

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

**<sup>4</sup> I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (NIV 84)**

Theme: The who, the what, and the where.

1. Who you were.
2. What you are.
3. Where you will be.

The book of Revelation is a fascinating portion of God's Word, but it can be a "love it or hate it" type of book. There are some that treasure this book and find extreme comfort in it; but there are others that while reading Revelation get lost, confused, and grow frustrated. That is because this book can be one most confusing and hardest books of the Bible to understand. It's filled with figurative pictures and numbers, apocalyptic language, and all different creatures doing many different things. It's easy then to get lost among the trees when reading this book. We get so enwrapped in trying to figure out every detail that we miss the forest—the big picture. Our text for today is a good example. But the big picture of our text is really the big picture of all of Revelation—Jesus wins; he defeated Satan and gives that victory to us so that we will join in him in heaven forever. We see that today as we take a look at who you were, what you are, and where you will be.

In the beginning of the world God created Adam and Eve in his own image and likeness. That means that they were perfect and holy and that they knew his will. But the devil came in the form of a serpent. He came to Eve and created doubt in her mind, "Did God really say..." He convinced her that the Lord was lying to her and that if she ate fruit from the forbidden tree, she could become like God. She questioned God's love for her and that he was telling her the truth; plus she wanted to be God so she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some of the fruit to Adam, who was right there with her, but did nothing to stop her; and he ate it. Adam and Eve rebelled against God; they sinned against him. And as a result they lost the image of God. They were no longer perfect and holy; they were no longer in-tune to his holy will. And they would die; that is the wages of their sin—to die, to have their souls ripped apart from their bodies. As God said to Adam, **dust you are and to dust you will return.** But it wasn't just a physical death Adam and Eve faced, but an eternal death as well.

And you are their descendant—you are a child of Adam and Eve. And as we read in our gospel from Trinity Sunday, **Flesh gives birth to flesh.** Passed down from one set of parents to the next was a sinful nature. You were sinful from the time you were conceived. You weren't born in the image of God; but in the image of sinful man. And so you deserve the same punishment that Adam and Eve deserved—death, but not just physical death, but an eternal death as well. As Paul says in Romans 5, **sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.**

The devil is still on the attack today. He is described as **a wolf in sheep's clothing**, or like, **a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.** But you are smart, your independent—you can handle things on your own. You don't need help from anyone. You know your weaknesses; you understand the devil's schemes. And you have a plan to take care of things yourself. Sure, many people have fallen to his temptations, but you have learned from their mistakes. You figure that you can go out and do whatever you want to do and stay away from the means of grace because you are smart enough and your faith is strong enough that you'll be able to withstand the devil's temptations.

But you are no better than Adam and Eve—in fact you are worse since you weren't born perfect and holy as they were. And yet when they were perfect and holy, they still were no match for the devil; they fell into the devil's temptation and sinned against the Lord. Let them serve as a warning to you. The devil, a fallen angel has far more power than you; he knows your strengths and weaknesses more than you do. You have no chance to stand up against the power and craftiness of the devil on your own. Numerous times a day you fail miserably just like Adam and Eve and sin against the Lord by eating that forbidden fruit, by doubting God's Word and his love for you, by refusing to lead someone away from sin; and thus you set yourself up for punishment.

That's who you were—a sinner, born as an enemy of God, helpless to save himself.

But, as we saw in our first lesson, God graciously came to Adam and Eve. And while he was pronouncing a curse upon the devil, in the form of a serpent, he gave the first gospel promise to Adam and Eve, **I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.**

From the fall into sin on, there would always be hostility between the children of Eve and the children of the devil—between believers and unbelievers. But one specific male descendant of Eve would destroy the devil's work. Adam and Eve rebelled against the Lord; they didn't deserve such a promise; but God in his grace gave them just that—the promise of a Savior.

Roughly four thousand years ago, when the time had fully come, **God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.** Christ wasn't born into sin like you were—he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary—a descendant of Eve; and yet the eternal son of God and God himself. Where Adam and Eve sinned Christ did not. He always withstood the devil's temptations. As the writer to the Hebrews says in chapter 4, **we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.**

Satan thought that he had defeated Jesus on the cross. The Lord, the eternal and Almighty God died. But Jesus went to the cross and died willingly so that he could pay for your sins and give you his perfect life. Plus Jesus didn't stay dead, of course. Three days after he willingly died he rose from the dead. He defeated death and Satan along with it, giving us this ultimate victory and in doing so, he crushed Satan's head. At the end of his letter to the Romans Paul makes a strong illusion to this, **The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.**

Our text gives another picture of this same thing—Christ defeating Satan. The angel in our next is none other than Christ himself. The term angel literally means messenger—Christ is a messenger for God and is regularly referred to in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. John saw Jesus destroy Satan and cast him down into the Abyss, a name for Hell. He bound the devil so that he could no longer deceive the nations. So this chain is not a literal chain made of metal but a figurative one made of the gospel. With the gospel we have the one tool that is able to defeat Satan and keep him at bay—as long as we are in the means of grace Satan cannot harm us or deceive us. And of course, the fact that Christ locked hell up with a key and sealed it, too is figurative. It means that Satan cannot escape and will never get out unless the Lord allowed him to do so.

You cannot defeat the devil, just like Adam and Eve; but Christ did for you through his perfect life, death, and resurrection. So, as a result, you are now a child of God. Christ restored you to a right relationship with God; since he declared you not guilty on account of Christ, you are considered pure and holy in his sight. You are a saint—the book of Revelation is full of pictures of saints, or the holy ones of God, those who are perfect and innocent.

That is what you are now because of Christ, a victorious child of God, a saint who is pure and holy in the eyes of the Lord.

But John didn't just see Christ defeating the devil and locking him up in hell. He also saw the souls of believers. These are those who either died while confessing their faith and defending the truth or those who refused to worship anyone or anything other than the one true God. These souls in heaven lived with Christ and reigned with him for a thousand years.

It's a good idea to look closer at one of these trees in Revelation: the 1000 years. Some people believe that the 1000 years are a literal thousand years—that Christ will reign on this earth with his believers for 1000 years. But based on the rest of Scripture, this cannot be true. There is no passage of Scripture that says that Christ will reign on this earth for 1000 years with his believers, or reign on earth at all.

Remember how he told Pilate, **My kingdom is not of this world.**

John saw souls (not souls and bodies) in heaven reigning (currently reigning—in the present) with Christ for those 1000 years. The Bible teaches that while the body dies, the soul never dies; but the souls of believers go on to live in heaven. As Jesus says in John 11, **He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** So this is not a picture of something that will take place in the future, but something that is happening now.

The whole book of Revelation is filled with symbolic numbers. 10 and its derivatives is a number of completeness. 1000 is 10 raised to the third degree, the highest number of completeness. It signifies a lengthy period of time that will eventually be completed. The 1000 years is the complete time of the New Testament era. It began about 2000 years ago with Christ and will continue to the Last Day. John was in this 1000 years and so are you and I.

The souls that John saw in Revelation are those who have died as believers and now live in heaven with Christ. And unless Christ returns soon, you will join them; you will be one of those souls living and reigning with Christ for the rest of the New Testament Era.

You will have been taken part in the first resurrection—you were given a new life at your conversion. And so the second death—the condemnation of all unbelievers to eternity of suffering with the devil in hell, will not affect you. Not only will your soul be in heaven, but on the Last Day when the Lord comes again he will raise your body to be like his glorious body; and then body and soul reunited in glory and in the perfect and restored image of God; you will live with him in heaven forever!

Your soul in heaven with your Savior when you die, and your body and soul together in glory forever after the Last Day—that is where you will be. And how did you get there? Not because of who you were; but because of Christ who made you what you are now—a redeemed child of God.

It's easy to get frustrated while reading this book or to lose sight of the forest while examining the trees. But here is the comfort for you and me: Christ did what we couldn't—he defeated Satan and brings us to heaven where he will guard and keep us from all harm and danger—free from the devil and sin. Jesus wins and so do we. Amen.