

Born to Win

Revelation #27

by Ronald L. Dart

Revelation 20

AKJV

- 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 on him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled[...]

This important piece of news is given to us by John in the 20th chapter of Revelation, right at the beginning. And having told us this—that Satan would be bound for a thousand years and we wouldn't have to deal with him anymore—he opens our minds to understand a couple of new things here that... it's funny, he tells it to us almost as though he thought we already knew.

He tells us that there is not merely *one* resurrection at the time of the end; that there are *two* resurrections *a thousand years apart*. Now, that's an interesting problem, and that's something to work out. Now, we *do* understand that the thousand years could be symbolic like other numbers in Revelation, but there is no hint of that here. In fact rather, the way everything is worded, it seems to me that (give or take a hundred years) that we're talking about a thousand-year period of time in which Jesus Christ rules the earth, the saints rule with him; and during that period of time Satan is utterly without any influence in this world.

Now, there are two chapters in the Bible that deal with the resurrection of the dead. Both of them deal with the first resurrection. They are **First Corinthians 15**, and **First Thessalonians 4**. I won't take the time to read them to you here, but they make it plain that all the dead in Christ are raised at his return. Now, let me explain: What this means is that everyone who is really a Christian, everyone in whom is the Holy Spirit, everyone who has met whatever requirements there are for salvation will be either changed into a spirit being or resurrected from the dead at the return of Christ. What this means is that everyone who is written in the book of life is raised in the first resurrection. Now John continues in verse 7 to say,

Revelation 20

AKJV

- ⁷ And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
- ⁸ 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.

Now, this is a little more difficult. After a thousand years of the rule of Christ on the earth, along with the saints ruling with him; with Satan having been bound and sealed up and shut up in a bottomless pit

somewhere where he can't have any influence on world affairs; when he *is* released, there are multitudes of people who can still be deceived. Go figure. You would think that by that time the presence of Christ, the rulership of God, the fact that the world is working for a change would have *some* influence on them. But these people that are deceived are everywhere. They are typified by Gog and Magog. In Ezekiel 39 (and also in chapter 38), you'll find that Gog from the land of Magog attacks the people of God who have been at rest and at peace for some time. Those two chapters back in Ezekiel actually deal with this same period of time if you'd like to study them. Now, in chapter 39 of Ezekiel, and verse 1, he says,

Ezekiel 39

AKJV

¹ Therefore, you son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus said the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

Now, when he throws in this expression, “the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”, do you remember in an earlier program we talked about this “prince of Persia” who withstood Michael the archangel for all these days as he was trying to reach Daniel? This seems to be another in that class of disobedient spirit. They're going to be powerless while Satan is bound, but they're going to be ready to be active on his return. And so what is released here is not merely a nation, but a *prince*—a spiritual prince—called Gog, influential over many of the people of the earth. And it's not just one area of the earth that he deceives; it's people from “the four quarters of the earth” that he deceives. It's a *strange* circumstance. And then he went on to say in verse 9,

Revelation 20

AKJV

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

It seems that at the end of all these things there is a need to gather up all loose ends and dispose of them once and for all. Everyone has had a chance, yet so very many have refused God *even without* the deception of Satan. It seems we are not going to be allowed to blame the devil for everything that's gone wrong on this earth; we're going to have to carry some of the blame ourselves. In verse 11, John continued in his vision to say this:

Revelation 20

AKJV

¹¹ 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.

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; [...]

Now, what is it when the dead stand up? Well, that's a resurrection, isn't it? So here are some dead people who are being brought back to life.

Revelation 20

AKJV

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and 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.

Now, this has to be the second resurrection. The common image of this passage here is “the judgment day”. In other words, here is this great judicial bench with a judge behind it and a gavel in his hand—an austere judge; and here’s this poor sinner who’s brought before him; and the books are opened, and they read all of his sins—and the good of his life, and the bad of his life—out of these books. And if the bad outweighs the good, he goes to hell. And if the good outweighs the bad... wait a minute, wait a minute. We don’t believe *that*, do we? We don’t really believe that, when all is said and done, that it’s a question of *the balance scales* that have to do with whether a person is saved or not. Isn’t it the blood of Jesus? Aren’t all of our past sins blotted out when we accept Christ? Aren’t we granted entrance into the kingdom of God by grace through faith [**Ephesians 2:8**], and not of works? Well then, what is this all about—this thing of people being judged? *Do* we have it right?

Now, there are a few things that call the common image of this into question. For example, *when* do you judge a prize fight? Well, if you’re sitting there watching on television, there are a couple or three guys sitting around the edge of the ring; and they’re judging the fight as the fight is in progress, right? They’re giving points, taking away points, imposing penalties on fighters who break the rules. The *judgment* of a fight is going on *while* they are fighting. What happens at the *end* of the fight is nothing more than tallying up the points. We add them up on the one side, we add them up on the other side, and this guy’s got 40 points, and the other’s got 39. He’s the winner by a decision. Well now, so judgment goes on while the act is going on—while *life* is going on.

Now, the next question in this is: Why is the book of life opened in this judgment? Everyone written in that book was *in the first resurrection*. We ought to know at this point that *there is no one* in that book when it is opened. Why open it then? Well, the only logical reason to open the book of life again is to write some new names in it. Now, for some strange reason, the idea that the book of life would be reopened and names written into it at this late date is *troubling* to some people. The idea that a class of people might live again in the flesh, and get a chance to have their names written in the book of life doesn’t sit well. But why shouldn’t God give people a second chance if he wants to? And what if it isn’t a second chance at all? What if it’s the first chance they have ever really had at salvation?

Now, I’m okay with burning Hitler alive. I mean, you take someone that’s been that evil and that wicked, and we bring him up before judgment, and we find him guilty... I’d have no problem whatsoever with taking him out and throwing him into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. Visualize a cauldron with lava—molten lava—in it. That seems fitting for that kind of evil. I can see Goebbels and Martin Bormann and all that ilk being thrown in there alongside of him. But there’s a small problem with the thesis that has these individuals tortured for all eternity. You know, the idea that in hell they jump about from one hot brick to another; that they may stand for a while upside down in a hole with their feet sticking out and steam coming up around their feet—some of the images from Dante’s *Inferno*. You know, even with the likes of these men, *torturing* them is a problem. Torturing them for a *week* is a problem. Torturing them for a *month* is a problem. But you know, there is a theology that says they will be tortured in *terrible* agony and *horrible* pain, day and night—not merely for a month, not merely for a year, not for a hundred years, not for a thousand years, but forever.

Alright, alright, I will give you for a moment the idea that we are going to torture Hitler for all eternity. Do you want to do it, or shall I? Now, I don’t know about you, but I think torturing somebody for an hour would be a drag (depending upon how badly you *hated* that person). I really think I would have had enough of it by sundown; don’t you think you would have? And what does torture do to the character of the person who is doing the tormenting? Well, maybe the devil is doing it; but frankly, why should the devil torture these people? They’ve been serving him all their lifetime. I mean, this is no big deal; and he’s not going to be in much of a position of tormenting anybody—he’s being *tormented himself*.

But, you know, this is not even here where the problem lies. Take my granddad for an example. J.D. was a kindly fellow. He was not the least bit religious. I never, in all the time I knew him, never knew him to go to church. And the only time I ever heard him speak of God at all was to take his name in vain. (It had to do with the description of a bass boat, or with a fishing rod, or he put some appellation

on it to have to do with God.) That's the only time I ever heard him speak of God at all. But there was a funny thing about the man: He was generous. He was kind. He never would turn his back on a person in need. He would have given a bed to a man who didn't have one. He would have given the shirt off his back to a man who needed it. He was really a very good man in terms of the way he actually lived his life, and the way his life impacted other people. He was a good father for his children, a good husband for his wife. Actually, one of the reasons I liked him so much is that he was my protector. He protected me from my aunts and my mother, who thought I should be chastised for my misdemeanors. He didn't much like that idea at all, so I loved the old guy dearly.

Now, I suppose if God just wanted to leave J.D. dead, I could understand. I would be *disappointed*, but I could understand. I might even be able to squeeze in some understanding if he were judged and executed for his sins. Though in the Bible it is only people who *take* a life who forfeit theirs. And so it is hard to figure why my granddad should be executed for his sins when he never killed anybody. Far from it. The death penalty seems a little stern to me for someone who frequently uses bad language, don't you think? But even crusty old gents like my grandfather are not the problem.

Everyone who has ever thought this through knows that billions of people have died on this planet without ever having a chance to be saved. What about them? What about the children? Let's just take some children in Somalia who starved to death before they ever get to the age to go to school had there been a school for them to go to. What about them? I was chatting with a fellow once who held the traditional belief that you either get saved in this life or else. If you don't get saved in this life, you go to hell. He believed, as I do, that there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved than the name of Jesus. It was Peter who said it; and he said,

Acts 4

AKJV

¹¹ This [Jesus] is the stone which was set at nothing of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

(The reference, in case you need it is Acts 4, verse 12.) Now, I'm sorry, but I don't believe that all the religions of the world are headed the same direction but by different means. Neither did Peter. Peter felt that if you did not believe in Jesus, you weren't going to be saved. Neither did Jesus believe that all these religions were going to the same place by different roads. In John 14 and verse 6, Jesus said,

John 14

AKJV

⁶ [...] I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.

Now, I *believe* that. Peter believed it; Jesus taught it. So this fellow and I both agreed that those who have never heard the name of Jesus had never had a chance to be saved. "What about those people?", I wanted to know. Are they condemned to hell and eternal torture when they had no chance—not any chance—to do otherwise. Now mind you, hell is forever; it's not just a bad weekend. "Well", he said, "I believe that, if they never had a chance to be saved, they *are* saved." "Well, very comforting", I thought; but I still had a question: I asked him, "Why, then, do you send missionaries to these people? To give them a chance to be lost?" Well, think about it: If they never had a chance to be saved, they are saved. So, if you send a missionary to someone who has not had his chance to be saved, what you're really doing is giving him a chance to be lost.

Well, I was going on about this once to a relative who thought I was balmy to think God would ever be so merciful as to give someone a second chance. (Never mind how many chances God has given me. I

mean, I've had more of them than I should have had.) But she heard me out, and then she concluded, "Well, I just believe that God will make a way." *Exactly. So do I.* And I believe we have right here in Revelation 20 a hint, not only that there is a way, but how it might possibly work out.

Now, I know I have listeners who feel like I do. Old J.D. my grandfather was not a bad fellow, and it's *hard* for me to believe that God wouldn't love the old guy *more* than I do, and that he might have some unfinished business with him. I *sure* want to see him again—and my dad, and my mother, and a few other souls I have come to love, whom...well, if I believe some people, I would never see them again. Now, I have an article I'd like to send you that has a detailed study of this question. If you'll drop me a line or give me a call at the address we have in this program, I'll send you a free copy. Ask me for the article entitled *Is There Only One Chance at Salvation?—Is There Only One Chance at Salvation?* I'll send you a free copy of it, you can get your Bible out, you can sit down and study your way through it, and it will help you come to grips with a question that has troubled all kinds of people down through the years. Continuing in verse 13,

Revelation 20

AKJV

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Now, that doesn't sound so good; because on *this* one there seems to be no resurrection.

Revelation 20

KJV

¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

So when all is said and done there *is* a separation. There is a division, as the Bible would put it, between the sheep and the goats [**Matthew 25**]. There are those who are Christ's, and there are those who are not, when all is said and done; and there is final destruction for those who, when they *do* get a chance, still reject God.

But the question is a little more complicated than some might lead you to believe. And, if it is of any encouragement to you, you may see people again that you thought you had lost forever.

Revelation 21

AKJV

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

John is still in vision, and in this vision he sees a new heaven and a new earth; the first one, the one you and I are used to...and remember, by the way, the word "heaven"—if you're going to take the Greek word and really translate it equivalently in English, the word is "sky". "I saw a new sky and a new earth, as the first sky and first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." In other words, the environment of the earth as we know it is gone and *it's all new*.

Revelation 21

AKJV

² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Now, the new Jerusalem is not on the earth at first; it's in heaven. And it's a bride prepared for her husband. Her husband, of course, is Jesus Christ.

Revelation 21

AKJV

³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Wow! The tabernacle of God is with men. You know, I don't want to take a big issue about "going to heaven" when we die, because of the fact that going into the presence of God is *like* going to heaven. That's no problem. But what you need to understand is that what this pictures is that the tabernacle of God is with men. God comes to the earth. It's a *new* earth, but it's still the earth; and God comes down to *dwell with men*. And they're going to be his people; and God shall be with them, and be their God.

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

What a change. What a world. To consider that the crying, the death, the pain is *over*. You know, it's a little hard to imagine how we could all be so easily cleared of the past, of the pain of the past, and the suffering of the past. For indeed, we in this lifetime pick up a lot of scars. We get hurt lots of different ways. We get hurt more often than we'd like to think about. Will we not remember any of that? Or perhaps we will have come to the place to where we *really understand* the meaning of that—that the pain and the suffering that we went through in this life shall have taken on *a whole new meaning* because of who we are, and where we are, and who we are with. Take Jesus Christ, for example. Will he no longer be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world [**Revelation 13:8**]? No, we will know him as that. We will know him as our "Redeemer". In a sense, his wounds are a badge of honor; the holes in his hands, and the hole in his side are those things which identify him to us as our Savior; and we love him *for* that, and we love him for what he did. The memory of that will not be gone, and I think probably the marks of it would not be gone; and if not for him, then why for us? And so I think that the reason why there will be no more sorrow or pain—how it's possible that sorrow could be replaced by joy—is because we have come to realize that there was a *reason* behind it all, and *now* we know what it is. *Now* we can see the character we have developed. *Now* we know what we have *become* in God. And it is worth *every bit of it*. Revelation 20, verse 5:

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁵ And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said to me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

⁶ And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He's talking about a spiritual thirst here, folks; not just the old parched throat that can be cooled with a Coca-Cola. He is talking about that hole down inside of man that was made to be filled with God and God alone. He is talking about that lack inside of man—that man was made without something that man has needed—and all of our life we've searched for it, looked for it, hungered for it, thirsted for it, wanted it...and never could find it because it isn't here. And it won't be here until *he* is here.

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

“He that overcomes”. You know, to overcome you have got to come up against adversity. There has to be an obstacle for you to climb *over*. To overcome means that there has to be some wrestling going on. In other words, there has to be “the game” as it were. There has to be the challenge that you meet—that you run up against and *win*. A basketball team goes on the court and overcomes their opponent: they win. The truth is, he is saying, “The winner will inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he will be my son.” And that’s why we were *put here*: to *overcome*, to *win*, and in the winning become something greater than any of us could *ever* have imagined. But the fearful will have no place there (verse 8):

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

I don’t think I’d want to be one of those: the fearful, and the unbelieving; instead of those who are courageous, and who believe, and have faith. That’s the distinction that’s made.

Revelation 21

AKJV

⁹ And there came to me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

What John is about to see is the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God—a city of such *staggering* beauty that John was at great pains to *try* to describe it for it for us; and we read it and try to read between the lines of what he meant and what he was trying to show us. You know, this is basically what I think most people think about, when they think about heaven, is a description of this city. It’s not really “heaven”, it’s the new Jerusalem—the heavenly Jerusalem, if you will, that’s come *down* to the earth where *we* are; and where those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life, those who have washed their garments clean in the blood of the Lamb, those who have been forgiven, who have received God’s mercy, and have been given life can enter into this incredible city. I suppose it could be a little bit like going to heaven, and the thought of going into this city like going to heaven; but in truth, I think most of us think more in terms of coming into the presence of God. Jasper, and pearls, and streets of gold, and all those wonderful things are very exciting; but they’re no where *near* as exciting as coming into the presence of God himself, of coming into the presence of Jesus Christ our Savior, and coming to understand what they have done and why they are doing it, and to realize what they have made of us. It’s almost too much.

Until next time, this is Ronald Dart reminding you: God does not intend to spend eternity with a bunch of losers. You were born to overcome. You were born to win.