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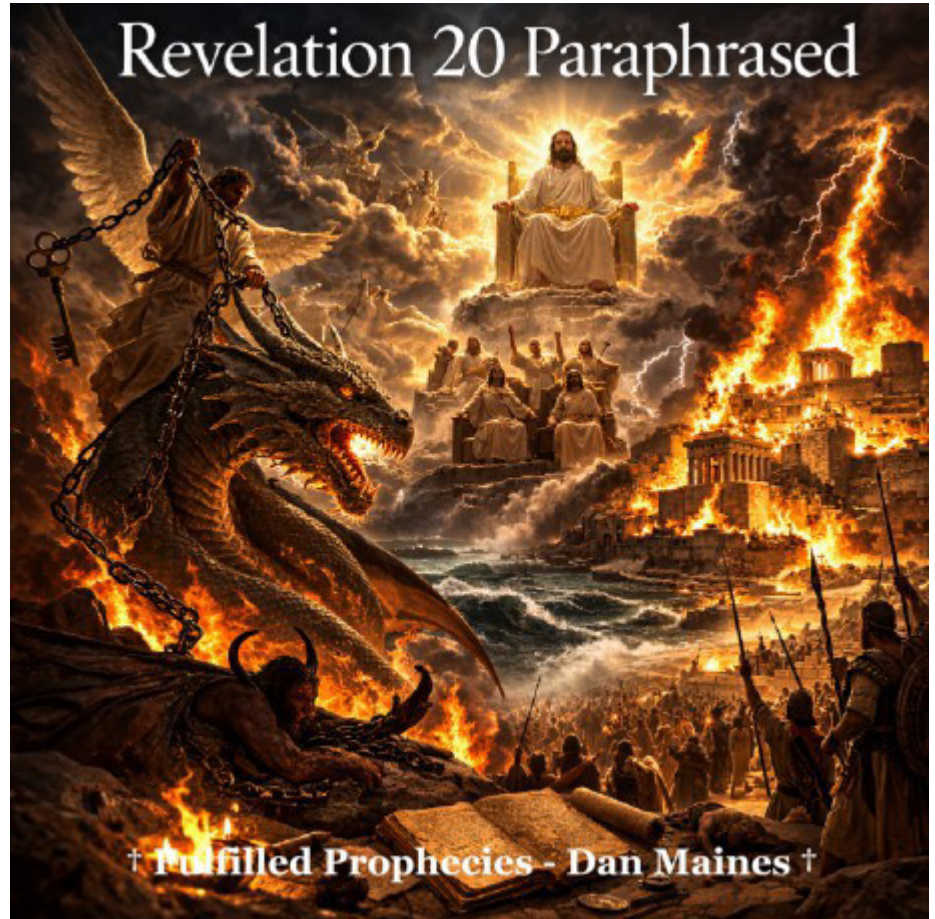
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Revelation 20 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Revelation 20 Paraphrased

Introduction

† This chapter describes the final collapse of the persecuting powers that opposed Christ and His people before the destruction of Jerusalem.

† The language of binding, thrones, judgment, and fire uses prophetic imagery that was familiar to the Jewish audience reading Revelation (Daniel 7:9-22).

† John is showing the victory of Christ's kingdom and the defeat

of the enemies who persecuted the early church during the Roman era.

Revelation 20:1

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

† The key represents authority from God to restrain the power of Satan during the time the gospel was spreading through the nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

† The abyss imagery comes from Jewish apocalyptic language describing the restraint of evil powers (Luke 8:31).

† The chain is symbolic language, showing limitation rather than a literal physical chain placed on a spirit being.

Revelation 20:2

He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is called the devil and Satan, and he bound him for a thousand years.

† The dragon and serpent imagery reaches back to Genesis 3:1 and represents the adversary who deceives the nations.

† The thousand years is symbolic of a complete, determined period rather than a literal calendar millennium, a common prophetic way of describing a full era (Psalm 50:10).

† The binding shows that Satan's ability to stop the spread of the gospel among the nations was restrained during the apostolic age (Matthew 12:29).

Revelation 20:3

He threw him into the abyss, shut it, and sealed it over him so that he could no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were finished. After that he must be released for a short time.

- † The sealing language reflects Daniel's visions where God limits prophetic events until their appointed time (Daniel 12:9).
- † Satan being unable to deceive the nations shows the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles during the first century (Acts 13:47).
- † The short release reflects the final outbreak of persecution before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Revelation 20:4

Then I saw thrones, and people sat on them, and authority to judge was given to them. I also saw the souls of those who had been executed because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image, and they had not received the mark on their foreheads or on their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- † The thrones fulfill Jesus' promise that His followers would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).
- † The martyrs represent believers who suffered under Nero's persecution but remained faithful to Christ (Revelation 13:7).
- † Reigning with Christ shows their vindication and participation in the kingdom authority of Christ (Ephesians 2:6).

Revelation 20:5

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

- † The first resurrection refers to the spiritual life believers receive through Christ, moving from death into life (John 5:24).
- † It represents covenant transition from the old system into the life of the kingdom (Romans 6:4-5).
- † Those who remain spiritually dead outside Christ remain separated until judgment.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

† The second death represents final separation from God, described later as the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

† Believers being priests fulfills the promise that the church is a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

† Their reign reflects the spiritual authority given to the saints through Christ's kingdom.

Revelation 20:7

When the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison.

† The release reflects a final period of intense opposition against the church.

† This corresponds with the final Jewish revolt and Roman war that climaxed in the destruction of Jerusalem.

† The temporary release shows that evil powers were allowed one final attempt before their defeat.

Revelation 20:8

He will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea.

† Gog and Magog language comes from Ezekiel's prophecy describing hostile nations gathered against God's people (Ezekiel 38-39).

† John uses the imagery to symbolize the massive opposition that rose against the early church.

† The phrase sand of the sea reflects the overwhelming size of the hostile forces.

Revelation 20:9

They marched across the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

† The beloved city refers to Jerusalem, the center of covenant conflict during the first century.

† Fire from heaven reflects divine judgment language used throughout the prophets (Isaiah 66:15-16).

† The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 ended the old covenant system that persecuted the church.

Revelation 20:10

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are also, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

† The lake of fire represents the final defeat of the enemies of Christ's kingdom.

† The beast and false prophet symbolize the Roman authority and false religious leadership that persecuted believers (Revelation 13:1-11).

† Their destruction shows the complete overthrow of the persecuting system.

Revelation 20:11

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

† The fleeing heaven and earth reflects the passing away of the old covenant order centered in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:35).

† The throne represents the authority of Christ as judge over the covenant people.

† This imagery parallels Daniel's vision of divine judgment (Daniel 7:9-10).

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged by what was written in the books according to their deeds.

† The books symbolize God's record of covenant faithfulness or rebellion (Malachi 3:16).

† The book of life contains the names of those belonging to Christ (Luke 10:20).

† Judgment according to deeds reflects accountability under God's covenant law.

Revelation 20:13

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and they were judged, each one according to their deeds.

† The sea often symbolized chaos and the nations outside Israel in prophetic imagery (Isaiah 57:20).

† Death and Hades represent the realm of the dead awaiting resurrection life.

† This shows the complete scope of God's judgment.

Revelation 20:14

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

† Death itself being destroyed fulfills the promise that death would be swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54).

† The lake of fire symbolizes the removal of the old covenant system that held people in condemnation.

† This represents the end of the power of death over God's people.

Revelation 20:15

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

† Being outside the book of life represents rejection of Christ and His covenant.

† The imagery shows the separation between those who belong to Christ and those who rejected Him.

† The final outcome is complete removal from the kingdom blessings.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the devastation of Jerusalem and the immense loss of life during the Roman siege in AD 70, showing the fulfillment of the warnings Jesus gave (Josephus, Wars of the Jews 6.4-6).

† Eusebius wrote that Christians fled Jerusalem before its destruction, recognizing the signs Jesus had warned about (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 3.5).

† Tacitus described the massive Roman military campaign that crushed the Jewish revolt, confirming the historical background of Revelation's imagery.

How it applies to us today

† Christ has already defeated the powers that opposed His kingdom, so believers live in the victory of that completed work.

† The judgment language reminds us that faithfulness to Christ matters, because our lives still reflect our allegiance to Him.

† The destruction of the persecuting powers proves that God's promises always come to pass exactly as He said.

Q & A Appendix

Q If Satan was bound, why do we still see evil in the world?

A The binding limited Satan's ability to deceive the nations from receiving the gospel during the first century expansion of the church (Matthew 12:29, Luke 10:18).

Q What is the first resurrection?

A It is the spiritual life believers receive through Christ, passing from death into life (John 5:24, Romans 6:4-5).

Q What is the second death?

A It is final separation from God symbolized by the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

Q What does the thousand years represent?

A The thousand years represents a complete appointed period in God's plan, not a literal calendar millennium. In prophetic language large numbers often symbolize completeness. During this time the gospel spread through the nations and Satan could not stop it. Scripture shows this restraint when Jesus said the strong man must first be bound before his house can be plundered (Matthew 12:29), and when the seventy returned saying demons were subject to them and Jesus said He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:17-18).

Q Who are the ones sitting on thrones in Revelation 20:4?

A These are the faithful believers and martyrs who remained loyal to Christ during the persecution of the first century. Jesus promised His disciples they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28), and Paul also said the saints would judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2). Their reign

with Christ shows their vindication after suffering for the gospel.

Q What are the books opened at the judgment?

A The books represent God's record of people's lives and covenant faithfulness. Scripture often uses this imagery to describe God's knowledge of every person's deeds. Malachi spoke of a book of remembrance written before the Lord for those who feared Him (Malachi 3:16). At the same time, the book of life contains the names of those who belong to Christ and share in His kingdom (Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Genesis 3:1; Psalm 50:10; Matthew 12:29; Matthew 19:28; Matthew 24:35; John 5:24; Luke 8:31; Luke 10:18-20; Acts 13:47; Romans 6:4-5; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Ephesians 2:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Malachi 3:16; Daniel 7:9-22; Daniel 12:9; Ezekiel 38-39; Isaiah 57:20; Isaiah 66:15-16

† Josephus, Wars of the Jews; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History; Tacitus, Histories.

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