

THE **N**OW

THE BOOK OF REVELATION:
*VISIONS OF THE THEN
THAT CHANGE OUR NOW*

(Intro Slide)



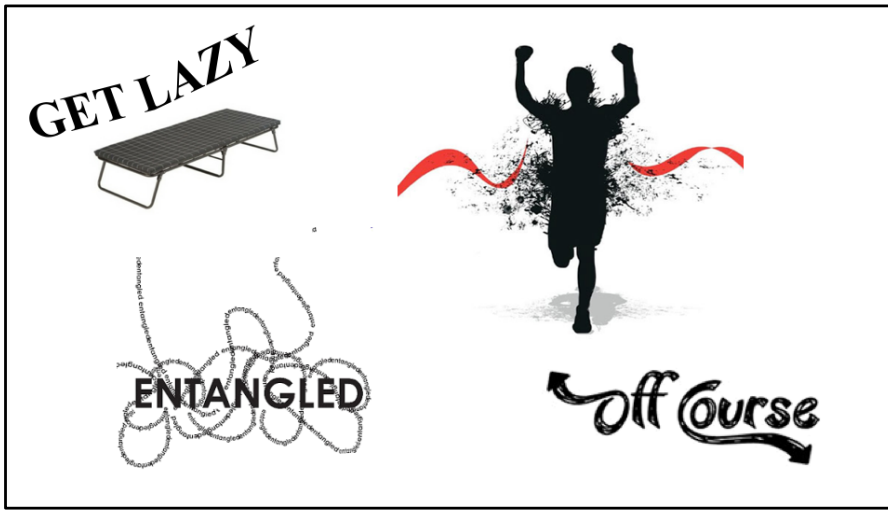
Easter is often a time of NEW BEGINNINGS.

-- Especially up in the northern countries, the final arrival of Spring, with its warmth and flowers, makes us think about making a fresh start.

-- And, it is a time for new hope and new beginnings.

-- But, God also wants us to think about GREAT FINISHES.

TR: "Starting is a matter of a moment. Finishing is a matter of a lifetime."



Today, many of us need encouragement to keep running the race . . . to run to win.

-- It is too easy for us to get entangled in civilian affairs, as the Apostle Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2.

-- Or we are tempted to go off course, cutting a few corners, forgetting we can't win the race, and get the trophy, when we cheat.

-- Others are in danger of not finishing well because they are getting lazy, imagining that the farmer doesn't have to do the hard work of faith.

TR: Revelation 20 gives us a mega-dose of encouragement that can help us develop . . .









. . . enduring faith.

-- Faith, the ability to trust God that works out into our faithfulness to Him, is that in which we must endure.

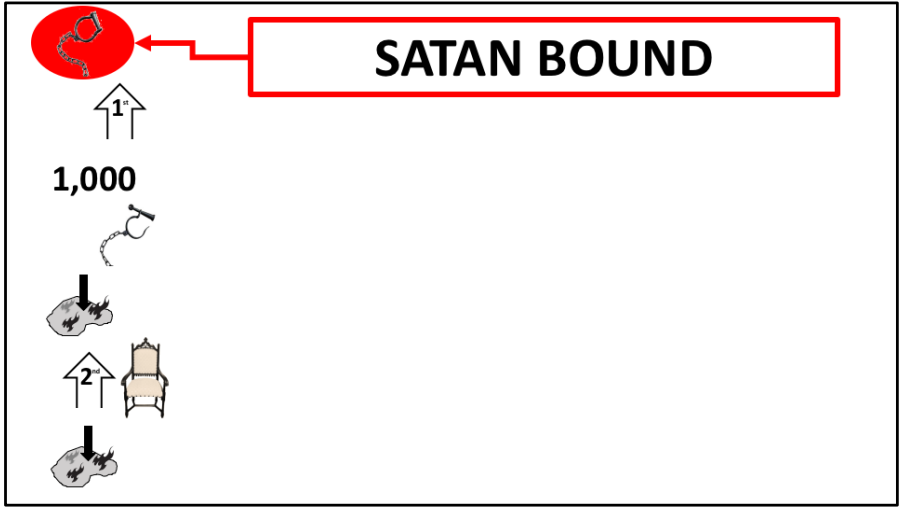
-- To have enduring faith is the call for all believers between the first coming of Jesus and His second coming.

TR: Let's look through this chapter that takes resurrection hope from new beginnings, all the way to great endings.

	SATAN BOUND
	1st RESURRECTION
1,000	1,000 YEARS
	SATAN RELEASED
	SATAN → LAKE OF FIRE
	2nd RES. & JUDGMENT
	DEATH → LAKE OF FIRE

In your notes, we'll see some simple icons that take us through this chapter.

TR: As a church that has a core value of being "UNDER THE WORD," let's work through this part of God's Scriptures.



The chapter begins by promising us that the time will come when Satan is bound.

-- Chapter 19, that we looked at last week, pointed us to the second coming of Jesus.

TR: This is what happens after the final battle, that is really a rout by Jesus through His spoken word. It will be no nail-biter. Jesus wins decisively. He is God Almighty.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, **and bound him for a thousand years,**

ESV

READ SLIDE

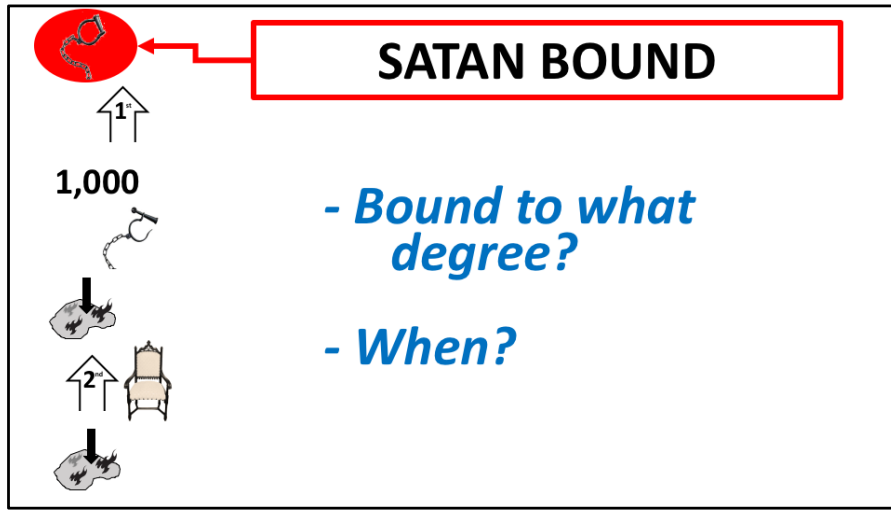
TR: Verse 3

... 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.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: These first three verses give us an overview of what will happen, but they focus on a time when . . .



. . . Satan will be bound.

-- Bound to what degree?

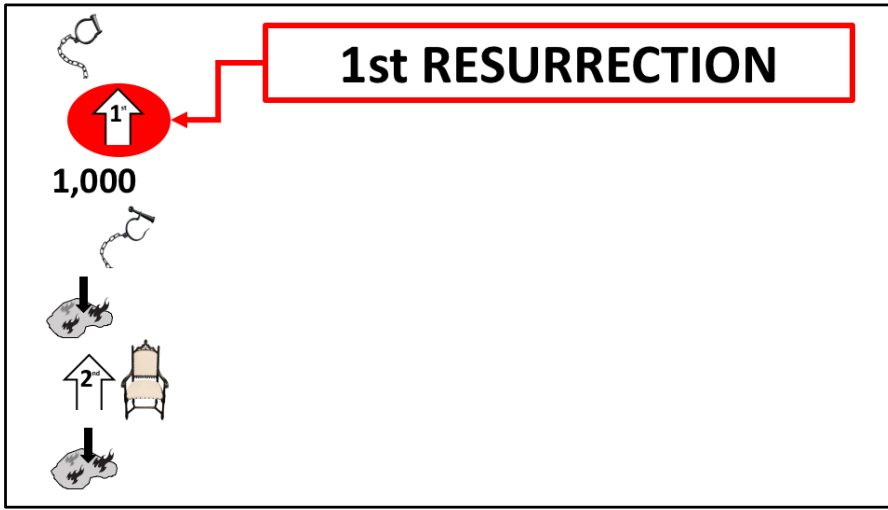
-- It seems to a great degree . . . chained with a great chain, thrown into the pit, shut and sealed over

-- This degree of binding even helps us with the question about the **WHEN of these 1,000 years.**

-- Some think that it is right now, the time between Christ's first coming and second.

-- But, our experience, and especially our suffering brothers and sisters around the world, tell us that while Satan is under the sovereign hand of God, he certainly seems to have a lot of freedom to hinder us. I don't think this is talking about now.

TR: Around this time, when Satan is bound and imprisoned, there will be the . . .



... 1st resurrection.

TR: Look at verse 4

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 4 continues . . .

Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- Talking about martyrs, the killing of those who had remained faithful to Jesus.

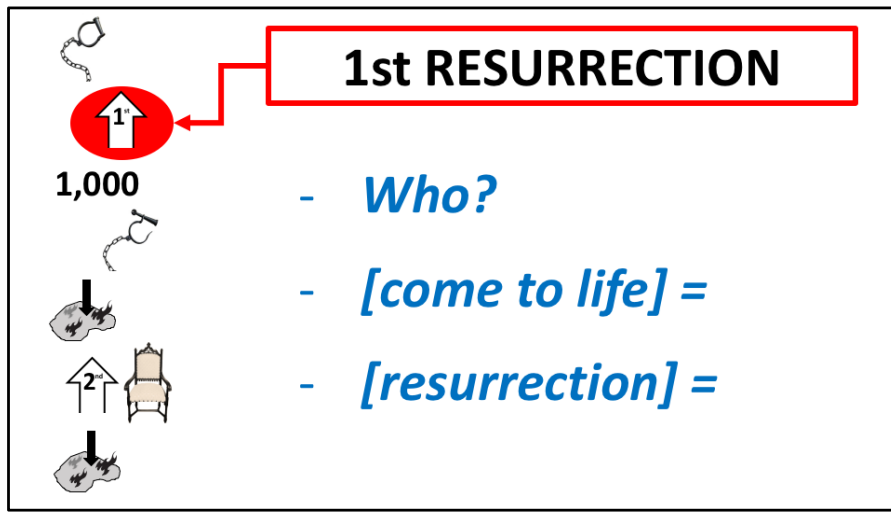
TR: These souls, including the many who had died in the final years of the great tribulation, that we've read about in the earlier chapters of Revelation, will . . .

They **came to life** and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is **the first resurrection**.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Key questions in these verses include . . .



. . . WHO are these folks?

-- Are they just the martyrs, of all time or just the tribulation period?

-- Or are these martyrs symbolic of all the faithful who refuse to commit idolatry by worshipping the anti-Christ OR the world controlled by the spirit of anti-Christ.

-- COME TO LIFE and RESURRECTION, and what these mean, are related to each other.

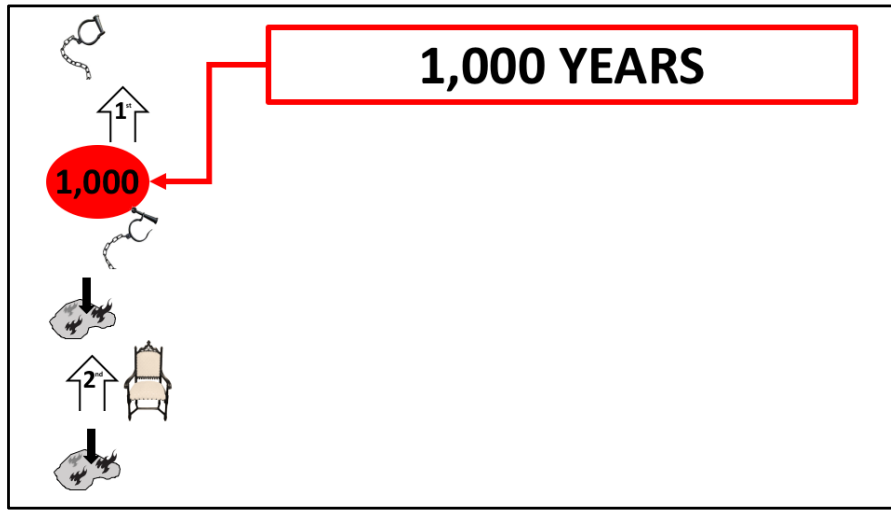
-- Those who think the 1,000 years is merely symbolic, of the time we are in now, have to take these to be symbolic as well.

-- But, we are told that “the rest of the dead” did not come to life UNTIL, which means all will be resurrected.

-- This is not just about being raised to newness of life when we trust Christ, as symbolized by baptism, but about our bodies being raised even as Jesus was raised from the dead on the first

Resurrection Sunday.

**TR: The components of this time center around the idea of
...**



. . . 1,000 years.

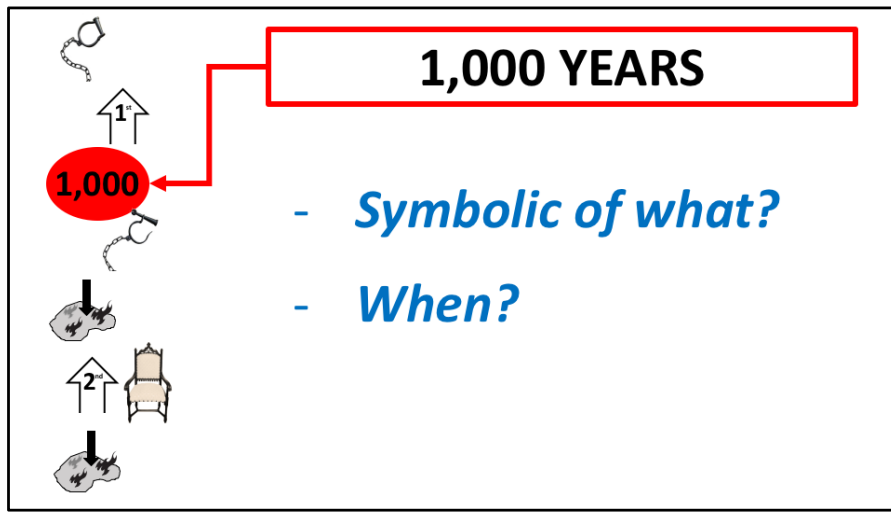
TR: Verse 6 gives us one of the beatitudes of the book of Revelation, the “Blessed are” statements.

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

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Those who are faithful to Christ, like the martyrs who are faithful even to death, will reign with Jesus, as rulers and priests.



But, what is this 1,000 years SYMBOLIC of?

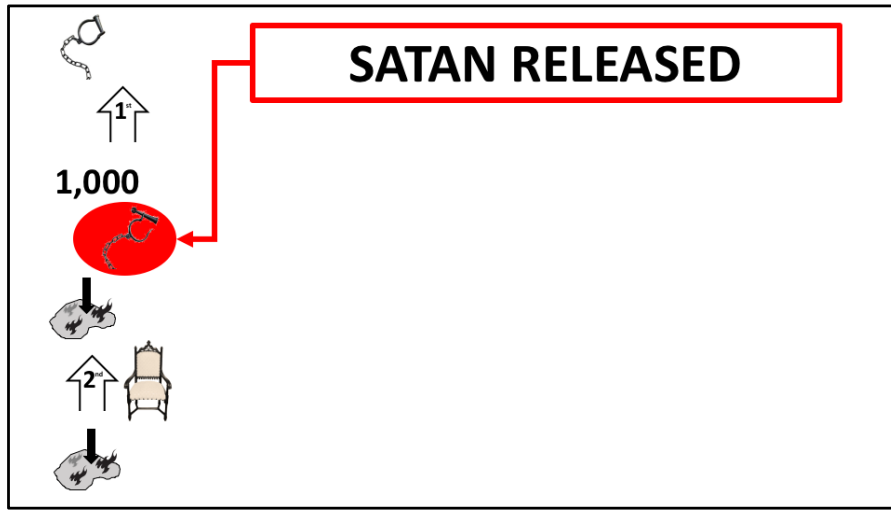
-- There are some who think this is a literal period of time covering ten centuries.

-- Most would look at the various symbolic numbers throughout Revelation and would agree that this is a symbol.

-- But, a symbol of what? It seems to be of a period of time, a period that is far longer than the 3 ½ years of challenging suffering that this final book of the Bible talks about.

-- **WHEN** will this take place? If the first resurrection is a bodily resurrection, then it is not talking about **NOW**, but the **THEN**, when Christ returns.

TR: This period of time is book-ended by first resurrection and the binding of Satan, with the other bookend being . . .



. . . Satan's brief release at the end of the 1,000 years.

TR: Verse 7 addresses this . . .

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Verse 9

And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

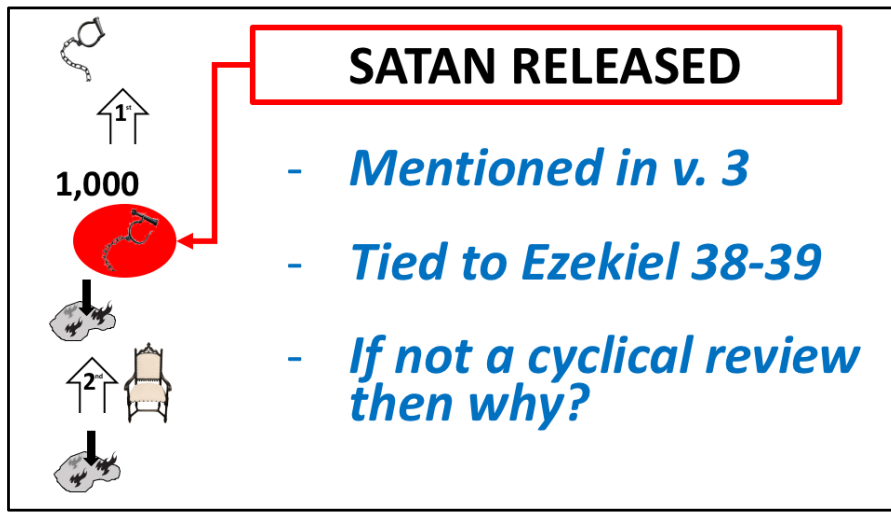
ESV

READ SLIDE

- This battle, after the thousand years, is no more a nail-biter than the one at the return of Christ to the earth.
- Rebelling against God is not a winnable proposition . . . ever.

TR: A couple of key insights about these verses include that . .

.



... Satan's release has already been mentioned in verse 3, the overview verses.

-- The mention of Gog and Magog brings us back to the same reference to this leader and the land he leads mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39.

-- The folks who believe that this time of final battle is the same as the other battle references found earlier think this is just another cyclical review or recapitulation.

-- But, if it is after the 1,000 year reign of Christ and His saints, why would God allow this?

-- I think it is to show us the depravity of our hearts without Christ.

-- There are several theories of how folks who are not believers get into God's 1,000 year kingdom – perhaps it was only the kings and their armies that were wiped out in chapter 19.

Perhaps the calling up or rapture of the saints happened but after that some come to faith. Yet, unglorified, they have children.

-- In any case, there are folks who are not yet glorified in body and who have not decided to follow Jesus at the end of the 1,000 years.

-- Even 14 lifetimes under the direct reign of Jesus will not change us deeply, if we have not yielded the throne of our lives, that is, our hearts, to Christ.

-- We may be tempted to blame our environment or circumstances for our choices.

-- But, it is our sinful hearts that are the real problem.

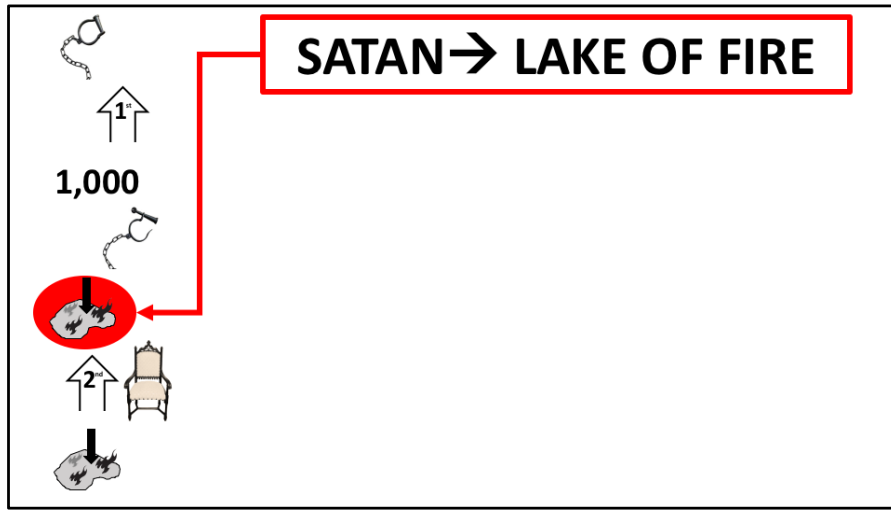
-- We all wonder whether someone has REALLY changed . . . or, given the right deceptions, that they would fall again into the sin.

-- The deceptions of not getting caught, it doesn't really matter, I deserve this.

TR: After this brief release of Satan, who deceives the

nations into one more rebellion against God and His Christ

...



. . . we see Satan cast down to the lake of fire.

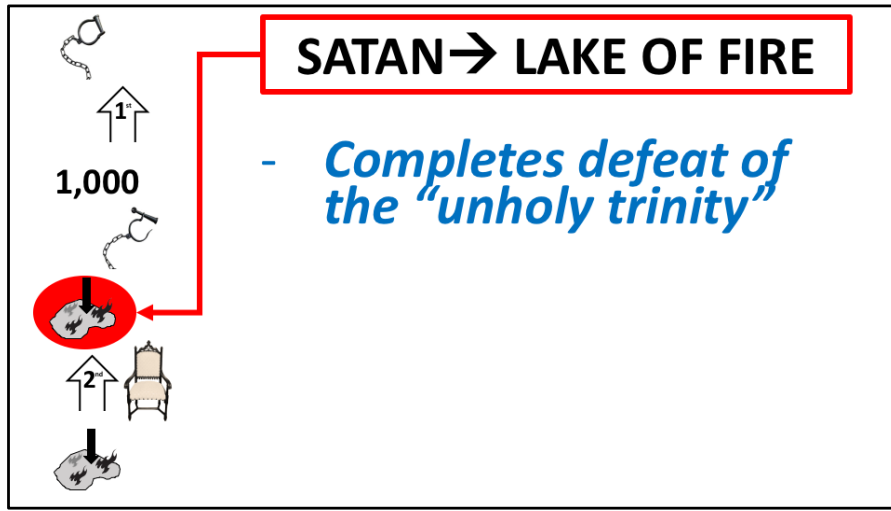
TR: Verse 10

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

ESV

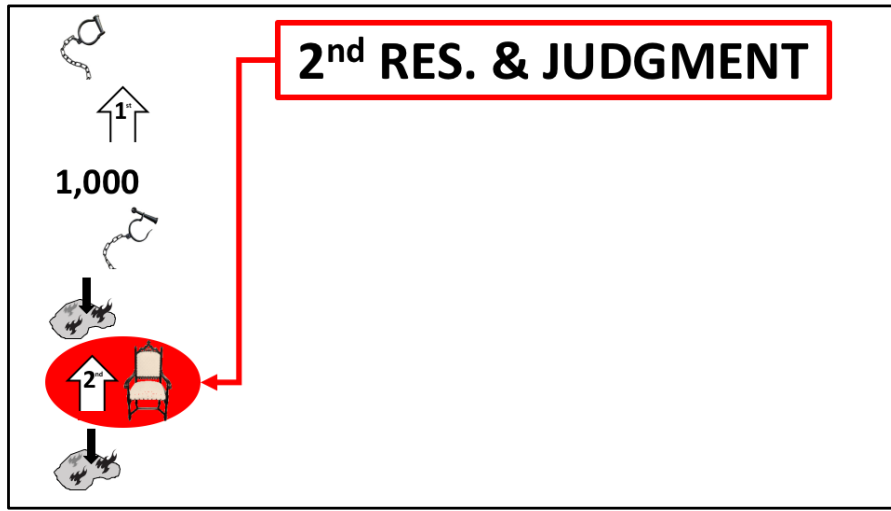
READ SLIDE

TR: The lake of fire ends up ...



. . . completing the defeat of the unholy trinity of Satan, the beast (Anti-Christ), and the false prophet.

TR: The forces of evil are defeated and those, who were not raised in the first resurrection, are now raised in the . . .



. . . second resurrection and great white throne judgment.

TR: Verse 11

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- The awesome presence of King of Kings, Jesus.

TR: Verse 12

Revelation 20:12 page 1143

27

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.

ESV

READ SLIDE

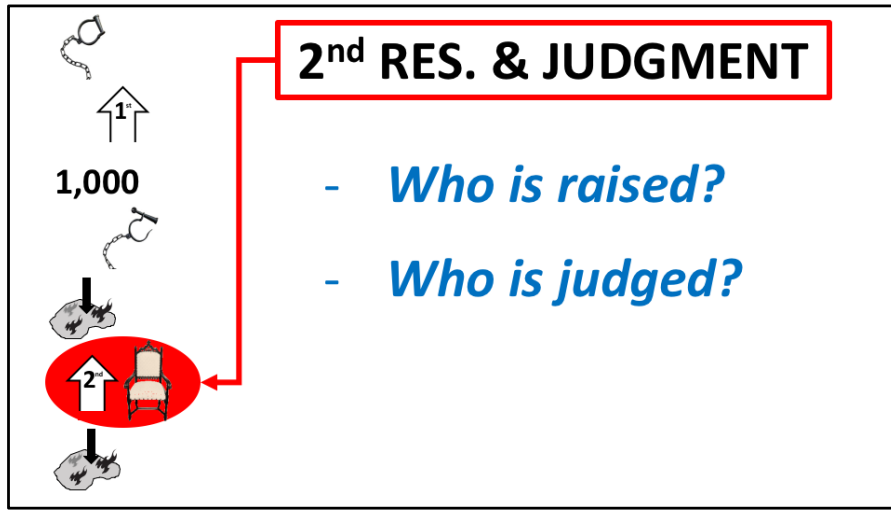
TR: Vere 13

And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: These three verses raise some important questions.

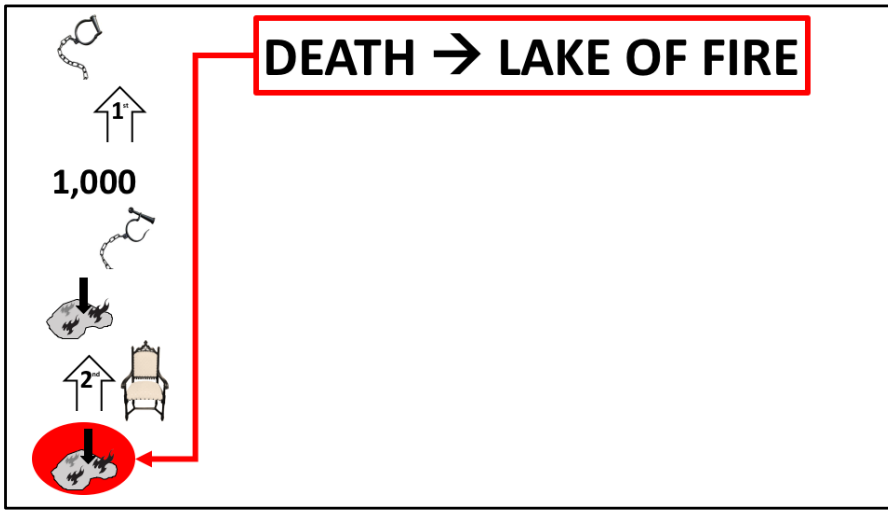


WHO IS RAISED?

- Part of the answer relates to who we think was raised in the first resurrection. If that was merely a spiritual resurrection, then this applies to everyone.
- But, if at the first resurrection, it was the believers, both those who had died and those still alive . . .
- . . . then this is the rest of the dead (as the opening verses of the chapter make clear).

- **WHO IS JUDGED** at the great white throne? Certainly those who are raised in the second resurrection.
- Yet, the reference to “great and small” suggests that all will stand before this throne.
- Believers, those whose names are in the book of life, will not be judged for their sins but rewarded for their sacrifices.

TR: This chapter ends with . . .



. . . death being thrown into the lake of fire.

TR: Revelation 20:14

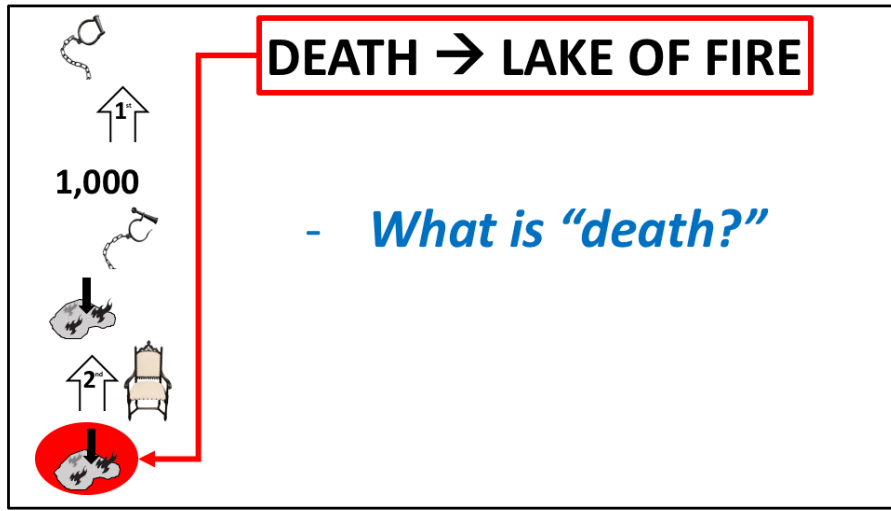
Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Death is thrown into . . .



. . . the lake of fire.

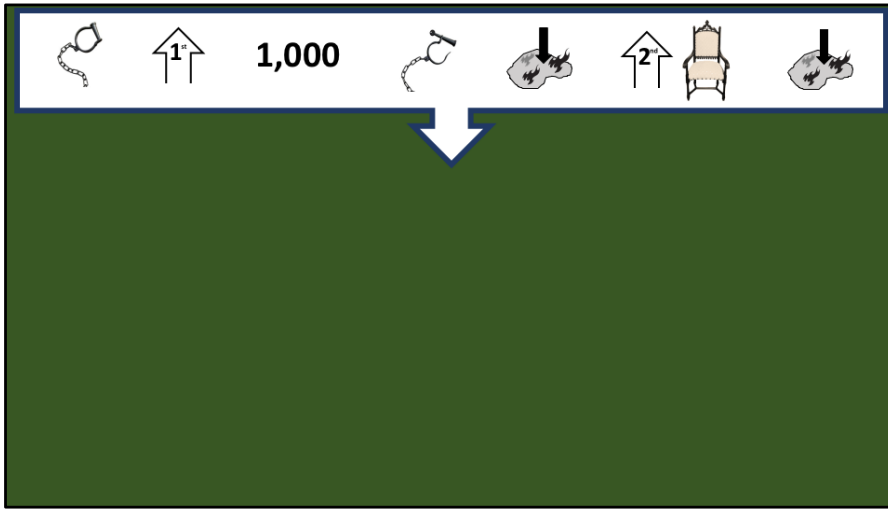
- Death and Hades, the holding place for those who don't know Christ as Savior, are now thrown into the final reality of being experientially separated from God.
- Death is not really the end but rather the SEPARATION from others. The second death is the separation for all eternity from the experienced presence of God in horrid torment.
- Obviously, "death" is not an person . . .
- . . . but what we have is a symbolic reference to the wonderful truth that we will explore next week in Revelation 21,
- that death will be no more.

TR: All of that is interesting, but we might be tempted to ask, "How does that help me this week?"



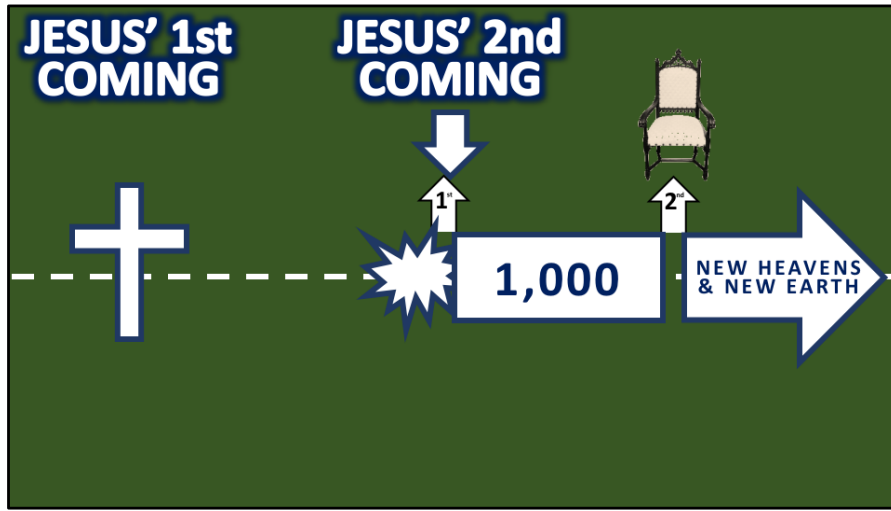
How can these biblical truths, about the first and second resurrections, help us develop enduring faith.

TR: In our notes we are trying to move from the . . .



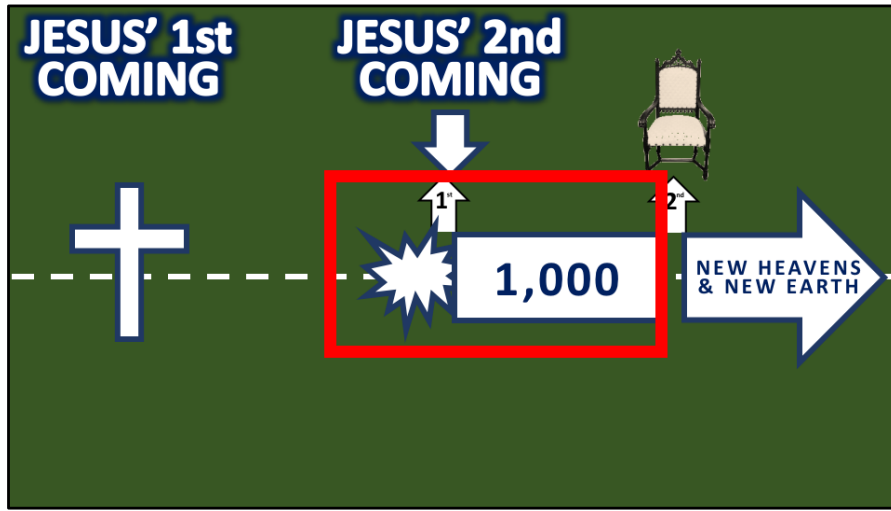
. . . top box, with its icons and overview of Revelation 20, to our lives right now.

TR: For those who've never considered what the Bible teaches about the end times, perhaps we need to take a moment and put it in perspective.



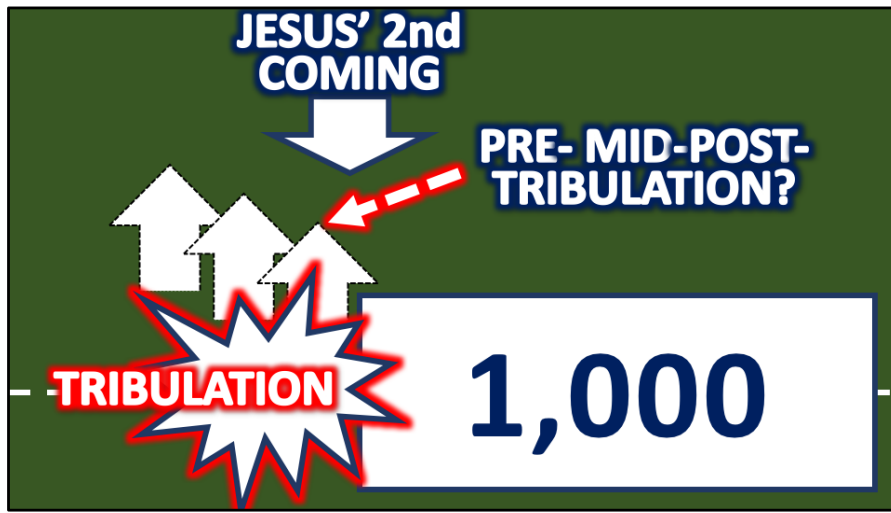
The way I understand this chapter and how it fits with history is
... REVIEW SLIDE

TR: If we zoom in a bit ...



... looking at the time of Jesus' second coming ...

TR: We see that there are many believers who are confident that the 1,000 years, literal or symbolic of a long period of time, is talking about an earthly kingdom with Christ physically reigning.

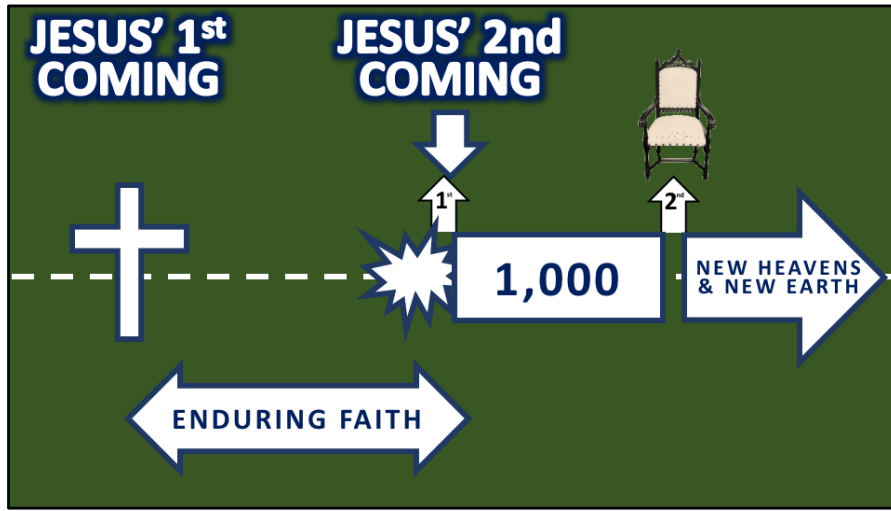


But, there is disagreement about whether the first resurrection is talking about the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the living believers . . .

-- before, in the middle of, or at the end of the time of tribulation.

-- I personally think we need to be ready to face the time of tribulation with enduring faith.

TR: Even as we are called right now . . .

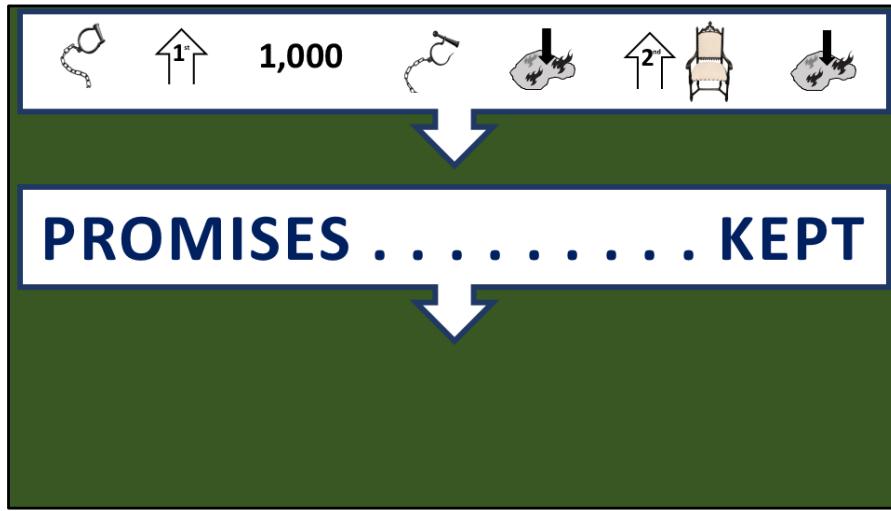


. . . to be people of enduring faith.

-- The Revelation of Jesus to John was not given to us to fulfill our curiosity about the future, but to strengthen and establish the first century believers and us.

-- This glimpse into the future THEN was to help us heed the call to endurance and faith NOW.

TR: For me, this chapter tells me that . . .



. . . God's promises will be kept to the full.

-- The Bible has many promises that we NOW experience a measure of, but that await the THEN to get in completeness.

TR: Are we in the 1,000 years now? I don't think so, for Satan is still deceiving people today.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for **they are folly to him**, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

ESV

As 1 Corinthians says . . . READ SLIDE

TR: Paul's second letter to the people in Corinth, modern day Greece, goes further . . .

Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read **a veil lies over their hearts.**
¹⁶But when one turns to the Lord,
the veil is removed.

ESV

READ SLIDE

TR: Satan is deceiving many today. But, even as the 1,000 year binding and then final release of Satan showed us in Revelation 20 . . .

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, **because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.**

ESV

... the problem is deep within us.

-- The lawless one is the beast, the anti-Christ of the book of Revelation ... READ SLIDE

-- Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet are the unholy trinity aligned against us ...

-- ... but the problem is they "REFUSED TO LOVE THE TRUTH."

TR: The next verse goes on to say ...

Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹²in order that all may be condemned **who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Yes, God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned . . .
- . . . but, it is because they do not believe but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- They would rather cut corners and get off the path . . .
- . . . or get lazy and lay down . . .

TR: Revelation 20 makes clear that in spite of Satan's deceiving work, before the 1,000 years and briefly at the end, Jesus wins . . . and we win with Him if we have trusted Him.

Romans 16:19-20

For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. ²⁰**The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

ESV

**We can have enduring faith today, being wise to what is good and innocent to what is evil . . .
-- because READ SLIDE (highlight only)**

TR: Jesus Himself said it this way . . .

John 5:25-26

"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, **and is now here**, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and **those who hear will live**. ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

ESV

READ SLIDE

- Today, in the already **NOW**, we can live.
- We can be spiritually raised with Christ through faith.
- The Son, who has life in himself, will grant us eternal life beginning right now.

TR: But, there is still a future to come. The next verses in John's gospel read . . .

Do not marvel at this, **for an hour is coming** when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come out, those who have done good to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil to the **resurrection of judgment**.

ESV

READ SLIDE

-- This is talking of the first and second resurrections we just saw in Revelation 20.

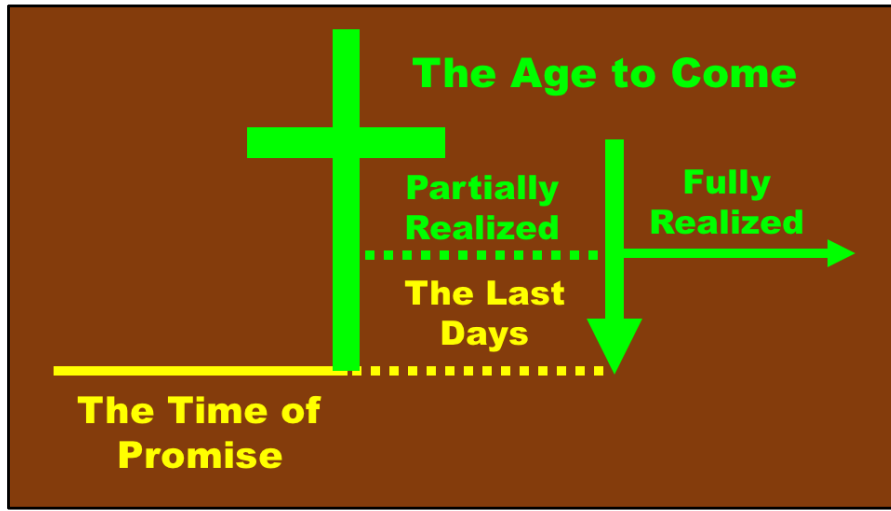
TR: Today, in the NOW, we must welcome the truths of the future into our hearts so that we . . .

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

ESV

. . . READ SLIDE

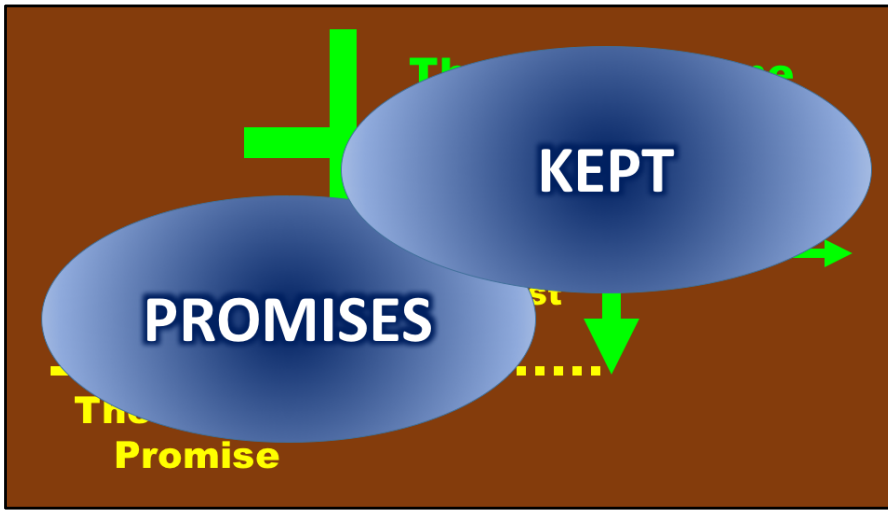
TR: I hope, in the midst of the questions of details, you see the big picture.



We are living in the LAST DAYS.

-- The AGE TO COME is now partially realized, but after the return of Jesus we will experience the full realization of God's kingdom.

TR: All this is what Resurrection Sunday is all about . . .



. . . it is about Promises that are kept.

-- God promised to send a Messiah . . . promise kept.

-- He promised to atone for our sin in a day . . . Good Friday . . . promise kept.

-- Jesus said He would rise on the third day . . . promise kept.

-- He said if we trust in Him we would be raised to newness of life NOW and given the Holy Spirit to live within us . . . promise kept.

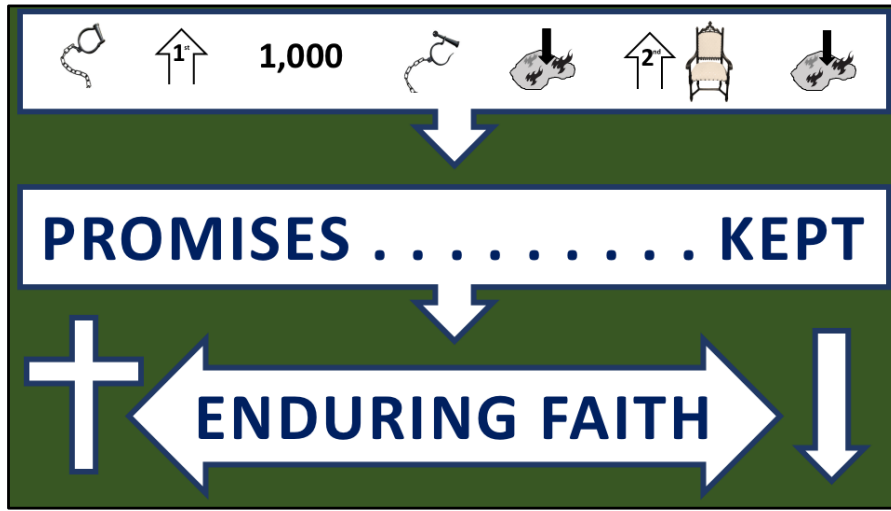
-- He told us through His apostles that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, Satan . . . promise kept.

-- Yet, Revelation 20 shouts to us that the fullness of our victory of Satan, the fullness of eternal life along with resurrection bodies,

-- and the fullness of death no longer being our final enemy

WILL BE PROMISES KEPT.

TR: God has kept His promises . . . and He will keep all those that still await their fulfillment . . .



. . . and as we live between the first and second coming of Jesus, we can be people of enduring faith.

-- People who finish well. Who run the race to the end. Who persevere through the challenges.

TR: For those of us who are welcoming this glimpse of the THEN into our NOW, there are at least four prayers that follow from our study . . .

*Ask God to expose
the deceptions that lure us*

First . . . READ SLIDE

- Satan is not yet bound and locked up. He is prowling around seeking whom he can devour.
- He is trying to use his number one weapon, which is not power but DECEPTION.
- We can be silly and say, “I’d know if I was deceived.” But, a deceived person doesn’t know.
- So, won’t you pray right now . . . “God, would you expose the deceptions and help me see your truth?” (Take a moment of silence to do so)

TR: A second prayer of application is to . . .

*Ask God to help us
“keep our minds on things above”*

READ SLIDE

- The book of Revelation talks about “earth dwellers” – people who don’t have a relationship with God and focus on living only for the NOW.
- God gave us Revelation 20 so that we might see the truth about the THEN . . . and help us rise above the entanglements of the living for today.
- EX: Passed a store front with “Carpe NOW.”
- Let’s pray that right now, “God, please help me to see the importance of the eternal THEN so that I can make good choices NOW.”

TR: The third prayer is tied to the lesson of a released Satan, who deceives and rallies the unbelievers to rebel against God one last time . . . we need to . . .

*Ask God to help us quit
blaming others for our choices*

READ SLIDE

- Outer conformity for 1,000 years is not the same as spiritual reality.
- Even as our true hearts often show up when we are no longer under our parent's reign, so will hearts be exposed at the end of the 1,000 years.

- For me, I've asked God to help me . . . **RE-READ SLIDE**
- Other people's bad choices do not excuse ours.
- The devil may seek to deceive us, but he can only do so if we refuse to love the truth.
- We need the Spirit's help to stop blame-shifting.

- We need God to help us see the deceptions we've fallen for, we need Him to help us keep our minds on things above . . .

and to admit that we've been entangled with things here below . . .

-- We need God to help us quit defending ourselves, blaming others or comparing ourselves to people we think are worse than us.

-- We need God to help us see that hypocrites in the church or in our families does mean Jesus is a hypocrite . . .

-- . . . and it certainly does not mean that we are not hypocrites ourselves.

-- Will you take a moment right now to pray, "God, help me to own that I am a sinner, not just in theory but in practice. Help me quit blaming others for my choices. Help me come to you humbly and honestly."

TR: For us to have enduring faith, to finish well, which is a matter of a life time, we need to begin . . .

*Ask God to write our name
in the Book of Life*

- . . . which is a matter of a moment.
- This is the fourth prayer . . . to READ SLIDE
- One won't pray this without the others . . . revealed deception, perceived hope, accepted responsibility.
- To have ENDURING FAITH you need to begin with childlike faith that asks Jesus to write your name in the book of life.
- A life of faith begins with a step of faith.
- Let's take a moment to actually pray that . . . or to praise God that we've prayed that sometime in the past . . . "God, I receive what Jesus did for me through His death and resurrection and so I ask that you write my name in your Book of Life."

- Last week we used the imagery from Revelation 19 of the wedding garments to help us understand what it means to become a Christ-follower.

-- With joy, we baptized our new sister in Christ before she headed back to the Netherlands. We are looking forward to a number of baptisms next week and hopefully more in the near future.

TR: Today, I would like to use this huge Bible as a touchpoint.

Ask God to . . .

*expose the deceptions,
keep our minds on things above,
help us stop blaming others,
write our name in the Book of Life*



Some of us have prayed to have our names written in the Book of Life, others have prayed along the lines of the other requests.

-- If you are ready to stop being entangled, or off-course, or just plan lazy in your faith . . .

-- . . . won't you come forward, briefly lay your hand on this Bible, saying to God, "By your grace, I trust the promises You have already kept . . .

-- . . . and the promises You will keep. Help me keep my promise to be a person of ENDURING FAITH."