20:1**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 anymore until the thousand years were ended. **After that**, he must be set free for **a short time**.

*v.1 –* ***And I saw*** *– not “then I saw” – no particular sequence of events is implied here.*

***having the key to the Abyss*** *– in 9:1-2 Satan had the key to the Abyss; now he does not, so he cannot let himself in and out at will.*

*v.2 –* ***bound him*** *– Jesus bound Satan in His earthly ministry (Mt 12:28; Luke 11:20; only in the Gospels is this binding referenced in regard to Jesus’ ministry – the 1000 years begins with Jesus’ overcoming Satan’s temptation.*

***a thousand years*** *– see Ps. 90:4, Job 10:5, 2 Peter 3:8 for hints on understanding this “1000 years”; also previous notes on Revelation 20:1-6*

*v.3 –* ***Abyss*** *– John’s word for the temporary abode of Satan until the end of time; after that, it’s “the lake of fire” (v. 10).*

***After that*** *– when God has completed everything He had planned to complete.*

***a short time*** *– just long enough for Satan to be transferred from the Abyss into the lake of fire, during which he will try to destroy the Church in one last climactic battle (v. 7-10)*

**NOTE ON ABYSS and LAKE OF FIRE:**

Although Scripture doesn’t appear to support the idea of a place like Purgatory (a sort of “refugee camp” between earth and heaven, where “refugees” from earth are “processed” before being admitted into heaven), John seems to be indicating that there is a sort of “internment camp” between earth and Hell, called “**Abyss**” (or “really deep pit”).

**Abyss** is the place where Satan is temporarily chained during the time of Christ’s Kingdom of Grace until He returns in judgment. From **Abyss** Satan can direct his demons and their activities, and manipulate world events through his pet beasts (Revelation 13).

However, **Abyss** is only temporary. In the end, Satan and his demons, beasts (Rev. 20:10) and even death and “Hades” (probably = “the grave”, see I Cor. 15:55) as well as all unbelievers (Rev. 20:15) will be cast into “**the lake of fire**,” a place of no escape from eternal torment.

**4**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 about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years**. **5**(**The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended**.) This is the first resurrection.**6**Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. **The second death** has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ[I Peter 2:9] and will reign with him for a thousand years.

*V.4 -* ***those who had been given authority to judge*** *–they had been given (by God) authority to judge, and they reign with Christ, because they were “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10) in these 4 areas: (1) They are witnesses about Jesus; (2) They are witnesses of the word of God; (2) They did not worship the beast; (4) They did not receive the mark of the beast.*

***They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years –*** *not that each individual lives for 1000 years; but that each one’s shared reign with Christ began with his/her resurrection in Him in their Baptisms (Colossians 2:12) and continues throughout the time they live in His Kingdom of Grace (see previous notes on Revelation 20:1-6).*

*See Matthew 16:16-19 and John 20:21-23 for the scope and practice of the* ***judging.***

*v.5 -* ***The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended*** *– those who are spiritually dead and remain in unbelief are not in the Kingdom of Grace, and so do not reign with Christ during this “1000 years.” This does not mean, however, that they come to life at the end of the “1000 years,” just that they remain spiritually dead and not in the Kingdom of Grace as long as they do not believe.*

*v.6 -* ***The second death****- physical death. Through Baptism we have been raised with Christ from “the first death,” which is spiritual death, to live with Him forever; so now physical death (“the second” has no power over us).*

*In this way, Christians undergo two deaths and two resurrections: (1) Spiritually, through Baptism we die to sin and are raised to newness of life in Christ; (2) physically, our bodies die in this world and are physically raised at the end when Jesus comes in glory.*

**7**When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison **8**and will go out **to deceive the nations** in the four corners of the earth—**Gog and Magog**—and to gather them **for battle**. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. **9**They marched across the breadth of the earth and **surrounded the camp of God’s people**, the city he loves. But **fire came down from heaven** and devoured them. **10**And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

*v.8 –* ***to deceive the nations*** *– directly, not only indirectly through his pet beasts*

***Gog and Magog*** *– see Ezekiel 38-39 St. Augustine rejected all narrow interpretations of these that tried to limit them to certain historical peoples or nations (Brighton, p. 574); instead, he suggested that these names represent all nations at any times who are opposed to the church and godliness*

***for battle*** *– although this is Satan’s climactic attempt to destroy the church, this is not the third of three battles in Revelation; rather, this is the third scene of the same battle (see Revelation 9:13-21 and 16:12-16 for the previous scenes); cf. the Battle of Gettysburg, which lasted for 3 days.*

*v.9 -* ***surrounded the camp of God’s people –*** *not the New Jerusalem (which doesn’t come until Chapter 21), but the Church, which would be totally annihilated without God’s direct intervention* (***fire came down from heaven***; se*e Mark 13:14-23, especially Mark 13:20)*

*v. 7 -* ***When*** *– this is difficult to understand, and leaves many hard questions without certain answers: Is there a time sequence? Why this “release”? Why the need for this horrendous battle? What does God want to show us here? Here are a couple of thoughts:*

One result of this tribulation is that God can show His saving grace as He delivers His people from evil by forgiving their sins, bringing them into His Kingdom of Glory, and sending Satan to Hell forever.

Another result of this tribulation is that the church can bear witness to Satan’s final disgrace and God’s ultimate triumph.

**11Then** I saw a **great white throne and him** who was seated on it. **The earth and the heavens fled** from his presence, and there was no place for them. **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 according to what they had done as recorded in the books. **13The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them**, and each person was judged according to what they had done. **14**Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.**15**Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into **the lake of fire**.

*v.11 –* ***Then*** *– At the end of everything else, the judgment begins at last!*

***great white throne and him –****the same throne, throne-room and God we’ve seen in 4:1-5:14, but we don’t need the full description here, just mention of the throne and its occupant to tell us where this scene takes place.*

***The earth and the heavens fled*** *– either all human life, or the whole physical world flees in awe and fear before God.*

*v. 12 -* ***books were opened. Another book . . . the book of life*** *– the “books” contain the record of what everyone has done; but the* ***“book of life”*** *is the critical one (see v. 15): it contains the names of the justified, members of the Kingdom of Glory!*

*v.13 -* ***The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them*** *-   
“I believe that God will raise up me and all the dead” – Apostles’ Creed, Art. III Explanation. Brighton (p. 586) notes that “nowhere else in the New Testament is there such an earthly and graphic picture of the bodily resurrection at the End as here in Revelation 20:13.” See also I Cor. 15, I Thess. 4:13-16, John 11:38:44*

*v. 15 -* ***the lake of fire*** *– See Matt. 25:41. Outside of Jerusalem was the Valley of Ben-Hinnom, where children were sacrificed during the reigns of King Ahaz and Manasseh. By Jesus’ day the Valley of Hinnom (****הינום בן גיא*** *in Hebrew;* ***γέεννα*** *in Greek) became known as a place of horrible things, trash fires, and other abominations and a synonym for Hell and its fiery torment.*

*(Note: not to be confused with Gahanna, Ohio, which gets its name from “a Native American word for three creeks joining into one and is the former name of the Big Walnut Creek”, according to the Gahanna Area Chamber of Commerce* [***website***](http://gahannaareachamber.com/about-the-chamber/about-gahanna/)*.)*