

**What follows represents the unedited lecture notes of Pastor Merritt's teaching of The Book of The Revelation. Please feel free to reproduce all or part for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. Last week I completed a study of Rev 19:20 and 21 when the clock struck 7:45 we had just begun an analysis of Revelation chapter 20.
2. Before continuing I want to provide "1Jo 1:9 time" as may be necessary.

**Expanded Translation:**

**Rev 20:1 And then I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, this angel was very similar to those earlier seen. This angel had a key to a large bottomless pit and in his hand, he held a large chain.**

**Rev 20:2 The angel seized Satan and bound him with the great chain and Rev 20:3 literally threw him into the terrible Abyss. The lid to the great pit was locked and sealed. In the Abyss he could no longer delude the nations anymore, at least until the thousand years were over. After the thousand years, however he will be set free but only for a short time.**

Introduction to Chapter Twenty

1. John Walvoord writes of the first three verses of Revelation Chapter Twenty:

"The dramatic prophecy contained in these three verses has been the subject of endless dispute because to some extent the whole controversy between pre-millenarians and a-millenarians hangs upon these passages. The passage yields to patient exegesis, and there is no solid reason for taking it in other than its ordinary sense."

2. As we read Rev 20:1-3 we find the angel is said to perform six functions:

to lay hold on the dragon,  
to bind him for 1,000 years,  
to cast him into the abyss,  
to shut him up, that is, to use the key which will lock up the abyss,  
to set a seal upon Satan which will render him inactive in his work of deceiving the nations,  
to loose him after the thousand years.

3. At every point, however, the prediction has been disputed, especially by those of the historical persuasion. For example, G. Encell in his book *The Exiled Prophet* finds the chain with which Satan is bound as a symbol of "the chain of evidence that has been coming to life for nearly a hundred years past, but mostly within the last half century, and is still coming to life, corroborating the truths of the Bible."

4. By this he apparently means archaeological evidence confirming the Bible record. Encell goes on to write:

“We are living in the time when the many lengths of this chain are being brought forward for which to bind Satan; when he is securely bound a happy state of things will prevail, as for a long period of time, is indicated by the expression "a thousand years." How long a period of time is symbolized no mortal knows.”

5. The difficulty with this symbolic or historical interpretation is that it fails to satisfy the essence of the passage. Furthermore, the mounting evidence for Christianity does not seem to reflect a binding of Satan in the twentieth century, quite the contrary.

6. Encell's views are so common to those of the Amillennial persuasion. The question has also been raised as to how can an angel who is immaterial, lay hold on Satan who is also immaterial; both are spirits.

7. Such a query is born of unbelief. Certainly, the qualities belonging to a physical body are frequently attributed to angels and to Satan, and to God, the Creator of angels.

8. That God can also deal with His creatures in a physical way would seem to be a given unless as noted the thought is born from unbelief.

9. Particular objection has been raised as to the idea of binding Satan with a chain, again on the grounds that an immaterial being such as an angel or Satan cannot be bound with a physical chain.

10. In considering this problem, we must bear in mind that we have here language of appearance, (and I might add accommodation) that is, that John saw the angel with a chain in his hands.

11. The word chain here is a translation from the Greek **Halusis**. It is the same as found in Mar 5:3 where we find a reference to Legion, a man possessed of demons who had been bound with chains.

Mar 5:3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.

Mar 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

12. It is also the same Greek used for the chains which fell off Peter in Acts 12:7 and for Paul's chains described in Acts 28:20 and 2Ti 1:16.

Acts 12:7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrist.

Acts 28:17 Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.

Acts 28:18 They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death.

Acts 28:19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar-- not that I had any charge to bring against my own people.

Acts 28:20 For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

Acts 28:21 They replied, "We have not received any letters from Judea concerning you, and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you.

Acts 28:22 But we want to hear what your views are, for we know that people everywhere are talking against this sect."

Acts 28:23 They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Acts 28:24 Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe.

2Ti 1:16 May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

2Ti 1:17 On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.

13. Different words, however are used in 2Pe 2:4 where there is a reference to the chains of darkness binding the wicked angel, and for the everlasting chains of Jude 6. In these verses we find general terms for being bound.

2Pe 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Jude 6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

14. The use of the word "chain" in Rev 20:1 gives no reason for interpreting the record in other than its ordinary sense.

Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

15. Whatever the physical character of the chain, the obvious teaching of the passage is that the action is so designed as to render Satan inactive.

15.1 In confirmation of this, verse three states that he is cast into the abyss, which by its character is a place of confinement.

Rev 20:3 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.

16. We must remember the Scriptures use words meaningful to us and though in our arrogance we may question a word here or there as being inappropriate or better said another way, understand that someday you and I will see the whole picture in God's frame of reference and we may even be able then to say "You did quite well!"

17. Since God wanted to show that Satan was totally inactive and out of touch with the world, how could He have rendered it more specifically than He has done in this passage?

18. The fact that Satan is bound for a thousand years is confirmed by a multitude of passages dealing with the millennial period in which Satan is never found working in the world.

19. Walvoord writes:

"Of major importance, however, is the decision whether this scene refers to the future millennium or to the present age as is taught by the a-millenarians. It should be made clear from this passage that if the millennium is the inter advent period between the first and second comings of Christ, as held by a-millenarians (the common Augustinian viewpoint of the inter advent age), then Satan must be bound during the present age. There are few theories of Scripture which are less warranted than the idea that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ.

"A-millenarians often refer to Luke 10:18, as does Augustine, where Christ said to the seventy witnesses returning in triumph from their period of witness and miracles, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." From this it has been inferred that the fall of Satan occurred at the first coming of Christ instead of in relationship to the second coming. Opposed to the a-millennial interpretation, however, is the uniform revelation of the New Testament which shows that Satan in the present age is a very active person. If anything, he is more active than in preceding ages ..."

20. For example in Luk 22:3, Satan is said to have entered "into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve with the result that he went out to betray Christ.

Luk 22:3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.

21. Satan is revealed to have attempted to dominate Simon Peter as recorded in the Lord's saying in Luke 22:31: "The Lord' said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

22. Throughout the rest of the New Testament similar references are found.

22.1 In Acts 5:3 Ananias and Sapphira are said to be filled with Satan and motivated to lie to the Holy Spirit regarding the extent of their gift to the church.

Acts 5:3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"

23. In 2Co 4:3 and 4, Paul records that Satan is active in blinding the minds of those who hear the gospel:

2Co 4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

24. In 2Co 11:14 Satan is declared to be transformed into an angel of light thereby deceiving the church through false teachers.

2Co 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

25. In Ephesians 2:2, Paul warns of those who live "according to the prince of the power of the air."

26. Paul writes in 1Th 2:18 that Satan had hindered his coming to them. More dramatically, in 2Ti 2:26, unsaved people are declared to be taken captive by the devil at his will and are rescued only by the grace of God.

27. The capstone to this series of references to the activity of Satan is found in 1Pe 5:8 which should settle the matter beyond dispute. In this passage Christians are told, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

28. This passage, instead of saying that Satan is bound and unable to deceive the nations, pictures him as a lion which has been loosed, walking about, roaring, seeking someone to devour.

29. That Satan is hindered by the protective power of God is evident throughout the Scriptures as in the case of Job.

30. There is no evidence whatever that Satan is bound today, but rather the mounting evil in the world and in the church would seem to demonstrate that he is more active than ever.

31. The nations of the world are being deceived today and the saints are being opposed by the ceaseless activity and deceptive power of Satan.

32. Much has been made of the fact that these verses are found in a book largely given to symbolic presentation and visions. It is true that John is seeing a vision in these early verses of chapter twenty.

33. The passage reveals, however, something more than seen. John visually observed the angel bind Satan and cast him into the pit.

34. John could not see how long Satan was to be in the pit nor could he see the purpose, namely, that the devil should deceive the nations no more and that he should be loosed again after the thousand years.

35. This purpose had to be given to John by divine revelation which constituted an interpretation of the vision.

36. If the record had given only what he saw without any indication as to the meaning of the passage, it might have lent itself to diverse interpretation.

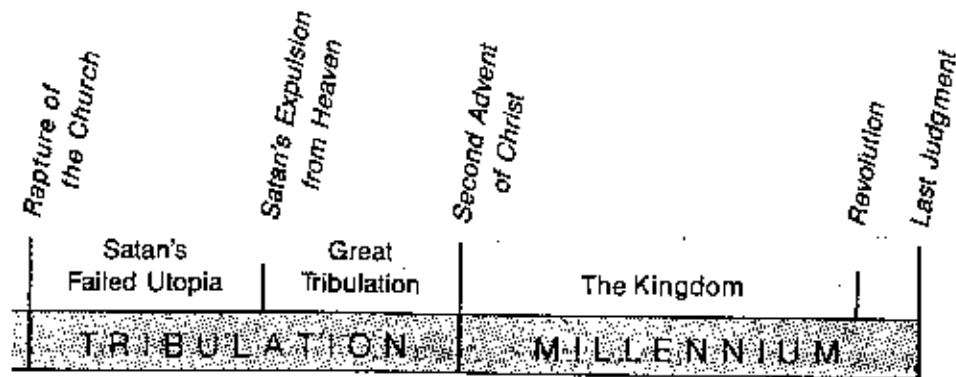
37. But with the vision recorded as it is, accompanied by the divine interpretation, we should not inject our own ideas but must accept the plain statements and interpretations of the passage as given.

38. It is most important to observe that while the thousand years are mentioned in verses four and five in the vision of John, they are also mentioned in verse six in the interpretation.

39. "The expositor is not free says Walvoord to spiritualize the interpretation of the vision but must accept the interpretation in its ordinary and literal meaning. If this is done, there is no other alternative than the premillennial interpretation which holds that at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound for a thousand years."

40. Such rule is one of the major features of Christ's righteous rule upon the earth and in fact will make possible the peace and tranquility and absence of spiritual warfare predicted for the millennial kingdom.

41. The period before Satan is bound, that is, the Great Tribulation, and the period at the close of the millennium, when Satan is again loosed, stand in sharp contrast to the tranquility of the thousand years in between.



42. The fact is that the only period in all human history in which Satan will not execute his work of deception will be the thousand years in which Christ will reign.

43. This passage also introduces, for the first time in Scripture, the exact length of the earthly kingdom of Christ. Six times in this passage the fact is stated that the period is a thousand years or a millennium.

44. The idea that the future millennium would be 1,000 years has been suggested by apocalyptic writers before Christ.

45. We have seen in our study of the apocalypse abundant evidence eschewing all but a literal one thousand years - a literal millennium.

46. Even Augustine, living in the fourth and fifth centuries was favorable to the idea of a literal one thousand years

47. In conclusion John Walvoord writes in his book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*:

“While Scripture sometimes uses the term "day" in other than a literal sense, never in the Bible is a month or a year used in other than its literal sense. Even the word day used of a period of time in reference to "the day of the Lord" is used literally throughout the book of Revelation.

“ It may also be faithfully held that all numbers in the Revelation are literal. About the only number that can even be reasonably questioned is that of the army of two hundred million in Rev 9:16. Even here it is probable that the number is intended to be taken literally as is the "ten thousand times ten thousand" of Rev 5:11. Certainly there is nothing inherently impossible in a thousand-year period in which Christ should reign upon the earth.”

48. Now let's see what we can learn from Rev 20:4:

KJV

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

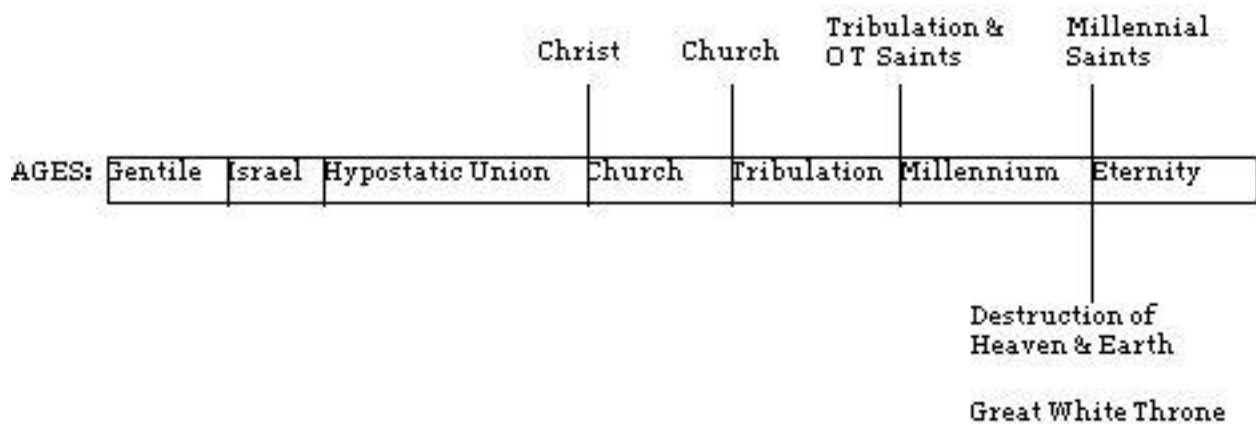
NIV

Rev 20:4 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 for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Principles

1. Who are these sitting on the thrones and what is meant by the judgment?
2. The interpretation of verse four is complicated by a lack of specificity, John in his vision records that he saw thrones but refers to those sitting on the thrones as "they" (the subject "they" is supplied because the verb **Kathizo** is parsed as a third person plural aorist active indicative)
3. Like all things found in the Word of God, the lack of specificity is purposed. It therefore is consistent to translate the they as those saints from battalion three.

ORDER OF THE RESURRECTIONS



4. Thus the "they" has as its antecedent the Old Testament saints, some Kingdom Age saints and the saints martyred during the Tribulation.
5. This is certainly the view of Lewis Sperry Chafer who in his book entitled *Major Bible Themes* has written:



"In addition to the resurrection which takes place at the rapture of the church, there is also a resurrection of righteous dead in connection with the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom ... In Revelation 20 the resurrection of the martyred dead of the tribulation time is said to take place in connection with the second coming of Christ. It probably is combined with the resurrection of the Old Testament saints. Those resurrected are said to live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:4) and are apparently rewarded much in the same way as the church is rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. Their faithfulness to God even unto death and their service rendered are recognized in their sharing in the reign of Christ upon earth."

6. Chafer goes on to write: "Some confusion has arisen because of the fact that the church is also said to reign with Christ. Scripture seems to indicate that all the righteous raised before the Millennium will share in some way in the millennial reign, each in his own order and according to the sovereign purpose of God. The church will reign as the Bride of Christ in the New Jerusalem and all other resurrected saints will reign in their respective capacities on the earth."

7. The most probable interpretation, "they" are all the Old Testament believers and believers who are martyred during the Tribulation. These will reign with Christ on earth. The raptured saints in heaven seem to recognize this distinction. Notice particularly Rev 5:10.

7.1 The raptured saints called the twenty-four elders sing of those believers of the Tribulation who will become a kingdom of priests who shall reign on earth.

Rev 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Rev 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

8. This correlates with the prophecy of Christ as earlier noted. Christ is speaking to Kingdom Age saints.

Luk 22:29-30: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

9. Verse four makes specific mention of those described as "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands."

10. This detailed description fits only one classification of saint, namely, the tribulation saints who in refusing to worship the beast are martyred.

11. Here we learn that they are beheaded, first for their positive witness for Christ and the Word of God, second, because they refuse to worship the beast and receive his mark.

12. The most important truth introduced in verse four is the evident fact that a thousand years separates the resurrection of the martyred dead from the resurrection of the wicked dead. This is borne out in the passage which follows.

13. Before we look at that passage I want to give you an expanded translation of Rev 20:4.

#### **Expanded Translation:**

**Rev 20:4 I saw thrones upon which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. On each throne sat Old Testament and some of the Kingdom Age believers; additionally, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of their acceptance of the Word of God. They had not worshiped the Antichrist nor his image and they had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, received a new body and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

14. Now let's see what we can learn from Rev 20:5-6.

KJV

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

NIV

Rev 20:5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Principles

1. In order to clarify the distinctions observed in this passage, John mentions now that in contrast to the martyred dead raised at this time, the rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished.

2. The resurrection at the beginning of the millennium is therefore characterized as "the first resurrection." In what sense can the tribulation saints in their resurrection be labeled "the first resurrection?"

3. We earlier have studied the order of the "Resurrection."

3.1 There we found four battalions: 1st the Resurrection of Christ, 2nd the raptured saints, 3rd the Old Testament saints and tribulation martyrs and 4th the resurrection of the millennial saints.

3.2 These four battalions are part of the first resurrection. The unbelievers who appear before the Great White Throne represent the 2nd resurrection.

4. John Walvoord has written of these verses:

"It would seem clear from these facts that the term "the first resurrection" is not an event but an order of resurrection including all the righteous who are raised from the dead before the millennial kingdom begins. They are "first" in contrast to those who are raised last, after the millennium, when the wicked dead are raised and judged. Just as there are two kinds of physical death, namely, the first death which results in burial, and the second death which is described as being cast into the lake of fire (20:14) ..."

Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

5. So there are two kinds of resurrection, a first resurrection having to do with the resurrection of the righteous, and a second resurrection having to do with the wicked. They are separated by at least one thousand years.

6. Walvoord further writes:

"A further question can be raised concerning the special mention of the martyred dead of the tribulation. In view of the fact that they are publicly humiliated and suffer as no preceding generation of saints have suffered, so God selects them for public triumph on the occasion of the establishment of His kingdom in the earth."

7. The blessedness of those who take part in the first resurrection regardless of classification is summarized in verse six in the words "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Their estate is a happy and a holy one.

8. They are delivered from the power of the second death; they are given the special status of priests of God and of Christ, and are privileged to reign with Him on earth for the thousand years.

9. As previously indicated in verse four, the privilege of reigning with Christ is not exclusively the reward of the church, but the righteous saints in general are given privileged places of service on earth.

10. This does not mean that classifications of saints are ignored, but each saint is rewarded according to his individual relationship to the sovereign will of God.

11. If the church is afforded the special place in the New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ, other resurrected people will also reign and enjoy privileges and rewards on earth.

12. They will apparently not only share in the political aspects of the kingdom but also in its religious life, for they are declared to be "priests of God and of Christ," a designation of a privileged rank similar to that which the church enjoys in this present age under Christ our High Priest.

13. The main burden of this passage, is to demonstrate beyond any question that there will be a thousand-year period between the resurrections of the righteous and the wicked.

14. Passages such as Dan 12:2 and Joh 5:28-29, which refer in general to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, must be interpreted as declaring the fact of resurrections rather than that the two events take place at the same time.

Dan 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Joh 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

Joh 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

15. The significance seems to be that the time will come when both the righteous and the wicked will be raised without designating exactly when it will occur.

16. In considering Revelation 20:1-6 as a whole, there is much to commend its normal and literal interpretation. Alford writes pointedly:

17. "Those who lived next to the Apostles and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense: and it is a strange sight in these days [1860] to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents.

"As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion."

18. Before we look at a description of the doom of Satan, I want to give you an expanded translation of Rev 20:5-6.

**Expanded Translation**

**Rev 20:5 The rest of the dead, the unbelievers, are not removed from Sheol until the thousand years are over. This is properly called the first resurrection.**

**Rev 20:6 Blessed, happy and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.**

The Westbank Bible Church accepts direct donations to further the spreading of the Gospel. You can mail or drop off a check or money order made payable to Westbank Bible Church, 4010 Bee Cave Road, Austin, Texas 78746

We do not authorize any third party to solicit donations on behalf of the Church.