

Binding the Strongman

Jesus and the Binding of Satan

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¹⁵ But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,”

¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.

¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.

¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;

²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

²⁴ “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’

²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order.

²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first.”

(Luke 11:13-26)

Millennium Madness

One of the most discussed and disagreed upon passages of the Bible is found near its end. “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while” (Rev 20:1-3). This text is famous for being the epicenter of what theologians call [the Millennium](#), that is the thousand year binding of Satan.

[Entire theological systems](#) have arisen over the different interpretations of this one passage. And since they are systems, it shouldn't surprise you to hear that the differences are not limited to this text. Indeed, these systems create [entire worldviews](#) about the end times that can in some ways be as different from each other as dogs are from cats. They've generated anything from fun dinner table discussions, to congenial debates, to small fights, to church splits, to entire denominations and seminaries being created just to separate themselves from those “heretics” who disagree.

To a large degree, the differences begin in [how people read the book of Revelation](#), so let's spend a moment on this. There are two basic approaches. The first sees each chapter of as [chronologically consecutive](#), like reading a classroom history book or a manual for putting together that desk you just bought at IKEA. In this way, chapter 20 takes place after chapter 19 in future history. Since the end of chapter 19 describes this crazy battle that some have identified as the Battle of Armageddon¹ (I have to admit that this seems self-contradictory to me, given that Armageddon isn't mentioned in this chapter, but was three chapters earlier.), the millennium cannot happen until after the Battle of Armageddon, because ch. 20 follows ch. 19. If their assumption is correct, this seems obvious enough. Unfortunately, I've not come across a single author even attempt to argue for why the book *must* be read this way; they usually just state that it is so, and so it must be.

The other view reads the chapters [cyclically or repetitively](#). That is, ch. 19 may or may not precede ch. 20 chronologically. The context must determine it. For a variety of reasons, this idea does not seem self-evident to modern readers (we mostly don't write anything this way these days and it is normal to impose what we do upon others). So, there

¹ [Grant R. Osborne](#), *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 688; *ESV MacArthur Study Bible* on Rev 20:1-22:21; etc.

have been many who take this view that have gone to great pains to argue and demonstrate why John meant for us to read the book this way. These arguments have persuaded me. The most convincing to me work with the [parallel passages](#) both within the book and in the Gospel of John to show that indeed, John is writing Revelation as a book of cycles.²

The Context of Overcoming the Strongman

Since this isn't a sermon arguing for how we derive one view of the millennium, I'm not going to go into those here. I'm mostly going to [assume it](#) for today as we look at what I believe is one of two of [Luke's parallels to this passage](#): [Luke 11:14-23](#)—the story of Jesus casting out demons, being accused of casting them out by the power of Satan, but then refuting that claim because he has “[overcome](#),” or as Matthew and Mark both say, did “[bind](#)” ([Matt 12:29](#); [Mark 3:27](#)), the [strong man](#). The other parallel is Satan falling like lightning ([Luke 10:18](#)), which we have already discussed, but will keep in the background as we think about our passage.

² Just a few examples, see [Warren Austin Gage](#), *John's Gospel: A Neglected Key to Revelation?* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Warren A. Gage, 2001); [G. K. Beale](#), *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), especially 974-83; [Anthony Hoekema](#), “Amillennialism,” *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977), 155-87, esp. 156-59.

The story is found in the three synoptic Gospels, and each writer has a slightly different emphasis in how they tell it. Matthew and Mark use it to conclude that the Pharisees, in rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit through Christ, have committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, and will not be forgiven. Luke saves this for a different context in the next chapter (see [Luke 12:10](#)), though he also connects the Pharisees to this sin through literary parallelism at the end of this chapter (via [Luke 11:37-54](#)). Luke's unique contribution here connects our story to the Jonah saying, via others testing Jesus who seek *signs* from heaven ([11:16](#); cf. [29-32](#)). But all three are really dealing with [Satan's defeat](#), at least in some sense of that word.

Matthew 12:22-32	Mark 3:22-30	Luke 11:14-23
<p>22 Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.</p>		<p>14 Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled.</p>
<p>23 And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?"</p>		
<p>24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."</p>	<p>22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."</p>	<p>15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,"</p>
		<p>16 while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.</p>

	23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan?”	
25 Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.	24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.	17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.
26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?	26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.	18 And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.
27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.		19 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.
28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.		20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
29 Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.	27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.	21 When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; 22 but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.
30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.		23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.
31 Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.	28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” — 30 for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”	

I also need to bring up here that **John** seems to have **his own version of this teaching** of Satan’s defeat, although it is in a different context (the triumphal entry). In it, Jesus gives a very **clear time frame** for when the event occurs and for good measure, it is the literary center of his Gospel and finds direct parallel in the literary center of his Apocalypse, which itself is parallel to Rev 20 (I’ll say more about this later):

John 12:28-32	Revelation 11:19-12:10	Revelation 20:1-3
<p>²⁸ Then a voice came from heaven...</p> <p>²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”</p>	<p>^{11:19} There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.</p>	
	<p>⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back,</p> <p>⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.</p>	<p>^{20:1} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.</p>
<p>³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.</p> <p>³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”</p>	<p>⁹ And the great dragon was cast out, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.</p> <p>¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them day and night before our God.</p>	<p>² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,</p> <p>³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.</p>

Finally, we have **Luke 10:18-20** and Satan falling like lightning from heaven, which we saw when we were in that passage is also **parallel to Revelation 20**, and there was a pseudepigrapha text in the **Testament of Levi** that connected them directly. To fall like lightning was in some sense related to Satan being overcome or bound. In that case, I suggested that his fall occurred **at the transfiguration**.

Luke 10:18-20	Testament of Levi 18:12	Revelation 20:1-2, 4
<p>And [Jesus] said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.</p> <p>Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.</p> <p>Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.</p>	<p>And Beliar will be bound by [Messiah],</p> <p>And he will give authority to his children to trample upon the evil spirits.</p>	<p>I saw an angel coming down from heaven. . . and he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. . . that he might not deceive the nations ...</p> <p>[The saints] came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.</p>

This gives us **seven biblical passages** that are all orbiting around the binding of the great dragon, like giant balls of space ice following in the tail of a comet. Together, they tell us how the serpent fell from heaven to earth. When understood properly, they simultaneously explain how the serpent

is no longer able to do certain things, like a comet that has left the solar system, while at the same time a great fury is unleashed, like a comet that suddenly strikes the earth. This paradox is what we are now going to try and understand.

Jesus, Casting out Demons by Beelzebul?

The story begins, “Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled” (Luke 11:14). We’ve seen Jesus doing this many times in the Gospel. In chapter four, after he comes back from the temptation, there was a man in the synagogue with an unclean demon and Jesus cast it out (Luke 4:35). Just a few verses later, we read about many more demons also coming out of “many,” and they recognized who he was, “The Son of God” (41). In Luke 8, we saw Mary Magdalene, from whom Jesus had cast out seven demons (8:2). Then, later in that chapter, the man with the Legion of demons was confronted and the demons were sent into the pigs (27-35). In the next chapter, Jesus had to cast out a demon from a boy because his disciples were unable to cast it out (9:42). And the last time we saw demons, it was when the 70 returned with joy because the demons were

subject to them in Christ's name (10:17). It was at that moment that Jesus told them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (18).

Now, Jesus is back at work as the itinerant exorcist. But while all the people marveled, "Some of them said, 'He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,' while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven" (11:15—16). Who is this Beelzebul, and where does this term originate?

"Beelzebub"

"Baal zebub" appears four times in the OT, all in 2 Kings 1 (2, 3, 6, 16). King Ahaziah, son of the wicked king Ahab, has an accident where he fell through the lattice in his upper chamber in Samaria (2Kgs 1:1). It is interesting that Luke puts this story in the journey of Jesus through Samaria. As the king lay sick, he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover from this sickness (2). The Angel of the LORD appears to Elijah and is furious. "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub?" (3)? So he sends Elijah to tell the king that he will die for his insubordination. And the king dies (17).

The word *zebug* means “flies,” while *baal* means “Lord.” So *Baal-zebug* is “Lord of the Flies,” and yes, that’s where William Golding got the name for his book. Because of this title, this deity was believed to be able to cause or cure disease. Importantly, the Greeks called Zeus, “Averter of Flies” (Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus* II, 28, 4; Pausanias, *Graeciae Descriptio* V 14, 1). So Zeus and this creature are related.

Now, the LXX (and Josephus) translates this as *Baal Muia* (Baal the Fly). However, Symmachus (a post-NT Greek translation) along with the Gospels have *Beelzeboul*, rather than *zebug*.³ *Zebul/zeboul* may mean “house” or “temple” (*bêt zebul*; 1Kg 8:14) or it could come from *zbl* in Akkadian and Arabic which means “prince” or “the elevated one.” Both “house” and “prince” are found in our context, so both are possible. The English form ‘Beelzebub’ does not come from any versions of the Greek NT, but rather from the Latin and is due to assimilation of 2 Ki. 1:2, 3, 6.⁴ However, most scholars today think that *Baal-zebug*, even in this OT passage, was actually a deliberate corruption of the original *Baal-zebul* by the Jews (turning the prince into a fly as a

³ “Baal,” “Beel,” and “Bel” all mean “Lord.”

⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 473.

kind of mockery of their great god Baal), but that the NT through some now unknown source maintained the original. This is why the ESV has “Beelzebul;” that’s literally the Greek spelling.

Baal-Satan

All of these point to the great enemy of God’s people in the OT, which is often just “**Baal**.” But who is Baal, besides what we’ve just seen in the name? The Gospels further identify him as “**the prince of demons**” (**Luke 11:15**). You can hear the word “**prince**” here. Princes are what **the sons of God** who rule the nations are called in Daniel 10: *archons*—the “**prince**” of Persia (**Dan 10:13**), the “**prince of Greece**” (**20**). This guy Beelzebul seems to be the prince of princes, for he controls all the demons.

What I’m about to tell you is something few understand today, but I think it is incredibly important for grasping so much of what goes on in the NT regarding **Satan**. People are deeply confused about this, but it need not be so. If this was better understood, I honestly wonder what kinds of things it would change in our thinking.

Importantly, the Jews referred to someone named **Samael** as the “**chief of satans**” in the sense of “**prince of demons**.”⁵ So, same title as Beelzebul. Remember, “*satan*” just means “**accuser**,” and this creature is said to be accuser, seducer, and destroyer. His name means “**Venom of God**” (think “serpent”). Sometimes this venomous creature was said to be the one in the Garden with Eve (**3Bar 4:8**). In **3 Enoch 26:12**,⁶ he is called—drum roll please—the “**prince of Rome**.” In the **Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:2**, king Manasseh is said to have bowed down and served, “**Satan, and his angels, and his powers**.” But later in the same book, this becomes “**Sammael and his hosts**” (**7:9**). In other words, it sees Sammael as Satan.

How interesting then that Jesus, “**knowing their thoughts, said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?’**” (**Luke 11:17-18**). In other words, **Jesus calls Beelzebub Satan**. By extension, this means that Beelzebub and Satan are Samael and, more importantly, **the prince of Rome**.⁷ All this

⁵ **Isidore Singer**, ed., “Samael,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, 12 Volumes (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901–1906), 665.

⁶ See also 14:2; T.B. Sota 10b.

⁷ “**Samael as prince of Rome. We have already seen instances where the belief in the heavenly patrons of the Gentiles is combined with the belief in Satan as the arch-fiend. Satan-Samael**

was well understood by the Jews. It is no coincidence either that the head god of Rome was Jupiter, that Jupiter is nothing but the Romanized Zeus (the storm god), and that Zeus is nothing but the Greekized Baal (the storm god). And that the place where Satan's throne was (Pergamum), is the same place where the giant throne of Zeus was located (**Rev 2:13**). All of these entities, you see, are the same person. They are just different names to get across different ideas.

It is into this that I want to return for a moment **to the temptation** of Jesus by Satan. In Luke's second temptation, the devil takes Jesus to **Mt. Hermon**, shows him all the kingdoms of the world and said, **"To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will"** (**Luke 4:5-6**). The temptation was real. The devil really did have all these kingdoms. They were given to him, by God. We've seen this in the whole divine council worldview, which is so vital to grasp if you want to understand all this stuff with the devil in the Gos-

thus becomes the patron angel of Edom, that is, Rome ... in Talmudic literature, Samael is a name of Satan and has a cosmic rather than a national significance." **Bernard J. Bamberger**, *Fallen Angels: Soldiers of Satan's Realm* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 139. "... in Luke 4:6, where Satan speaks of the authority and glory of the kingdoms of the world having been 'delieverd' to him, or in *3 Enoch*, where Sammael, or Satan, is described as the angel of Rome and the head of the seventy princes of the kingdoms of the world." **Walter Wink**, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 30.

pels. The seventy sons of God were given the seventy nations, to rule them, as punishment for our desire to commit spiritual adultery at the Tower of Babel. But why did Satan now have them all? Because **he's the prince of Rome** and to Rome belonged all the kingdoms of the world at that time. As on earth, so in heaven.

It is into this that we can now return to our passage and make sense of what we just heard. Jesus brings up **the kingdom of Satan**, this is essentially the kingdom of the Roman Empire, but in its spiritual aspect. Jesus says that, “**Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls**” (11:17; you can hear the “house” imagery here).

On June 16, 1858, **Mr. Lincoln** spoke at the close of the Illinois Republican State Convention where he addressed his opponent, not in attendance, the Democrat Stephen A Douglas, whose politically neutral stance on slavery—wanting every state to be able to choose their own road on the issue—had led to the present crisis. He pointedly attacked a policy that was supposedly going to put an end to slavery agitation. But the policy not only **hadn't worked** over the last five years, it had actually augmented the problem. “**In my opinion,**” he says, “**it will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed – ‘A house divided against itself cannot**

stand.” What did he mean? He continues, “I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other.”⁸ In choosing this passage, Lincoln likely had a double entendre in mind. Not only was America now acting like the Pharisees accused Jesus was doing, thus putting itself on the verge of collapse, one side of the debate was being positively Satanic. The point is, you cannot have mutually exclusive policies in a union, you must be united if you wish to survive.

A Foreign Attack

This is easy to see in what Jesus says next. “If *Satan* also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul” (Luke 11:18). Even Satan does not divide his own kingdom. He divides others’ kingdoms—his enemies. And this has very interesting ramifications for today in what might seem unrelated news. It is amazing to watch what is taking place in America and

⁸ Abraham Lincoln, “House Divided Speech,” *Lincoln Home* (June 16, 1858), <https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/housedivided.htm>.

around the world (and I recently heard from two missionaries even in China) at the present time. And I'm not talking at the moment about each of our personal propensities towards sin in our depravity. There are so many *policies*, new *rules* and *laws*, forced *mores* and *patterns of behavior* that we are being told we must accept, coming down upon our heads with so much *public pressure* from every sector of society all at once that it doesn't take a brain surgeon to see what is going on—so long as you aren't a frog boiling in the kettle. From the **transexual** and LGBTQRSTUVWXYZ agendas (running rampant in China!) and **critical race theory** suddenly foisted upon all of our educational institutions, to compulsory support and even literally bowing down to fascist and communist organizations that burn down entire minority blocks in our major cities with the full backing of our sports and big tech, to psyops and censorship being done by our media and our own government on the American people, to compulsory mandated **poisons** that people must put into their bodies with all the pressure the world's governments, courts, and police can bring to bear, to the mockery of anyone thinks that child sex trafficking is a problem, to so much more, and **they all have one ultimate goal in mind**. The dividing of the people and nations into factions, with

the ultimate goal, being war and our own destruction. That's my take on it, and it is literally exactly what Jesus is saying a kingdom will never do *to itself*.

That means, by definition, that what we are seeing take place is *external*. It is not coming from our own people or government. Not really. Sure, the external force(s) are using people on the inside, and many bad actors are coming from within having been bought and paid for, but that is the definition of **infiltration** and warfare.⁹ No kingdom would ever do this *to itself*. Not even Satan's kingdom. Because it wouldn't stand. Thus, this means that our civilization has been attacked and invaded and, quite honestly, we are at war. It just isn't conventional warfare as we've grown accustomed to thinking about it. That's why people can't see it. Strategies change.

Most people do not want to think about this, but it's the inevitable conclusion of Jesus' words. Just who has attacked us is still in some ways an open debate in terms of humans. But it is clear to me that this is an attack not merely on the

⁹ Specifically, Fifth Generation Warfare. **Fifth generation warfare** is “**warfare of narratives**,” essentially “**the strategy and tactics [of] ... manipulation of thoughts and attitudes without people's awareness.**” It follows first generation warfare: pre-gunpowder; second generation warfare: the weapons of gunpowder; third gen. warfare: flying machines, tanks, trench warfare, rockets, and long-range artillery; and fourth gen warfare: atomic and nuclear weapons, the concept of state and non-state actors, including terrorists, seeking to achieve political goals on a global stage. **Michael T. Flynn** and Boone Cutler, *The Citizen's Guide to Fifth Generation Warfare: Introduction to 5GW* (Resilient Patriot, 2022).

West, but against humanity itself, and more specifically Christ's church, by **evil spiritual forces**, indeed, the very kingdom Jesus is being accused of belonging to here: **Satan's kingdom**. It is incredible to me how few Christians, indeed Calvinists that I know, people who all say they believe in real and present evil in this world, total depravity, a real Satan and real demons, want to continue to pretend that everything is just fine, that there is no war, no enemy, no attacks, no problems. It honestly blows my mind. As they and their friends suffer and die, as our minds and wills are thoughts are systematically altered and conditioned with ideas that are quite the opposite of the Bible.

And it blew Jesus' mind too. But **Jesus refused to act like nothing happened** at that moment, and instead took the fight immediately to them. **“And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges”** (19). They accused Jesus of being of the devil while they went around doing the very same thing he was doing. That's just the first of many hypocrisies that Jesus will point out about these people, concluding in the parallel unit with the woes to the Pharisees and lawyers.

If I go any further into these issues, I fear I'll never come to what is the real **point of the passage** that can help us **think**

much more clearly about the devil, able even to process his present kingdom, taking it seriously, wanting to fight against it, but do so with hope and understanding.

The Greater Kingdom and the Finger of God

Jesus will not let the people fixate on the kingdom of Satan, even if those accusing him of being in it are themselves its firstborn sons. So he flips it. “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). The “finger of God” is a fascinating phrase that is different in Luke from Matthew. Matthew has “Spirit of God.” The idea reminds us of at least two places in the OT: Moses and Daniel.

When Moses confronted Pharaoh and the magicians were not able to duplicate his miracle, they told their boss, “This is the finger of God” (Ex 8:19). Remember, nearly all of Luke 9 into ch. 10 was patterned on Exodus typology. Luke even used the word “exodus” to describe the events we are now seeing. David Poe thus writes, “The contest between Moses and the Egyptian magicians, is particularly relevant, as Moses was able to prove that the power of the one true God was on his side. In Luke’s context Jesus likewise

affirms the presence of divine power when he is challenged by his competitors.”¹⁰ (One might also think of the finger of God writing the Ten Commandments; **Ex 31:18**). Daniel also comes to mind when the supernatural finger of a hand (**Dan 5:5**) wrote on the wall, “**Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin.**” The *judgment* (same idea Jesus has just used) had come to king Belshazzar, he had been found **weighed and wanting** and his rule would end that very night.

In the OT, the **hand of God** is usually the military figure (the Right Hand)—the angel of the LORD. But it seems to me that *the inspiration*, the finger of that hand makes good sense as the Spirit of God. Thus, **Matthew calls the finger the Holy Spirit**. It is by the Spirit’s power that Jesus is casting out demons, not by the power of Baal-Satan. Such a blasphemous suggestion will become the conclusion of Matthew and Mark as they talk about the blasphemy *of the Holy Spirit*, but as Luke waits to bring this up, we’ll save that discussion for ch. 12.

Instead, let’s focus on what Jesus says here. If he is doing these things, “**then the kingdom of God has come upon you**” (**Luke 11:12**). This is very important. **Two kingdoms** have now been contrasted. Satan’s kingdom, which can’t be divided

¹⁰ **David W. Pao** and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 323.

against itself and stand, and Jesus' kingdom which comes through the casting out of demons. But if the Jews are also casting out demons, what makes what Jesus is doing here any different than them? The answer is found in what follows.

The Strongman

Jesus continues, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe” (Luke 11:21). Jesus here uses the image of a “strong man.” We might think of someone in the WWE (Hulk Hogan, Andre the Giant, Mark Henry, Brock Lesnar, Triple H), or in the Strongman competitions (Bill Kazmaier, Mariusz Pudzianowski, Magnús Ver Magnússon, or Ft. Lupton's own Brian Shaw), or ancient mythology (Hercules, Ninurta, Gilgamesh, Atlas). Jesus' strongman is stronger than them all. It is very clearly Satan—the one they have been discussing. Jesus is depicting Satan as having an impenetrable castle full of goods where everything is safe: Hell and its gates that protect it. This reinforces the fact that Satan is not going to fight against himself. He's rich and powerful. Why would he want to destroy that? (Don't think from that that other fallen angels won't fight *against him* though).

But our Lord continues, “but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in

which he trusted and divides his spoil” (Luke 11:22). Suddenly, as strong as Satan is, Jesus introduces another, *stronger man*. Since the context is that Jesus is driving out demons, not by the power of Satan, “the prince of demons,” but the Holy Spirit, and since this driving out of demons means that Jesus is stronger than Satan, we must therefore conclude that *Jesus is the stronger man!* Jesus is stronger than Satan! How many forget that? As much fear and trepidation as some people have of the devil, they forget that Jesus is stronger. But while we should certainly respect the power and intellect of this enemy, we should not fear him.

Jesus is echoing two OT passages. The first is from Psalm 19. “In [the heavens and sky] he [El, God] has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a *bridegroom* leaving his chamber, and like a *strong man*, runs its course with joy” (Ps 19:1, 4-5). When the sun comes “out,” it comes out in the east, and this eastern sunrise in the LXX becomes the word “branch” (Zech 6:12 LXX). Who is the Branch? Christ (Jer 23:5; cf. Luke 1:78-79;¹¹ John 15:1-8; 1Co 1:30; etc.). Who is the bridegroom? Christ (Luke 5:34-35; John 2:9; 3:29; Eph 5:25; Rev 18:23). Who is the Sun of Righteousness? Christ (Mal 4:2). Christ is the strongman of Psalm 19.

¹¹ “The dayspring from on high has visited us” could be translated as “branch,” the same word used in the LXX of Jer 23:5 and Zech 3:8 (cf. Rev 3:1; 5:6).

The other comes from **Isaiah 49:24-25**. “Can the prey be taken from the [*strong*], or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? For thus says the Lord: ‘Even the captives of the [*strong*] shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children.’” Meredith Kline explains,

Isa 49:24, 25 is translated by Jesus into a saying about himself and Satan (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21, 22). Re-phrased, the question, “Shall the prey be taken from the strong?” (Isa 49:24) becomes, “How can one enter the house of the strong man and spoil his goods?” (Matt 12:29). And God’s answer, asserting that *he would himself contend with the strong man and take away his prey* (Isa 49:25), becomes in Jesus’ saying a declaration that a stronger warrior will overcome the strong man, take away his armor (Luke 11:21, 22), bind him, then enter his house, seize his goods and divide the spoil. According to the context, Satan is the strong man and Jesus is the stronger warrior who spoils the prince of demons by rescuing the demon-possessed from his domination.¹²

In other words, Jesus is saying that this strongman is the fulfillment of prophecy.

¹² **Meredith G. Kline**, *Glory in Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah’s Night Visions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 84. **This seems to have implications for Christ’s descent into hell**, also **Psalm 24:9; 68:18; Eph 4:9; 1Pet 3:18-20**; etc.

Binding the Strongman

This then takes us to our ultimate question. **When is that fulfillment?** The most obvious answer is that it is somehow a **present reality**, for this is the point of Jesus casting out demons *at that very moment*. If he casts out demons, then the kingdom of God *has come*. That's the whole reason Jesus says this. Each time a demon is cast out, one of Satan's slaves is set free in some sense. But we can look at this another way, through the language used by Matthew and Mark.

Where Luke uses the word “**overcomes**,” the other Gospels say, “**binds**.” “**But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man**” (**Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29**). Importantly, “binds” is the same word used in **Revelation 20:2** (Mt: *dēsē* from *deō*; Rev: *edēsen* from *deō*). So this word quickly becomes **very important to try and understand**. Those who take a view of the millennium as happening after Armageddon usually point out that if Satan is bound now, this means he can't do any evil. Period. MacArthur says that he and the demons “**destructive influence in all areas of human thought and life will be removed**.” Waymeyer says, “**Satan will be cut off from all earthly activity during the thousand-year reign of Christ**.”

It is the “total removal of his influence on earth.”¹³ But is this really the case?

Let’s think about a couple of things. First, the binding. Binding language is used throughout the ancient Jewish literature, including the OT, to speak of binding spiritual forces. This is a point almost never discussed by those who take this absolute view of Satan being utterly eliminated from doing anything bad in the millennium. “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?” (Job 38:31). Don’t think constellations. Think gods, for what are the constellations all named after? What’s the point here? The binding forces them to do exactly what God wants them to do. Essentially, it is covenantal language. In fact, the Assyrian word for a covenant, *biritu*, means “bond” or “fetter.” And the Hebrew *berith* is intimately related to this word.¹⁴ Read this way, God is placing Satan under a covenant whereby he must do what God wants him to do according to the conditions of that covenant.

¹³ *MacArthur Study Bible*, n. Rev 20:2; Matt Waymeyer, “The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20,” *Masters Seminary Journal* 26.1 (Spring 2015): 21.

¹⁴ “The most plausible solution [to the etymology] seems to be the one that associates *berith* with Akk. *birītu*,⁴ “clasp,” “fetter” (cf. the Talmudic *byryt*). This is supported by the Akkadian and Hittite terms for treaty: Akk. *riksu*, Hitt. *išhiul*, both meaning “bond.” The concept of a binding settlement also stands behind Arab. *‘aqd*, Lat. *vinculum fidei*, “bond of faith,” *contractus*, “contract,” and is likewise reflected in German *Bund*.” M. Weinfeld, “בְּרִית,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T.

But we can say more. Beale, who has a wonderful little study of this, lists several texts where **angelic creatures are said to be “bound”** (1En 10:4-16; 18:11-19:3; Jub 5:6-14; 1En 88:1-3; 2Pe 2:4; Jude 6; Tob 8:3). He then says, “It is true that in all of these Jewish texts the evil spirits appear to be bound in a complete way without any exception.”¹⁵ I disagree with this, because in one of these, **Azazel**, that god worshiped at Mt. Hermon, was said to have been bound. “The Lord said to Raphael, ‘*Bind Azaz’el hand and foot and throw him into the darkness!*’ And he made a hole in the desert which was in Duda’el and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he may not see light; and in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgment” (1En 10:5-6).

Here’s the problem. This was said to have been done *at the time of the Flood*. And whoever wrote this obviously knew that. However, as I just mentioned, **Azazel was still being worshiped** at Mt. Hermon *after the Flood*. In fact, in Leviticus, God demands that one of the goats on the Day of Atonement be sent out into the desert *for Azazel*. If he is utterly

Willis (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 255.

¹⁵ Beale, 989.

and in every possible way bound in the lowest regions of the earth, then what possible sense could any of that make? God would have to be an idiot to command a law like that. But if the binding isn't absolute, then it makes sense.

In fact, there are at least **four other texts** that clearly demonstrate that the **binding is not absolute**, and they are all intimately related to **Rev 20:2**.¹⁶ The Testament of Levi, which we mentioned in the Fall of Satan says, “**Beliar [another name for Satan; see 2Cor 6:14-15] will be bound by [the Messiah], and [the Messiah] will give power to his children to tread on evil spirits**” (**TLevi 18:12**). That's not an absolute binding, but one with a purpose. And, in fact, this is literally exactly what the conversation with **the seventy** was all about. They were treading on evil spirits! The language is so close to that passage and Revelation that it seems it is in the background in both.

In **Jubilees 48:15-17**, **Prince Mastema** (root: STM a by-form of STN, Satan is another name for Satan meaning “Ha-

¹⁶ Orlov also notices, “Scholars have noted that the binding motif was very prominent in the tradition of the fall of the Watchers. On this, see R. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC, 50; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 53. On the binding motif, see also 1 Enoch 13:1; 14:5; 18:16; 21:3–6; 54:3–5; 56:1–4; 88:1; 4QEnGiants 8:14; Jub. 5:6; 10:7–11; 2 Enoch 7:2; 2 Bar. 56:13; Sib. Or. 2.289; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5:52.” **Andrei A. Orlov, Demons of Change: Antagonism and Apotheosis in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism** (New York: Suny, 2020), 213 n. 33.

tred/Hostility”) “was *bound* and imprisoned behind the children of Israel *so that he might not accuse them.*” Then he is “let loose” *so that he can again accuse* Israel. **The Prayer of Manasseh 3** speaks of God restraining the evil chaos powers at the beginning of creation saying, “He who *bound* the sea and ... who closed the bottomless pit and sealed it...” The thing is, the sea monster is still able to wreak havoc on the nations throughout history (**Rev 12:3; 13:1**). Finally, the **Gospel of Nicodemus 22:2** says that after his death Christ “seized the chief ruler Satan ... and handed him over to the angels, saying: *Bind with iron fetters* his hands and feet ... Then he gave him to Hades and said ‘take him and hold him fast until my coming.’”¹⁷ This most ancient text says exactly what I’m suggesting. Satan is presently bound, but not absolutely. So we have several examples of binding that are in fact not absolute.

But someone might ask, how could this possibly be? Doesn’t Revelation describe him as consigned to the bottomless pit with a great chain and he is then shut in and the opening is sealed over him? This is precisely where the Prayer of Manasseh is so helpful. For who is this that is

¹⁷ While the other three are Jewish works most likely pre-dating Jesus, The Gospel of Nicodemus is a 2nd-4th century AD Christian document that scholars have put into the NT Apocrypha.

locked up? It is Satan—*the dragon*. This dragon is called Leviathan in the OT, the chaos monster. And where does he live? *He lives in the sea*.

There's a problem here in **Revelation 20:2**. Translators are interpreting a word to mean “bottomless pit” when nowhere else in the entire Bible do they translate that word that way. That word is “abyss” (*abussos*). It is the normal word in the LXX that translates “the deep” or “sea” (*tehom*). 31 out of the 34 times *tehom* is translated into *abussos*. And what's so important about the *tehom*? This is precisely where **Rahab** (**Isa 51:9-10**); **Leviathan** (**Job 41:31-32; Ps 74:13-14**), and even the **Nachash** (**Amos 9:3**) all live in the OT. Rarely are scholars bothering to even look into these words, yet there it is.

What does this mean for the binding of Satan? Because John deliberately calls him here the serpent and dragon, we are forced to see that *he is being bound in the place where he lives*. In other words, he is being put under *house arrest*. But house arrest is not anything at all like what we are told is this utter, absolute binding where Satan can do absolutely nothing. Rather, like a mafia godfather or Martha Stewart, when they are under house arrest, they can still run their kingdom.

This is why it is so important to read **the purpose clause** for the binding in Revelation. Satan is thrown here, shut up and sealed, “*so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended*” (**Rev 20:3**). Many of those who see Revelation 20 taking place after Revelation 19 and understand the point I’m making here will nevertheless argue that “**the New Testament teaches that Satan is in fact deceiving the nations during the present age.**”¹⁸ All I can say is that this is a **fundamental ignorance of the divine council worldview** which has such great explanatory power for this. For this was the very thing Jesus began to show us in the parallel passage in Luke 10, when he sends out the seventy.

The whole point of **that mission “to the nations,”** and then what we see really ramping up once God brings persecution to the church in Jerusalem forcing them to go to the nations (**Acts 8:1ff**), is that the church’s Gospel literally **saves Gentiles** who live in pagan lands and they do not have to go to Israel and become circumcised ceremonial law-keeping Jews to do it. In other words, when they are saved like this, they are no longer being deceived. **This is a fundamental change in world history** since Babel that I just think people

¹⁸ For example, **Waymeyer**, 31. As he wrestles with this problem, Waymeyer, first likens Satan’s confinement to the abyss as “solitary confinement,” which we’ve seen it is not.

have utterly failed to appreciate as it has become so obvious to us that this is what happens that we think it was always like this. It wasn't. **The nations were in darkness**, my friends. Sheer, total darkness (**Acts 17:27; Eph 5:8; Col 1:13; 1Thess 5:4**; etc.). It was a darkness of their own making, as God gave them over to the fallen angels to rule them as punishment for the Tower of Babel. It wasn't that God wasn't near to them. Paul makes this abundantly clear to the Athenians. It was that they were **blind and groping around unable to even feel their way towards him**.

The point of Revelation 20 is not to say that every single individual in all the nations will no longer be deceived, but rather that if God wants to save someone in Greece or Turkey or Egypt or Norway or Boliva or Colorado, Satan has no legal authority to stop him now. That's the point. This was **a legal jurisdiction** that God gave the heavenly sons of God the nations *as their inheritance*. God could not just take that away because he didn't like it. It was a covenantal agreement rooted in their right as sons of God. But Jesus is saying that this is about to stop. That is, the legal agreement is about to be nullified—on legal grounds. The **sons are going to be disinherited**; ala Psalm 82.

Here's where we briefly need to understand **the parallels to Revelation 20 in Revelation 12 and John 12**. These are also parallel with the two passages in Luke that we have been discussing. First, **Revelation 12** tells the story of a woman about to give birth and the dragon stood there before the woman so that he might devour her child when it was born (**Rev 12:2, 4**). This very clearly refers to Herod's attack on the babies in Bethlehem (**Matt 2:13**), for John quotes Psalm 2, the Messianic psalm where Jesus will rule the nations with a rod of iron (**Rev 12:5**).

The scene then shifts to **this great battle in heaven**. Michael is battling the dragon and “**the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiving of the whole world**” (9). This language is almost exactly the same as **Rev 20:2-3**, showing that they are parallel. In other words, they are talking about **the same event**. This throwing down of the devil is akin to the binding of Satan. Then what does it say? “**And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down**” (10). When? **Now**. Not, after the Battle of Armaged-

don. *Now*. Salvation doesn't come in some future millennium. It comes *now*. This is why Jesus keeps talking about the kingdom of God as he casts out demons and overthrows the strongman.

But now, John 12 must be looked at. In this passage, Jesus says, “*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out*” (John 12:31). When? *Now*. He says it twice. When? As he's just entered into Jerusalem on a donkey, where in one week he will be put to death. And that's exactly what he talks about next, “*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*” (32). *This is the same idea as no longer deceiving the nations*. He isn't saying that every single person on planet earth will suddenly be saved at his death. He is saying that looking to his sign of the cross will be the means by which he saves his elect from the four corners of the earth. All the nations will come to him, just as Isaiah 2 had predicted. When? Beginning at his death and resurrection. *That's the point of Pentecost*.

I believe then that what has happened is that *at the transfiguration*, Satan fell like lightning, kicked out of heaven but also raging mad and trying everything he can to keep Jesus from being installed as king. But in his own stupidity and rage, his own pride and inability to read the prophecies, *he*

put Jesus to death. That then became the **legal, covenantal cutting of the new covenant in blood** whereby Satan was legally disinherited of the nations. At that moment, he was bound, not absolutely, but from no longer deceiving the nations, no longer keeping them in absolute worship to himself, as all the pagans were for times beyond remembering.

Of course, this will now work its way out in space and time slowly, through Christ's body on earth—the church, as she witnesses and confesses and worships and evangelizes and disciplines and teaches the peoples.¹⁹ But this is precisely why it says it will last 1000 years. This is not going to be a victory savored all at once. Nevertheless, it was **a real victory**, in fact the greatest victory the world has ever known. The seed of the woman crushed the head of the serpent.

All this way playing out in a kind of **dress rehearsal** as Jesus made his way down to Jerusalem, as the seventy were casting out demons, as Jesus was bringing the kingdom near by showing his power over the strongman. As Jesus was in the process of binding him.

¹⁹ **Going Deeper:** The amazing thing about the John-Revelation parallels and the seventieth year of Daniel's prophecy (also symbolized by the numbers 1,260 days; 3 ½ years; 42 months) is that these cut the seventieth year in half. The first half covers Christ's earthly ministry in John's Gospel. The second half covers his Bodies earthly ministry (the church) in Revelation. They parallel one another as a body to a head. And this is latter one is symbolized also by the number 1000 years in Revelation 20. I discuss all this in the relevant texts in the Revelation series.

I can't think of anything more relevant or important for people to understand today, especially in turbulent times like these. Satan is not the winner. Christ is. If people are being saved still, then the binding is still effective. My view is that even at his final release, since he attacks the church (**Rev 20:7-10**), there is still some effect of the binding working—for after all, there is still a church. So even if we were living at the very end of all things, the Gospel is still the power of God. That never changes.

We might have our disagreements over the millennium and people might come away from this still disagreeing with me. But at least consider the idea and tell me how this isn't a most invigorating, hope-inspiring, fear-eradicating, go-and-do-something-now theology that the church is in such desperate need of today? We must get rid of the sell-all-you-have-and-go-live-on-a-rooftop-waiting-for-Jesus-to-return mentality. We must recapture the power that Jesus has given to his church in our faith and practice as we see the world crumbling down around us. The strong man is bound. And Jesus has and is plundering his kingdom. It began to show itself here in our text in Luke. It does not end until his Glorious Second Coming.

Whatever happens to our nation or the nations, whatever God decides to do with us his people in terms of persecution or sending a revival, we must be faithful. And we show our faithfulness only by first having faith—**faith in the power of Christ over the strongman**. Jesus has bound him. That's what he said. He is the power of heaven and he has given us his power through his Holy Spirit. It's high time we remember that and start believing it once again.

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