelation* expounds extensively on Verses 1 – 3 in the chapter subsection under the heading:

THE MILLENNIUM IS INAUGURATED DURING THE CHURCH AGE BY GOD’S CURTAILMENT OF SATAN’S ABILITY TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS AND TO ANNIHILATE THE CHURCH AND BY THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS’ SOULS TO HEAVEN TO REIGN THERE WITH CHRIST (20: 1 – 6)

On page 973 – “It is important to remember the genre of Revelation in approaching 20: 1 – 6, especially the programmatic nature of 01: 01, which states the general symbolic nature of the communication from the mediating angel to John. Further, the repeated introductory “I saw” (or similar expressions) throughout the book introduces symbolic visions (e.g., 4:1ff, 12:1-3, 13:1-3, 14:1, 17:1-3). Since “I saw” introduces both 20:1-3 and 20:4-6, we can assume that there are at least three levels of communication in vv 1 – 6: (1) a visionary level, which consists of the actual visionary experience that John had in seeing resurrected people and the other objects of his vision, (2) a referential level, which consists of the particular historical identification of the resurrected people and the other objects seen in the vision, and (3) a symbolic level, which consists of what the symbols in the vision connote about their historical referents.”

On page 974 – “First, ‘and’ throughout the whole Apocalypse can indicate either historical sequence or visionary sequence. More often than not it indicates visionary sequence as a transitional device either between major literary segments or between smaller units of material within the larger segments. Where historical sequence is indicated, the conjunction is typically found within the

larger segments as a transition between verses or even phrases. Each overall context must determine which use is in mind.”

On pages 984, 985 – “In light of the preceding, the descending angel in 20:1 introduces a vision in vv 1 – 6 going back before the time of the final judgment in history, which was just narrated in 19: 11 – 21... The angel ‘binds’ the devil with the chain for ‘a thousand years.’ Just as the first creation appears to have been preceded by a battle between the sea monster and God, so the creation of the new heavens and earth must be preceded by such a battle...

But exactly how is the binding to be defined? In light of 1:18 and 3:7-8 it can be said that Satan no longer has authority over the realm of the dead as he did prior to Jesus’ resurrection...But the ‘binding’ of Satan in Mark 3:27 does not restrict all his activities but highlights that Jesus is sovereign over him and his demonic forces. Therefore, context, and not the metaphor by itself, must determine what degree of restriction is intended. That Satan is ‘cast out’ by Christ’s death does not restrict Satan in every other way. Rather, it keeps him from preventing ‘all people’ throughout the earth being drawn to Jesus (John 12: 31, 32). ‘Sealing’ may connote an absolute incarceration, but could just as well connote the general idea of ‘authority over,’ which is it’s primary meaning.”

On page 986 – “God’s seal on Christians does not protect them in every sense but only in a spiritual, salvific manner, since they suffer from persecution in various physical ways. Conversely, God’s seal on Satan prevents him from harming the salvific security of the true church, though he can harm it physically.

If our understanding of the disjunctive temporal relation of 20: 1 – 6 to 19: 11 – 21 and our view of the ‘keys’ is correct, then Christ’s work of restraining the devil’s ability to ‘deceive’ is not complete curtailment of all the devil’s activities but only a restraint on his deceiving activities...9: 1-10 and 20: 1-3 are synchronous and portray those whom Satan is permitted to deceive and those whom he is not permitted to deceive.”

On page 987 – “It is wrong to picture the devil being ‘cast out of the earth’ in some spatial sense, so that he is no longer present on earth. This would be to take ‘abyss’ in an overly literalistic manner. Rather, like ‘heaven’ throughout the Apocalypse, it represents a spiritual dimension existing alongside and in the midst

of the earthly, not above or below. The abyss is one of the various metaphors representing the spiritual sphere in which the devil and his accomplices operate.”

*On pages 988, 989 – “Included also in the restraint on the devil’s deceiving activity is that he is not able to delude and mount hostile attack against the covenant community during the age after Christ’s resurrection in the way that he formerly did. That Satan’s binding is not complete in every respect is consistent with the name ‘the ancient serpent’ in 20:2 in connection with deception in 20:3, which is an allusion to Genesis 3:1, 14. There the serpent claimed that God’s command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17 was not true (Genesis 3:4-5). The serpent’s deception led to Adam and Eve’s fall. *This deceptive attack against humanity’s first representatives destroyed the first covenant community and prevented humanity from carrying out its commission to subdue the ends of the earth for the Lord. Now, the last representative of humanity, the last Adam, has come to reverse the effects of that first fall in order to enable the covenant community among humanity to fulfill its created purpose to subdue the earth for God. Therefore, the binding of ‘the ancient serpent’ is intended to restrain him so that he cannot accomplish the deceptive purposes that he formerly accomplished during ancient times in Eden.**

Indeed, after the Fall, the serpent and his agents do on a worldwide scale what the devil began to do in the garden. In the OT age Satan was able to delude the majority of Israel so that they were not able to fulfill their commission to be a salvific light to the nations. As a result, the good news of God’s kingdom was not heralded to the pagan nations, and the nations remained in spiritual darkness. Also, because of Israel’s sin Israel remained in subjection to Satanic oppression from foreign nations attempting to exterminate Israel. This attempted extermination was climaxed by Satan’s attack on Christ, who summed up the community of true Israel in himself. Satan appeared finally successful when his agents put Christ to death, but the resurrection demonstrated that Satan had failed. All who subsequently identify with Christ as true Israel begin to fulfill the commission to be a light to the nations, so that Satan’s veil of deception over the nations is lifted. This means the devil will not be able to stop the spread of the preaching of the gospel or its expanding reception (= the church) during the age preceding Christ’s return. So Christ commands his followers to ‘make disciples of all the nations’ (Matthew 28:19). The gospel will ‘be preached in the whole world

for a witness to all nations, and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:14) ... This accords with 2 Thess. 2: 6 -12, where Satan is said to be 'already at work' in a mysterious way, but nevertheless restrained."

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JAMIESON, FAUSSET, & BROWN ON REVELATION 20: 1 – 3:

"As 'seven' mystically implies universality, so a 'thousand' implies perfection, whether to good or evil. Thousand symbolizes that *the world is perfectly leavened* and pervaded by the divine...Satan's binding at this juncture is not arbitrary, but is the necessary consequence of the events (ch. 19:20); just as Satan's being cast out of heaven, where he had previously been the accuser of the brethren..."

COFFMAN COMMENTARY @ REVELATION 20: 1 – 3:

Verse One – *Having the key of the abyss...* "In all the places where 'abyss' is used, the word signifies the present abode of Satan and his angels, not the place of final punishment. The 'key' here indicates that, 'Power was given to this angel over Satan during the time of the world's existence.'

And a great chain, in his hand... The Greek text here is literally 'upon his hand,' and this corresponds to the word of God being 'upon the hand' of the angel in Revelation 10: 2. Thus, the great chain is seen to be the Word of God.

Verse Two – *And bound for a thousand years...* 'This means during the entire gospel age.' The effective binding of Satan took place in the events of the Incarnation. Satan had already been thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12: 7 – 9); Therefore, it is some more restricted phase of Satan's binding that is revealed here.

Just How Is Satan Bound? **He is bound in that he cannot destroy the Bible; he cannot tempt a child of God more than he is able to bear; God makes a way of escape with every temptation. The period of Satan's binding is co-extensive in every particular with the times when people are being saved by obeying the gospel. Again, to paraphrase Christ's question, 'How could Christ save anyone at any time when Satan was not bound?'**

Until the thousand years should be finished... The gospel age will finally close; and when the last person to accept the Son of God shall have done so, the age will end."

EARLY DATE BOOK COMMENTARIES ON VERSES 1 – 3:

Brother Foy E. Wallace (1966) in *The Book of Revelation* – "In the vision Satan returned from his prowling to his diabolical abode in ignominious and complete defeat. His abysmal abode was shut by the angel with the key to the bottomless pit that he held; which angel also set a seal upon him, as an authoritative act, such as the seal of state stamped on the documents signed by officials of government. The purpose of this satanic imprisonment was that he should 'deceive the nations no more' – that is, in the idolatry of Caesar-worship, a repetition of the previous symbols of the mark and image of the beast in the heathen emperor-worship."

Brother Arthur M. Ogden (1985) in *The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets* –

"What is the meaning of this, and what significance does it have for us today?"

Much unnecessary speculation has grown out of these verses. We must remember to understand each text in the light of its context. The spiritual war between Christ and Satan has been raging. We have observed Satan's helpers being destroyed. One of these helpers is the Roman Empire. It has ruled the world by the power of Satan (13:2). Rome fought gloriously against the Christ, but in the end was broken to pieces and destroyed (Daniel 2:44). It would appear natural that Satan should turn his abilities again to the development of another powerful helper like the Roman Empire, but he is not permitted to do so because God binds him, putting a seal upon him, forbidding him to deceive the nations any more until a thousand years are accomplished. This period of time is not intended to be a literal, exact, period of time. It does indicate a long period of time, however, and if we compute the beginning of the thousand years with the fall of Rome (the chronological position it holds in the Apocalypse), the period has already been longer than 1,000 years...

Many have interpreted this binding of Satan as a complete imprisonment causing cessation of all his powers. This is to ignore the context and reality. Satan is still alive and doing very well. His influence is abundantly evidenced in the world. The fact is, Satan's binding must be considered as limited to the specific purpose

stated in the context. He is bound 'that he should deceive the nations no more.' Satan deceived Rome into warring against Christ and His saints, but he is bound to prevent him from deceiving other nations as he did Rome."

"First, 'and' throughout the whole Apocalypse can indicate either historical sequence or visionary sequence. More often than not it indicates visionary sequence as a transitional device either between major literary segments or between smaller units of material within the larger segments. Where historical sequence is indicated, the conjunction is typically found within the larger segments as a transition between verses or even phrases. Each overall context must determine which use is in mind." (NIGTC Revelation)

BROTHER DAVID HERSEY IN HIS *THE FALL OF SATAN (REVELATION 20)* ARTICLE CORRECTS TRANSITION SEQUENCE VISIONARY TO HISTORICAL CHAPTER 19 - 20:

"It is vitally important to keep in mind that the events pictured in Revelation do not always follow a linear chronological timeline. The visions of John have painted a story of victory over persecution since the beginning. These visions have been laid out in non-chronological fashion all along. The opening of the seven seals and the bowls of wrath were not in chronological order. Many of the natural disasters and events God used were overlapping and running contemporary with one another. It should not come as any surprise to anyone at this time that the events in Revelation 20 are not laid out in chronological fashion. By now the reader should be of this fact and should recognize immediately that there is a grand overall picture being illustrated in this vision. Any attempt to interpret Revelation 20 in a systematic sequential fashion is immediately frustrating and should be dismissed outright. The reader should step back and take a broad view of the vision and consider it in light of the whole story of Satan, his fall and ultimate total destruction in eternal punishment. Focusing on the elements we know, and can identify and then harmonizing the rest into one grand vision. Revelation 20 is a big picture of the ultimate falling of Satan and the forces of evil which draw on events from before the coming of Christ all the way to the end of the Christian age to the final judgment."

Verse Two & Satan Bound – "And we now jump backwards in time to an event that took place before the coming of Jesus Christ on earth. **This is the figurative**

picture of Satan being bound after what he did in the garden of Eden. Satan had restrictions placed upon his activities since that transgression. He had to get divine permission from God in order to afflict Job and Satan followed the directives given him by God to the letter. Satan operated only within the parameters God gave him concerning Job. Satan was not nor has ever been unbound on the earth to do as he would without restriction. As soon as Satan demonstrated his rebellious nature, he had restrictions placed upon him. This is the binding we see in John's vision here." [Satan No Longer Has Heavenly Access per Luke 10: 18]

Verse Three & Satan Loosed – “The number (10) for ‘completeness’ multiplied by itself 3 times would therefore mean a complete period of time sufficient to accomplish God’s purpose. The thousand years that Satan’s activities were restricted is therefore a figurative symbol for a period of time from the initial binding of Satan (2nd Peter 2:4) until the period of time where he was loosed for a short period.

Consider the plight of Job on a worldwide scale. Were Satan to be unleashed without restriction upon the earth at any time, the results would be immediate worldwide devastation, destruction and Chaos the likes of which we could not even imagine.” [NOTE: Not the 2nd Coming Compared to Antediluvian World’s Inhumanity of Man to Man as described in Genesis 6: 1-13 & Luke 17: 26.]

World Power Was Satan’s To Offer – “After this perfect period of time Satan is allowed to operate in a more direct fashion on the earth than previously. Not without restriction by any means. During the temptation of Jesus by Satan, he made a statement to Jesus which has a direct bearing on this. “And the devil said to Him, ‘All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it’.” (Luke 4: 6)

Satan Tempted Twice Face to Face – “Satan was able to come face to face and tempt Jesus directly. Satan does not do that now. And there is no record of him ever tempting anyone face to face beyond the garden. Satan had to get special permission from God to afflict Job in the way he did and there is no indication that Job ever met Satan face to face. In fact, it is evident from Job’s complaints that neither he or his companions knew Satan was directly involved in the matter.

There is no indication that Job ever knew of the meeting between God and Satan concerning him.”

Involuntary Possession Is No Longer – “Evil Spirits were also allowed to possess people during this period of time. The scriptures contain many examples of evil spirits being cast from people. This is not something we see throughout Biblical times. There was a period of time Biblically where the forces of evil were allowed to operate directly on mankind. This [Satan Face-to-Face] and the presence of evil spirits was a temporary arrangement and happened in the years directly before and after Christ’s life on earth. **The loosing of Satan has been done.** This event is in our past and has been fulfilled and today the degree of freedom that Satan and his evil followers enjoyed for a period of time is over. Satan and the forces of evil are still in operation on earth today but not in the way they were during the time of Christ on earth.”

III. **Seven Necessary Implications**

Prophecy Vision vs. Historical Vision: Although, Chapter 19 ends with prophecy; **For the 1st Century Audience Addressed to Have Understood the Imagery - Chapter 20: 1 - 2 would have to start the Story of Satan in Historic Vision** - Post-Eden Abyss Bound & Restricted for an indefinite period verses 1 & 2; The author is writing concurrent in verse 3 of the “Little While” Release of Satan – a period that had its beginnings between the Testaments and would end with the generational fulfillment of those prophesied in the Book of Revelation; Because things were going to get worse before they got better – in verse four the Story of Satan shifts to the End in a Prophetic Vision of the Hellfire Lake, vindication of the saints, and Christ’s ultimate victory. Satan’s Short Period Unbound as in the Garden began during the 400 years of God’s Silence between the Testament – High pointed in Garden Face-to-Face Reenactment by Christ’s Desert Temptation – Culminated After the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Death of The Last Apostle.

God’s Perfect Will vs. His Permissive Will: God’s Perfect Decretive Eternal Will includes His Redemptive Plans for The Human Race, His *Specific Plans for both Physical & Spiritual Israel* and His *Intermediate & Ultimate Plans for the Fallen Angels & their Leader* – the Archangel Satan. These three threads of story line

converge together in the first three verses of Revelation Chapter 20 – one at story start – one at mid-story – one at the end of their story.

Homer Hailey in his book *God's Judgement & Punishments: Individuals & Nations* presents a Providential Panorama of *God at the center and always in control* - playing neighboring nations and foreign empires to His long-term objectives - in the short term to either punish or reward His Chosen people – but always to mold them stronger and to terraform the spiritual soil for the coming of His Son in Messianic Mission. Judeo-Christianity is not of a Monotheistic Good/Evil Dualism – both religions believe God's Power Absolute & Satan's Being Different Degrees of Relative throughout history as God Has Permitted - Consistent with His Predetermined Plans. Satan was *permitted*, "let loose," for a short interval of human history – at least a generation before Christ's Birth and until after the actual physical deaths of His Apostles. During this time interval, The Devil was *permitted* to revisit the Garden Temptation with Our Savior as the Second Adam after Jesus had been Forty Days in the Desert Wilderness. Satan was *permitted* to test the faith of the First Century Christians of Jerusalem causing many to flee the city. Satan was *permitted* to persecute the fleeing Diaspora Christians relocated in the churches of Asia Minor - almost to the point of near extinction. Moreover, Satan was *permitted* during PAX ROMANA – to choreograph Outrage at a Temple Tax Seizure/Multiple Statue Desecrations of Self-Deified Emperor Caligula/Pro-Hasmonean Zionist Zealots all together into a Temporary Insanity Josephus captioned *The Jewish Wars*. However, the pivotal point activating the Jewish Revolt was Satan convincing the Jews that they would win against Rome. Josephus says the Reason Above All Other was a Soothsayer or Oracle Message received stating "At about that time, one from their country would become (Messianic) Ruler of the Habitable World." The Deceiving Serpent had brought together at once – The End of Physical Israel, The Separation of Spiritual Israel, & By His Last *Permission* Blinding the Pagan "Etnos" (Ephesians 2: 11-13) Hindering the Spread of The Gospel. **Therefore, Evil as a Force & Evil as a Person are now of such limitation during the present Gospel Age – that practically all those events and actions remaining - not consequential, of loving chastisement or for indirect achievement of a secondary virtue and previously categorized as pointless pain or gratuitous suffering - can be attributed to Man's Inhumanity to Man!**

Prince of This World vs. Prince of The Air: [Ephesians 2:2] The term “the power of the air” refers to the atmosphere around the earth. Why this mention of “the air” as a place where Satan is may mean no more than the air is where Satan dwells as chief ruler, prince of demons, and evil spirits; The air is the place such spirits live, and Satan is the prince of all such spirits whose abode is the air. The Jews of Paul’s day believed that the air was Satan’s Sphere of domination and what Paul is teaching was matter of fact by this statement. [Ephesians 6: 12] Although an equally descriptive title during Satan’s Short Release & Equally Accurate During the Mountaintop Temptation of Earthly Kingdoms at Jesus Feet - In my opinion, given Satan’s lesser latitude manipulating military and political authorities today – ***Prince of the Air better reflects Satan’s most recent demotion & limited activity.***

As Prince of the Air he still has some power to influence the circumstances of an individual’s life although the Bible portrays that power as bringing suffering, corruption, destruction and death along with fleeting success. The pleasures of sin endure for only a season. [Hebrews 11: 25]

Dealing with Satan’s Temptation vs. Making a Deal: Is it High Touch or High Risk in Bargaining Diabolical? The Bible suggests that God has wagered with man and man with God: God has even bartered on occasion as with Abraham (Genesis 18: 16-33) & Hannah (1st Samuel 1: 1). The attempted negotiation with Apostolic Authority by Simon the Sorcerer was rejected with warning (Acts 8: 9 – 24). The only instances recorded of the Devil interested in Making a Deal was with God - Targeting Job & with Jesus in the Wilderness. Our Savior’s High Mountain with Kingdoms at the Feet Temptation - make mere mortals full of self-importance – who would – think they could - strike a similar diabolical deal for material success.

The Bible does not portray the devil as a deal-maker. Instead, our concentration should be on resisting his diabolical influence in our lives. The Devil, as a fallen angel, has had no experience or personal reference of flesh and blood; Satan’s Sins were of the intellect & emotion – basic of simple selfish pride. Therefore, Satan works with what he knows best - supplementing self-centeredness with his behavioral observations through the ages of the human creature he’s hated from the beginning. In other words, Satan makes his attack appealing to the emotional center that then attaches to the flesh by way of human drives and fleshly desires.

For the Unbeliever Opportunity & For the Believer Security: Satan Cannot Make A Deal & Satan Cannot Own Souls. Satan operates within the limitations of God's Permissive Will – He does not have the buyer authorization and humans do not have the seller authorization. God owns us both body and soul.

NOTE: Manumission Movements to Emancipate Slaves Operated from the False Assumption that One Owned Oneself. For Example, this Statement of Principle from the Pre-Civil War Anti-Slavery Abolitionist Society – “We maintain that no compensation should be given to the planters emancipating their slaves {The Pre-Civil War Political Position of Alexander Campbell}: Because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle, that man cannot hold property in man: Because slavery is a crime, and therefore is not an article to be sold: Because the holders of slaves are not the just proprietors of what they claim: freeing the slave is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to its rightful owner: it is not wronging the master, but righting the slave – *restoring him to himself!*” Although a reform movement well intended, their chain of reason was wrong because they left the true owner out of their chain of custody. God owns us body and soul; You do not own yourself - in order to self-indenture yourself – an activity forbidden by God Almighty (1st Corinthians 6: 19,20; 7: 23).

Illustration: Pop Culture Entertainment Wisdom Found in “Bedazzled” Movie Jailhouse Exchange of Dialogue: *What you in for brother? Eternity! That's a long time. You must have done something really bad. I sold my soul. Hope you got something good for it. As a matter of fact, I got nothing for it. That's really bad if you ask me. Well I'm not asking you. Doesn't even matter, though. You can't sell your soul anyway. Why do you say that? Doesn't really belong to you in the first place. No way, no how. So who does it belong to? It belongs to God, that universal spirit that animates and binds all things in existence.*

Furthermore, we don't need a deal with the devil because – without change – we are already on his side; We need instead a Deal with God. The problem is that we have nothing to offer the Almighty in trade. God needs nothing from us (Romans 11: 33 – 36) and it is futile to try to appease Him with religious rite and ritual (Isaiah 1: 11).

**Good News – God Has Offered us a Unilateral Deal – a “Bargain of His Own.”
In a great exchange, Jesus Christ, Our Lord & Savior, has for us, appeased the
Father’s Wrath - taking upon Himself the Penalty of Sin.**

Living Within Range & Living on the Edge of Satan Bound by Bungee: Catholic Priest Theologian J. Corap simplifies the Satanic Temptation Dilemma such: “The devil is like a vicious dog on a Six-Foot Chain – Don’t Get Within 6’.” He continues – “How Do You Get Within Range? It’s Called Sin.” I’m sorry that I have to disagree; Although God keeps Satan on a short retractable leash regarding former activities and unfettered access to the highest heaven – I believe Corap has missed the entire point the Bible is communicating about our adversary the Devil. In terms of tempting influence, Satan has the free range of a Roaring Lion (1st Peter 5: 8). The double-minded individual is his easy prey (James 1: 6 - 8).

In my opinion, considering 1st John 2: 16 and James 1: 15, it is best to consider eye full lust the soft buffer to sin action from which Satan “buffets” (2nd Corinthians 12: 7). Satan would influence individuals into the planning stage to obtain an unlawful desire – such a planning process is productive of sinful action. Based on these two scriptures I would rather suggest a counterpart to the Concentric Rings of love selflessly radiating outward – from self to neighbor to community to humankind – to its perverse opposite selfishly radiating in. In other words, we need to take Satan more seriously, exercising more caution, especially by-way-of expanding our sensory distance from that burning ring of unlawful lustful desire.

In order to do so – a better metaphor to the idea of our adversary on chain – would be Satan on Bungee Cord leaping to reinforce every unlawful desire - encouraging in their conception by way of planning. If this action is inadequate to the occasion, Jesus during the Desert Temptation Modeled How to Handle Any Such Situation – Jesus Christ Quoted Scripture and then Told the Devil to – “Get Thee Hence!” (Matthew 4: 10 & James 4: 7).

God’s Protective Clawback for Renouncing Heavenly Citizenship & Necromancy: For all practical purposes, during this Gospel Age of indeterminate duration between the End of The Apostolic Age and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ – O.T. Precept @Satanism should parallel apply for both physical and spiritual Israel – those indicators signaling a diabolical divided loyalty in thought and practice by God’s Chosen - Post-Diluvian/Patriarchal/Pre-Apocrypha Mosaic. In my opinion,

the Old Testament laws, ordinances, commandments, negative examples and cautionary warnings are not to be considered for today archaic; In other words, **All of the Old Testament Admonitions Against Witchcraft & Satanism should with continuity default in individual not theocratic observance:** Exodus 22:18, Deuteronomy 18: 9–12, 1st Samuel 15:23, 1st Sam. 28, Isaiah 8:19, & Micah 5:12.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Millennialism Impacts Secular Society. Post-Millennial Theory under the heading of Christian Reconstruction has impacted as deeply as the field of social theory – i.e. both Gary North’s book and pdf article “Millennialism & Social Theory.” Libertarian Economist Gary North has offered forth in proposition a theocratic blueprint for a New American Order @socio-political economic comprehensive. His followers consider themselves members of a “Theonomic Movement.” His many critics and detractors all redirect readers attention to North’s first book – the groups *de facto* manual for reestablishing the O.T. Political Economy - the “Dominion Covenant.” Paul Elliot is among those unconvinced and not with the Theonomy Program. Elliot says of their agenda in his article entitled *Beware of Christian Reconstruction*: “Christian Reconstruction seeks to establish a legalistic regime in the unbelieving world-system that is contrary to God’s Plan and purpose for this present world system, as we find in His written word.”

The societal impact of pre-millennialism has been the most pervasive and accepted uncritically – by being mainstreamed without much notice. For example, in his The New Republic article *Seeds of Doubt*, author John D. Judis recounts “In November 1953, after he had left the presidency, Harry Truman travelled to New York to be feted at the Jewish Theological Seminary. When his old friend Eddie Jacobson introduced him as ‘the man who helped create the state of Israel.’ Truman responded, ‘What do you mean *helped to create*?’ ‘I am Cyrus!’” Such statements by presidents raised on the Scofield Study Bible and John Darby’s prophetic vision can cause one to question whether decisions of major foreign policy are being made solely on a calculus of this nation’s vested interests. Moreover, since the emergence of Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and more recently Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition – most of our U.S. Presidents

nurtured on millennial doctrine have committed to nuclear defense of the modern state of Israel – not entirely motivated according to our own national interest – instead determined by personal presupposition of prophecy whose future fulfillment is yet to come. For example, both Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan who followed him, committed to that same position during the 1980 presidential race.

Millennialism Impacts Religious Society.

Dispensational Preoccupation @Biased Perceptions: Preoccupation with the end of the world can lead to a biased perception of the real world. People so oriented see in history and in contemporary life only what fits their idea of what the end times will be. They see evidence of things increasingly worse, ignoring evidence of advancements in various areas of life. Those who see only one side of what's going on in the world become a source of humor to those that see the big picture.

Dispensational Preoccupation @Fatalistic Attitude: Those who believe the Second Coming is immediate often adopt a fatalistic attitude and fall prey to a siege mentality. They say – 'There's nothing that can be done about the world's problems... Don't prepare for any future; just hunker down and wait.' Instead of working to solve problems, they say 'This is prophecy being fulfilled. The end is here; there's no need to do anything.' By sitting on their hands when they should be actively involved, they fulfill their own prophecies and assure a worse world for their children. (Internet Posting Source Unknown)

Millennialism Impacts Christian Society. Mistaken Millennial Imagination Has Injured the Restoration Movement from Its Beginning. In *Redeeming America: Road to War*, Curtis D. Johnson writes on pages 164 & 184 as follows: "The Disciples of Christ, following the lead of Alexander Campbell, were generally in the postmillennial camp, as were the Baptists... Millennialism continued to have an enormous influence over the United States on the eve of the Civil War. When the great conflict came, Americans spoke of the war using millennial language. Having been steeped in biblical prophecy and apocalyptic images for decades, it is not surprising that the Civil War generation described the conflict in Armageddon-like terms and tried to fit current events into a broader prophetic context and God's role in history to make sense of the four years of carnage."

Steve Wolfgang in his article printed both in Truth Magazine & The Christian Courier entitled *Millennialism and the American Dream* speaks specific to the churches of Christ: "Like other Americans of their time, many of the early 'Restorationists' (Alexander Campbell and his *Millennial Harbinger* in particular) shared the enthusiastic postmillennial optimism of their contemporaries; like their counterparts they saw their dream of an American Millennium dashed by the war that which sundered the nation. The aftermath of that conflict led many who had anticipated the 'marriage of the lamb' (in 1866) instead to what has been called 'the Great Barbecue.'" This article by Steve Wolfgang additionally chronicles through the 20th Century mentioning the 'Bollite' Iteration of Pre-Millennial Theory that prompted so very much church disciple & wholesale withdrawals during the turbulent 1930's.

Millennialism Impacts Christian Watchfulness. The *Olivet Discourse* is easiest understood by observing that the Apostles were asking the typical ethno-centric question of the end of the world as they knew it (TEOTWAWKI) but truth be told - they were asking two questions – one of the destruction of the temple along with the city of Jerusalem - and the other as regards the end of the world. The fact that Christ gave His answer in two-part – the pivotal passage at Matthew 24: 34 – is of greatest illumination to our subject today. If we consider that Matthew 24: 3 – 34 parallels the events described in Revelation 20: 1, 2 to the End of that Age & Matthew 24: 34 – Matthew 25: 13 parallel events afterwards and until the End of Satan's Story or End of the World - we can then observe the following contrasts: Events Local Versus Events Global; "This Generation" Versus "The Days of Your Fathers"; "That Day" Versus "Those Days"; and Signs Versus Suddenness.

Signs Versus Suddenness: Brother Larry Ray Hafley writes – "Jesus told of the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem; namely, 'false Christs and false prophets,' and wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes – 'all these are the beginnings of sorrows' (Matthew 24: 6 – 8). Further He told them of 'the abomination of desolation' (Roman Eagle Standard), the Roman army (Matthew 24: 15; Luke 21: 20). 'Then know that the desolation thereof is nigh' (Luke 21: 20). They could 'know' the destruction of Jerusalem was 'nigh,' but the Coming of the Son of Man and the consequent Judgment were to be without warning (Matthew 24: 42, 43, 50; 25: 13). Compare 'then know' with 'know not' (Luke 21: 20; Matthew 24: 39). 'So shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be.'

The desolation and annihilation of 'the buildings of the temple' were to be seen by signs. 'When ye shall see these things, know it is near, even at the doors... But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father Only' (Matthew 24: 33, 36).

At least three times, Jesus specifically indicated that He was giving tangible evidence of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24: 8, 25, 33) but the second coming and the judgment were to be sudden, unknown, as when a thief strikes (Matthew 24: 42, 44, 50; 25: 13; 1st Thessalonians 5: 2 – 4; 2nd Peter 3; 10).

Jesus spoke of 'great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be' (Matthew 24: 21). This implies that time will continue after 'this time,' but there is no sense in saying, 'nor shall ever be' if the end of the world and the (final) judgment were being studied. The same argument can be made from the next verse (Matthew 24: 22). Those days evidently will 'be shortened;' they will end, and the elect shall be saved because of it. But if the end of the world were in view, the elect would be saved whether the days were shortened or not.

Finally, Matthew 25 supplements Matthew 24: 36 – 51. The judgment of Matthew 25 involves and includes 'all nations' (Matthew 25: 32). It is the final judgment (Matthew 25: 34, 41, 46). The ten virgins parable says, 'be prepared,' 'watch.' The parable of the talents stresses the necessity of diligence and faithfulness (Matthew 25: 21, 23, 26 linking @Matthew 24: 42 – 51).

Final Thoughts. In my opinion, for members of the conservative churches of Christ - whether late date or early date adherent is in priority of lesser importance than inclusion among those Revelation Prophecies Fulfilled – this Historic Timeline of Satan's Short Release. I believe – if we don't – it will diminish both our watchful purpose & Eschatological Expectation.