

What’s your reaction when the “Check Engine Light” pops on your dashboard? Ignore it? Wonder, “*How long can I drive with it on?*” Get nervous, “*Uh Oh?*” The “Check Engine Light” recently made an appearance on my dashboard.

That light is disturbing, but it’s also necessary. Something’s wrong and needs to be fixed. I’m grateful for those who know how to turn off that tiny engine light. The repair bill may be painful, but it’s better than waving at the cars driving by while waiting for a tow truck.

We live in a world that has the “Check Engine Light” on. It warns us something is wrong in our own lives and the lives of those we know and love. Death is present. Sin is everywhere. Heartache is constant. Problems are never-ending.

Who’s responsible for death and sin, for heartache and problems? Our Revelation reading uncovers his identity: **the Dragon, the Ancient Serpent, the Devil, Satan.**

He may go by many names, but he only has one goal ... to destroy your faith so you have to join him in hell. Lies and deceptions have been and still are Satan’s weapons of choice in achieving his goal. If it isn’t broken, why fix it? If it works, why change it? He’s a smooth-talking liar, just ask Adam and Eve. And we still fall for it way too many times to count. Why would we think the Devil, whose name means liar, would be telling us the truth? Why would we think Satan, whose name means enemy, would be our friend?

Are you ready to unwrap the Revelation reading that has thrones, a dragon and an angel with a chain? Do you want to find out if there’s a way to turn off our world’s “Check Engine Light” which Satan is responsible for? Before we walk through these 6 verses, let’s establish a few ground rules.

- 1) **The Bible is God’s Word.** Therefore, we let the Bible tell us when God is speaking literally; and when he’s using picture language. Most false interpretations of Revelation happen because people break this rule.
- 2) **Revelation is picture language.** It’s a vision God gave John to write down. Therefore, let other

parts of the Bible provide its own interpretation for Revelation’s pictures.

- 3) **The 22 chapters of Revelation cover John’s 7 visions from God.** Each vision pictures the struggle between Satan and Jesus from the time he ascended back to heaven, until the time he returns from heaven. Chapter 20 begins the 7th and final vision.

v.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.

Who is the angel who holds the key to the Abyss? The angel is Jesus. He already told John that he holds the keys to death and Hades in chapter 1. The great chain that Jesus carries is a picture of his strength and power to put the devil on a leash.

v.2) He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

With more pictures, the Devil is compared to a dragon, a powerful mythical beast and a serpent, which takes us back to the fall into sin. Jesus locks up this deceiving liar for 1,000 years.

What is the great chain Jesus carries? Ask yourself, “*What is it that locks up Satan?*” Satan gets us to sin and then wants God to condemn us for our sin. Jesus found a way to shut Satan up, by letting himself be locked up with nails on a cross, to pay for our sins. Because God’s wrath targeted Jesus, he could declare to us: “*Your sins are paid for.*” When you were baptized your sins were paid for. Where can we discover this good news? The Word of God chains Satan up and shuts Satan up.

Jesus’ chaining of Satan will last for 1,000 years. Revelation’s 1,000 year reference has been mishandled by so many. Millenium means “thousand.” Millennialists believe this 1,000 years will come at the end, just before Jesus returns, when believers will rule on earth and defeat their enemies. This false idea takes the 1,000 years literally.

Can we be sure this 1,000 years isn’t to be taken literally? Yes! Everything in v.1,2 of John’s vision are

pictures. Jesus as an angel holding a key. The devil as a dragon. Hell as the Abyss, or deep pit with a lock. You can't wrap up Satan, an evil spirit, with chains, but Jesus is holding Satan back with a great chain.

The 1,000 years is the time which began with the coming of Christ, **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."** Jesus' death and resurrection bound Satan and limited his ability to hurt God's people. That marks the beginning of the 1,000 years and his return on the final day will conclude it.

v.3) He (the angel) threw him (the dragon) 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.

Even chained Satan isn't completely restricted. His lies and deception still appeal to our sinful nature and influence the unbelieving world. That's why the Bible issues so many warnings about the roaring and prowling devil looking for believers to chew up and spit out. There will be a short period of time, near the end of the NT age, that will be especially difficult for believers as false prophets will deceive many and the love of most will grow cold.

v.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 lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

John now notices the thrones of judgment in heaven. We're surprised by who is and isn't seated on them. Believers and martyrs occupy these thrones, not God. John's first readers probably saw or heard about fellow Christians who had been beheaded, because of their testimony for Jesus. They refused to worship the beast and had no mark on their foreheads or hands. What is the **mark of the beast**? It's not a physical mark. It's more Revelation picture language. What does it mean? The head is where you think. The hands are where you act. They picture Satan working in people's thoughts and through people's actions.

Those without the mark will live and reign with Christ. This is important and powerful stuff. It's the reason we can call a Christian funeral service a Victory celebration. Along with Revelation's first readers, we have the comfort that those who die in faith are still alive in heaven. Jesus promised Martha, **"Whoever lives and believes in me will never die,"** and he reassured the thief on the cross, **"Today you will be with me in paradise."** Believers also begin to rule with Christ in heaven when their souls leave their bodies in physical death. Souls and bodies will be reunited when Jesus empties the graves on Judgment Day.

v.5,6) This is the first resurrection. 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 and will reign with him for a thousand years.

For most of us, the first resurrection was at our Baptism when, **"God raised us up with Christ,"** when we came to faith. That is a resurrection from the first death, when spiritually, **"You were dead in your transgressions and sins."** The second death, eternal death in hell, is what those without faith in Jesus will face when they die. And in case you are wondering, the Bible does speak of a second resurrection, just not here. That would be Judgment Day when our bodies will be raised from the grave.

So, we live in an imperfect world that has a "Check Engine Light" on. It warns us something is wrong in our lives and we need someone who can fix the mess Satan made with death, sin and heartache because we can't. You already know this. It's worth repeating and I hope you never get tired of hearing it.

- Jesus deals with the problem of death. He will turn your death into an entrance to eternal life.
- Jesus deals with the problem of your sins. He took them all the way to the cross.
- Jesus deals with your heartaches. He gives you the strength and the smarts that you need, when you need it.

What can you do when Satan attacks you with his lies and deception and you know he will. Don't let your guard down. You have Satan's Kryptonite. You have Jesus. You have the Gospel. You have Baptism and the Lord's Supper. You have prayer, which God promises to answer. What God gives us is not too hard to use! We just need to use it.