

PREMILLENNIALISM AND AN EXEGESIS OF REVELATION 20

13th ANNUAL PRE-TRIB STUDY GROUP

By Dr. Steve P. Sullivan © 2004

Professor at the College of Biblical Studies, Houston Texas

INTRODUCTION

Dr. John F. Walvoord in an article on Revelation 20:1-6 made this bold statement: "Few verses in the Bible are more crucial to the interpretation of the Bible as a whole than the opening verses in Revelation 20."¹ Even if this statement overstates the matter, this passage is very important to understand in the scheme of biblical prophecy. Yet, many people have dismissed the book of Revelation as too difficult to understand and chapter 20 as too controversial to know what it means. Therefore, they have missed some important revelation which God has given us for our blessed hope as well as blessing to our spiritual lives (Revelation 1:3).

What are they missing? They are missing the climatic events which follow after the second coming of Christ dealing with God's just and righteous kingdom. It is here that we see Jesus Christ's irruption into history which brings the long awaited triumphant over evil. Revelation 20 deals specifically with the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. It is also absolutely essential for the understanding of the future events and destiny of Satan. Finally, it is the place where God reveals the extent of time for the earthly kingdom.

How will this article help in the understanding Revelation 20? First, we will discuss the importance of the context of Revelation 20. Secondly, we will determine the meaning of the "binding of Satan" in Revelation 20:1-3. Thirdly, we will raise and answer seven questions concerning Revelation 20:4-15:

¹ John F. Walvoord, "The Theological Significance of Revelation 20:1-6," *Essays In Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, ed. Stanely D. Toussaint & Charles H. Dyer (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 227.

- (1) Who are they who reign with Christ?
- (2) Who are those who will live?
- (3) What about the thousand years?
- (4) Where will the saints reign for a thousand years?
- (5) When will the battle of Revelation 20:7-10 take place?
- (6) What about the “great White Throne Judgment?”
- (7) Why will there be a millennial kingdom?

One may see how important these questions are for understanding the future, but how will all this affect our life in this present age? Let us answer this question by the following statement: "One's view of eschatology [the study of last things], to a large extent, determines what kind of ethics one develops and practices."² Let us look at just one example from Scripture out of many we could turn to demonstrate the above point. 1 John 3:2-3 says, "Beloved now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has **this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**"³ Notice how John expects that the future hope of Christ's coming should purify our daily living in this present age. Therefore, let us not shy away from Revelation 20 which deals with some crucial events of things to come, but let us understand it and by God's grace not only enjoy the blessings it brings in this life and the life to come, but also be the means of purifying our lives!

² H. Wayne House & Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Cursing?* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1988), p. 45.

³ All Bible quotations are taken from NASB unless otherwise stated.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONTEXT

Introduction

How one understands the chronology of the book of Revelation, especially chapters 19-21 will set the course for one's understanding of the millennium.⁴ Many amillennial scholars use the recapitulation system or progressive parallelism⁵ as their system of interpretation of the book.⁶ Anthony Hoekema supports the recapitulation method of interpretation when he says, "the

⁴ John A. McLean, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation and Its Implication for the Pre-wrath Rapture (Part One)," *Michigan Theological Journal*, 2 (Fall 1991):138-167 critiques nine theories of structures for the book of Revelation. John A. McLean, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation and Its Implication for the Pre-wrath Rapture (Part Two)," *Michigan Theological Journal*, 1 (Spring 1992):7 "argues for the successive view of the septets judgments, i.e., the trumpets sequentially follow the seals and the bowls sequentially follow the trumpets. The successive structure does not negate a recapitulation of other visions in that the writer does portray visionary scenes which preview eschatological events to come (Rev. 7:9-17; 14:8-13)." McLean summarizes the book of Revelation by saying, "The crucial differences between the judgments include: the Prima facie reading of the text, the sequential character within each septet, the use of ordinal numbers, the sequential aspect of the seventh part of each septet, the contextual clues of progression argue for the successive approach. The following structural outline represents a descriptive view of the development of the Apocalypse. This progressive disclosure is like a spiraling conical staircase. The climax of the Apocalypse is the coming of the Son of Man. The major motif that leads up to the parousia is the intensification of the septet judgments, (4:1-19:21). The septets unfold out of each other until the final climax of worldwide destruction. The writer intermittently suspends the progressive movement and disclosure of the septets in order to introduce pertinent information. The information is inserted by meaning of narrative previews or narrative synopses. Narrative previews amplify major characters or events that are enunciated later in the Apocalypse. Narrative synopses provide apocalyptic scenes that review past events and lead the reader to future episodes." (*Michigan Theological Journal*, 1 [Spring 1992]:9-10)

⁵ G. K. Beale, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 121-45 surveys and argues for recapitulation position. See Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), pp. 525-43 for a critique of recapitulation and arguments for chronological progression in the book of Revelation.

⁶ A brief historical perspective of the development of eschatology see Harold Hoehner, "Evidence from Revelation 20," *A Case for Premillennialism*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), pp. 236-45. Hoehner suggests to consult Hans Bietenhard, "The Millennial Hope in the Early Church," *Scottish Journal of theology* 6 (1953): 12-30, which is a condensation of his doctoral dissertation and Jean Danielou, "The Theology of Jewish Christianity," in *A History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, trans. and ed. John A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 1:377-404. Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 2nd ed. from an amillennial viewpoint gives his understanding of the early history development of eschatology. See his summary chart on pp. 271-72. John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), pp. 282-90 gives a brief survey of the three major positions taken in Revelation 20.

book of Revelation consists of seven sections which run parallel to each other, each of which depicts the church and the world from the time of Christ's first coming to the time of his second coming."⁷ Most amillennialist would list Revelation 20-22 as one of those progressive parallels. Contrary to the premillennial view, the amillennialist does not see a progression from chapter 19 to chapter 20. They understand that chapter 20 begins to describe the activity of God binding Satan's activity by Christ's work on the cross. Then the rest of chapter 20 through chapter 22 progresses on and gives us more detail about the church age, events surrounding the second coming and the eternal kingdom.

Yet, there is strong evidence to indicate that the visions of Revelation 19 and 20 are presenting a chronological progression in time. The literary device that John uses to indicate this progression is the phrase translated "and I saw" (καὶ εἶδον). This is found in Revelation 19:11, 17, 19 and Revelation 20:1, 4, 11 and Revelation 21:1. This seems to indicate that the series of visions happened one after the other and not as parallel visions which are recapitulating the same period of time. Harold Hoehner addresses this issue:

The introductory words "and I saw" (*kai eidon*), used 32 times in the book, usually denote the next vision seen by John (e.g., 13:1, 11; 14:1, 6, 14; 15:1; 16:13; 17:3; 19:11, 17, 19; 20:4, 11, 12; 21:1). Though these words are not as forceful a chronological marker as "after these things I saw" (*meta tauta eidon*; 4:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1) or "after these things I heard" (*meta tauta ekousa*; 19:1), they do show chronological progression.⁸

Some amillennialists would agree that the καὶ εἶδον in Revelation 19:11 - 21:1 gives a

⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible And The Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 223; William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), pp. 28-29. The seven parallel chapters are: chapters 1-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-16, 17-19 and 20-22.

⁸ Harold Hoehner, "Evidence from Revelation 20," *A Case for Premillennialism*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), pp. 247-48.

visional chronicle, but not a historical chronicle of events. In other words, they would accept that John received the visions in the chronological order of Revelation 19:11 - 20:15, but they would deny that the actual progress of history is necessarily in this order. Many amillennialists would accept that Revelation 19:11-21 is a historical progression but they would contend that Revelation 20:7-10 is referring again to the second coming like Revelation 19:11-21. They would take Revelation 20:1-3 and the binding of Satan to begin at the death and resurrection of Christ and then the “thousand years” would extend from the church age to the second coming.

This brief survey gives us a broad summary of the chronology issue. The next section of this paper will examine the context and the validity of καὶ εἶδον in Revelation 19:11- 20:15 to see if there is any reason to accept the καὶ εἶδον sections as not only visional progression but historical progression of events.⁹

The “And I Saw” (καὶ εἶδον) Sections in Revelation 19:11 - 20:15

In Revelation 19:11-16 the καὶ εἶδον section is an introduction to Jesus Christ and His heavenly army. In 19:15-16 an explanation of the sword coming out of Christ’s mouth which will judge the nations is described. In Revelation 19:17-18 section we are introduced to the birds

⁹ D. E. Aune, “Revelation 1-5” *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1997) 52A:338 says the καὶ εἶδον: (1) introduces a new vision (Rev. 19:11, 17; 20:1, 4, 12; 21:1); (2) introduces a major scene within the vision (Rev. 19:19; 21:2, 22); and (3) focuses “on a new or significant figure or action that occurs within a continuing vision narrative” (Rev. 5:2, 6, 11; 6:2, 5, 8, 12; 7:2; 9:1; 16:13; 17:3, 6). Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, in ECNT, ed. Moses Silva (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002):699 does not think that καὶ εἶδον in Rev. 19:11 - 20:15 are chronological indicators, however he does believe that there is “narrative sequence, and the events in the vision flow one after the other.” Others who would support both a visional and an historical progression in Revelation 19:11 - 20:15 are: John Walvoord, *Revelation*, p. 290; Alan Johnson, *Revelation*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 12:580; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 252; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 381; David J. MacLeod, “The Third ‘Last Thing’: The Binding of Satan, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (Oct-Dec, 1999):472-73; Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (New York: Macmillan, 1919):738; R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, in ICC (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1920), 2:185.

of the mid heaven and their role in the judgment. In verse 17 an angel calls forth the birds to assemble for supper of the great slaughter and judgment of the enemies of God. The description of verse 18 explains further the make-up of the “nations” in the previous section (v. 15). The summoning of the birds in combination with the detailed description of the flesh they will eat (v. 18) explains the fierce wrath of God stated in 19:15. These combinations of events demonstrate historical and visional progression in the first two sections (vv. 11-16 and vv. 17-18). This helps to see that there is progression from each section that begins with “and I saw.”

Revelation 19:19-21 introduces the third sections where the beast and the false prophet are judged. There are five points we need to consider: (1) The kings of the earth and their armies are referred to in the previous section (vv.17-18) which demonstrates a progressive chronology. (2) The latter half of verse 19 describes the war against the Lord who was sitting on the horse and against His army which connects us back with 19:11-16. (3) The author in verse 20 makes a description of the beast and the false prophet which refers back to their activity Revelation 13. (4) Revelation 19:21 again demonstrates a progression in this section by referring to the “sword” which came out of the mouth of the Lord. Thus, in verse 15 the author describes the Lord and the sword which comes out of his mouth and then in verse 21 the author reports that the sword is used to kill the enemies of God. (5) The last part of verse 21 also demonstrates historical and visional progressive chronology. Notice in verses 17-18 that the birds are summoned to the supper of the flesh of mankind and in verse 21 it describes the birds actually eating the flesh of mankind.

Therefore, the major theme of Revelation 19:11-21 is the coming of the Lord and the judgment upon the beast, his army of followers and the false prophet. The fourth section (20:1-3)

deals with the last person of the unholy threesome. Notice the close ties that the beast has with Satan. Satan is first introduced and some of his activities cataloged in Revelation 12. Then in Revelation 13:4 it says, “and they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?’” This connection is also brought out in Revelation 20:10 when Satan is thrown into the lake of fire just like the beast and the false prophet. In Revelation 20:1-3 section Satan is confined in prison at the beginning of the thousand years. He will not be able to deceive the nations until after the thousand years. It is then that he will be released for “a short time” (v.3).

The fifth *καὶ εἶδον* section (20:4-6) concentrates on those who sat on the thrones and the martyrs who “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” The thousand years tie Revelation 20:1-10 together in a historical progression (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). The martyred saints (v. 4) who did not worship the beast or take his mark came to life in the first resurrection which is at the beginning of the thousand years. The mark of the beast and the doom of the beast is mentioned in Revelation 19:20 which is associated with the time period of the second coming of Christ. This demonstrates that the event progresses from the judgment of the beast and the false prophet at the second coming of Christ to the resurrection of the martyred saints who were contemporary in time with the beast and his mark.¹⁰ These martyrs were resurrected at the beginning of the thousand years for they must reign with Christ the entire thousand years (20:4-5). Furthermore, the author not only uses a thousand years in his vision but also in his beatitude (20:6). It is important to notice that the author changes from the aorist tense “reigned with Christ for a thousand years” in verse 4 to a future tense of “will reign” with Christ for a thousand years

¹⁰ This will be developed later in the paper.

in verse 6. This again demonstrates that Revelation 20:4-6 is future from the author's perspective. The future "reign" (20:6) corresponds with the beginning of the thousand-year reign. It is difficult to see how the thousand years could begin at the death and resurrection of Christ as many amillennialists propose.

The sixth section (20:7-10) changes the introductory phrase *καὶ εἶδον* and gives a time indicator by using the phrase "when the thousand years are completed." Revelation 20:7 connects back with 20:3 which says, "until the thousand years were completed" as well as the phrase "after these things he must be released for a short time." Notice the theme of Satan's deception on the nations. The deceiving of the nations is predicted in 20:3 yet this deception will be prevented because of Satan's imprisonment. Furthermore, in 20:8-10 Satan's deception on the nations and the final battle and his defeat is predicted. The time of Satan's defeat (20:8-10) is a thousand years after 20:4-6 (which we established as the time of the second coming of Christ). Furthermore, progress in time is seen from Revelation 19:20 - 20:10 by the tying together the beast and false prophet's doom with the doom of Satan. The doom of the beast and the false prophet happens at the second coming of Christ in Revelation 19:20. Revelation 20:1-3 indicates the imprisoning of Satan for a thousand years and then "after these things" he is released for "a short time" (20:3). This imprisonment is at the beginning of the thousand years (20:2-3). Revelation 19:20 and 20:4-5 use the mark of the beast and the worship of the beast to indicate that these two events happen at the same period of time—the second coming of Christ (19:20) and the beginning of the thousand years (20:4-5). Then after the thousand years we see the events of 20:7-10. The climax comes with 20:10, which ties the whole section of Revelation 19:20 - 20:10 together by mentioning the place of doom where the beast and false prophet have been thrown a

thousand years earlier.

R. Fowler White agrees that “there is historical as well as visional (revelatory) progress between the visions of 19:11-21.”¹¹ White and others refuse to believe that *καὶ εἶδον* (*kai eidon*) is an indicator of historical progress¹². He argues “when we consider the question of historical progress between 19:11-21 and 20:1-3, the presence of the words *kai eidon* in 20:1 is not relevant. The only relevant point is the content of the visions.”¹³ . However, the arguments stated above have established a historical and visional progression in the *καὶ εἶδον* sections of 19:11-16, 19:17-18, 19:19-21 (which White agrees) and in sections 20:1-3, 4-6, 7-10 (*καὶ ὄταν, kai hotan*). Why would one not think that 20:1-3 (*καὶ εἶδον*) section is also a historical and visional progression with 19:11-21, especially since the judgment of the ungodly threesome (the beast, false prophet and Satan) helps tie the context together?¹⁴

Daniel Seven

The latter part of Revelation 19 and the first part of Revelation 20 seems to parallel the

¹¹ R. Fowler White, “Making Sense of Rev 20:1-10? Harold Hoehner Versus Recapitulation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (December 1994):540.

¹² Paul A. Rainbow, “Millennium as Metaphor in John’s Apocalypse,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 58 (Fall 1996):211, n. 8 argues for progressive chronology in Revelation 19:11 - 20:15 (*contra* White), however he still holds to an amillennial position from these texts.

¹³ White, “Making Sense of Rev 20:1-10? Harold Hoehner Versus Recapitulation,” p. 540.

¹⁴ William J. Webb, “Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations,” *Baptist Review of Theology*, 4 (Fall 1994):15-16. He also argues in footnote #37 that “one might also note that the beast and false prophet in 20:10 have *already* been thrown into the lake of fire some time before Satan is thrown into the same location. Granted, the duration of the ‘time lapse’ is not specified. It may have been moments or it may have been a lengthy interval. However, if Rev 20:7-10 is the same battle as the parousia battle of chapter 19 and all three players in the triad get captured in the same battle (as amillennialists suggest), one might ask why John does not simply have all three players thrown into the lake of fire at the same time. . . From a (straight) recapitulation perspective one would expect in Rev 20:10 to read something like, ‘After the battle of Gog and Magog, Satan was thrown into the lake of fire *along with* the beast and false prophet.’” (Ibid., pp. 15-16)

events of Daniel 7. As one compares these two parallel texts, it seems to support the position that Revelation 19 through Revelation 20 is a chronological progression and not a recapitulation.

Jack Deere says it this way:

The little horn of Daniel 7 parallels the beast of Revelation 13:1-8. Both the little horn of Daniel and the beast of Revelation are said to have a worldwide empire (Dan.7:7, 23; Rev.13:8). Both have victory over the saints for "a time and times and half a time" (Dan.7:25; Rev.12:14). Both are destroyed by the Messiah at His second advent (Dan.7:11, 26; Rev.19:20). Both affirm that immediately following the destruction of the world ruler the kingdom is given to the saints (Dan.7:22, 27; Rev.20:4-6). Thus it is apparent that a least up to the reign of the saints Revelation 19:11-20:6 is following the same pattern as Daniel 7. Since the world ruler is yet future, the millennial reign must also be future for the saints do not reign or receive their kingdom until after his destruction. Thus on the basis of Daniel 7 it is more natural to read Revelation 20:4-6 as part of a chronological progression in its larger context (19:11-20:15) than as a recapitulation.¹⁵

The Worship of the Beast and the Mark of the Beast As an Indicator of Time

White says, "To appreciate the bearing of 15:1 on the interpretation of 19:11 - 20:10, we need to remember that Christ's wrath against the Armageddon rebels in 19:19-21 concludes the plot line that was dropped in 16:16 and thus must (more or less) coincide with the last plague of God's wrath in 16:17-21. This coincidence of 19:19-21 with 16:17-21 means that Christ's wrath in 19:11-21 falls within the time frame which 15:1 established for the completion of God's wrath."¹⁶

¹⁵ Jack S. Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (Jan.-Mar., 1978): 60-61.

¹⁶ R. Fowler White, "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989): 331; see also White, "Making Sense of Rev 20:1-10?," pp. 547-48. White sees an inconsistency in premillennialist who see God's wrath at the end of the millennium (20:8-9), when Revelation 15:1 indicates the seventh bowl finishes the wrath of God. Therefore, White uses this argument as one of his arguments for the recapitulation of Revelation 19:11-21 in 20:7-10. However, he does recognize that this is not an absolute statement on the wrath of God because he confines the wrath of God in 15:1 to the "divine retribution in history" for God's wrath "continues interminably in eternity" ("Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10," p. 330, n. 21). The writer would agree that God's wrath continues into eternity, however, why couldn't Rev. 15:1 be referring to the wrath that will end the three septet judgments? Ladd writes, "Now this series comes to its climax;

The last bowl plague not only falls under this general time period of Revelation 19:11-21, but also all seven bowl plagues fall under this general time period—near the end of the Tribulation period. This time period is brought out by following the theme of the worship of the beast and the false prophet or the worship of the image of the beast and the theme of the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:4-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2, 10-11; 19:20; 20:4). First of all in Revelation 20:4, the martyrs did not worship the beast or his image and did not receive the mark upon their forehead or upon their hand and they “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” This reigning for a “thousand years” parallels the time of Satan’s imprisonment in Revelation 20:2-3 for Satan is also bound for a “thousand years.” However one interprets the “thousand years,”¹⁷ Satan is bound at the beginning of the “thousand years” and these saints who were martyred and did not worship the beast “came to life and reigned with Christ” at the beginning of

with the visitation of the bowl plagues, God will have fully poured out his wrath in the particular context of the plagues which anticipate the final judgment. These words cannot be interpreted to mean that the plagues exhaust the totality of God’s wrath”(A *Commentary on the Revelation of John*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972):204). Therefore, Rev. 15:1 does not preclude God’s judgment at the end [of the millennium in Rev. 20:7-1], p. 204. See also Friedrich DÜsterdieck, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, in Meyer’s Commentary, Trans. & ed. Henry E. Jacobs (Wino Lake, IN: Alpha Pub., 1980 reprint), p. 408; Alan Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:546; Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958 reprint), 4:693; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 285, n.1; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 226; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 561, n. 2. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 567-85 argues that the seventh bowl begins in Revelation 16:17 and ends 22:5.

¹⁷ Daniel Wallace, *Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), pp. 202-03 explains the difference between the genitive, dative and accusative of time. “One way to remember the distinctions between the cases used for time is to remember the root idea of each case. However, under the five-case system this may prove a bit confusing. Therefore, for the cases used for time, it may be helpful to think in terms of the *eight-case* system. The root idea of the *genitive* is *kind*. Thus the genitive of time expresses the *kind* of time or time within which. The root idea of the *locative* (not dat.) is *position*, expressing *point* in time. The root idea for the *accusative* is *extent*. Thus the accusative of time expresses the *extent* of time.” In Revelation 20 there are six occurrences where 1000 years is used. Three are nominative (20:3,5,7) and three are accusative (20:2,4,6). The accusative of time fits well with the premillennialist view for the entire group will reign with Christ the entire thousand years. However, the amillennialist (recapitulation view) have martyred saints entering the reign of Christ through out the millennium which does not fit the text. Charles E. Powell, “Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6: Some Overlooked Arguments” (www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=2481, August 2000), p. 8 says if the amillennialist is correct then “the genitive of time would be more suitable. All other occurrences of groups of plural subjects with the accusative of extent of time in the NT have the entire group beginning and ending the period of time together (cf. Matt 20:6; 28:20; John 2:12; 11:6; Acts 21:7; Rev 2:10; 9:10).”

the “thousand years.” Most amillennialists declare that the beginning of the thousand years in Revelation 20:1-6 is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ at his first coming (some may include part of His ministry). If this is true, then the martyrdom of these saints and their refusal to worship and take the mark of the beast must have occurred before the death and resurrection of Christ. If they lived and died after the death and resurrection of Christ (which is the beginning of the “thousand years” for the amillennialist) then they would not be able to reign with Christ the full period of time like Revelation 20:4 declares.¹⁸

Secondly, most amillennialists place Revelation 19:19-21 during the period of the second coming of Christ. It is interesting that the author of Revelation mentions the worship of the beast and his mark at Christ’s second coming judgment (19:20). Does the author do this because these two beasts and their deception upon mankind are continuing until they are judged in Revelation 19:20? I believe so. If so, Revelation 20:4 which mentions the active deception of the worship of the beast and his mark is also in the time period of the second coming. This would demand that the “thousand years” must come after the second coming of Christ. Let’s try to develop this argument.

The writer believes the whole period of Daniel 70th week (Revelation 6-19) is a period of God’s wrath, but His wrath increases with intensity as the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are brought forth. God’s intense wrath is associated with all seven bowl plagues (15:1, 7; 16:1). Notice how the theme of the worship of the beast and his mark are connected with the seven

¹⁸ Harold Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 251 also adds this argument: “If we accept a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ, then it would mean that after that period Satan is for a short time released and deceives the nations as seen in Revelation 20:7-9 and afterward is cast into the lake of fire. But if one thinks that the 1000-year reign of Christ refers to the present church age and that Satan is bound until Christ’s second advent, at which time the new heaven and earth are ushered in, when will Satan be released for a short time? Those who hold to a nonliteral 1,000 years tend to be vague on this issue.”

bowls of God's wrath in Revelation 14:9-11. It reads, "And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.'" These verses warn the earth dwellers who worship the beast that the full strength of God's wrath is about to come on them and the eternal consequence with it. This full-strength wrath points to the seven bowl judgments. In the introduction to the bowl judgments in Revelation 15 the mark of the beast and his image is mentioned. However, this time it is used in a positive sense to describe those who did not submit to the beast. They are pictured "standing on the sea of glass holding harps of God." Notice bowl one (16:2) and bowl five (16:10-11) specifically state that the "loathsome and malignant sores" are upon "men who had the mark of the beast and who worship the image" (v. 2) and then in verses 10-11 the pain of the sores is mentioned when God pours out His darkness on the kingdom of the beast. These sores and pain are the continuation of the pain inflicted in verse two. This observation points out that the first five bowl judgments are in the same time period. Bowl six (16:12-16) is the satanic preparation for the battle of Har-Magedon. How did these nations decide to come to war? Revelation 16:13-14 indicate that the demonic spirits were sent out by the unholy threesome (dragon, beast and false prophet) to perform signs to deceive the kings of the whole earth to obey the unholy three and gather them for war. We are not told what signs the demons will perform, but we have already been told how the threesome deceived the

nations in Revelation 13:13-18. It states in Revelation 13:13 that the false prophet uses “great signs” and “causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead.” It is through these signs and the mark of the beast that the unholy three receive worship and allegiance from the kings of the whole earth as well as individual people. It seems plausible that these kings will receive the mark of the beast and follow him into war (cp. Rev. 13:7-8). Finally, bowl seven (16:17-21) coincides generally to the same time period with Revelation 19:19-21 which is the war of Christ against the nations of the earth at His second coming.

Now since all seven bowl judgments are in the same general time period which leads to the second coming of Christ and since Revelation 19:17-21 is describing the judgment of the second coming of Christ and coincides closely with Revelation 16:12-21 (the last two bowl judgments), then Revelation 19:20 is referring to the deception which occurred at the time period of the second coming of Christ. In other words, the worship of the beast (and sometimes the false prophet and the dragon) and the mark of the beast can be plotted from Revelation 13-16 and 19-20 and can be connected with the immediate events leading to the second coming (Revelation 16), the second coming judgment (Rev. 19:20), and the “first resurrection” of the saints after the second coming (Rev. 20:4-5). Secondly, and most importantly, Revelation 20:4-5 uses the mark of the beast and the worship of the beast which indicates that the events of Revelation 20:4-5 happened at the same general period of time. We have demonstrated above that the mark of the beast and the worship of the beast at least continues through the last two bowl judgments and the second coming of Christ. This indicates that the events of Revelation 20:4 will happen after the second coming of Christ and the martyrs will reign with Christ a “thousand years” after the

second return of Christ. We concluded this because Revelation 20:4 says, these martyrs will “live and reign with Christ for a thousand years.” Therefore, the recapitulation of the amillennialist in Revelation 20:1-6 has great difficulty in establishing their view while the premillennial view that the thousand years begin after the second coming of Christ is strengthened.

Summary

We see progressive, chronological events within the visions, in addition to being successive progress within the visions. This progress is seen through the judgment of God upon the ungodly leadership set up by Satan. The chronological progression in Revelation 19:17-18 and in the following event of 19:19-21 are demonstrations of this. In the former, the birds are called together for the feast and in the latter, they actually eat. Next, the book of Revelation presents the unholy threesome in the following characters: The false prophet, the Antichrist (beast) and Satan. At the end of Revelation 19 two out of the three persons (the beast and the false prophet) were judged. But nothing is said about the third person (Satan). It would be natural to see a continuation of the chronological progression in Revelation 20 with the judgment of Satan. Finally, Revelation 20:7-10 also shows progression in chronological succession. Satan is said to be cast into the lake of fire in Revelation 20:10, rather than in 19:20, where it would be natural for him to be mentioned if the unholy threesome is judged at the same time. The fact that Revelation 20:10 assumes that the false prophet and the beast are already judged and are already in the lake of fire, is a strong argument for a chronological understanding of the visions.

In review, we have seen the following progressive chronology: (1) In Revelation 19:19-

21 two persons of the unholy threesome are thrown into the lake of fire. (2) Tracing the theme of the worship of the beast and the mark of the beast in Revelation 13-16, one finds this theme culminating in the second coming judgment in 19:20 and therefore, connected with the general time period of the judgment leading to the second coming of Christ. This theme is also seen in 20:4 and places the time period shortly after the second coming of Christ where the resurrection of the saints begins the thousand-year reign of Christ. (3) In Revelation 20:1-3 Satan is bound for a thousand years, but will be released. (4) In Revelation 20:7 the thousand years end and Satan is released "for a short time" (v. 3). Notice the text uses the temporal word "**when** the thousand years are completed . . ." to indicate progression of time. (5) In Revelation 20:10 Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.

We also must add that the future tense "will reign" in verse 6 which interprets verses 4-5 as future events from the church age supports a successive chronology.¹⁹ Therefore, we concluded that the context of Revelation 19-20 strongly supports a premillennial interpretation.

THE BINDING OF SATAN (Revelation 20:1-3)

Those who don't hold to a future millennial kingdom normally try to prove that Satan is bound in this present age. They would say that Satan was bound by the death of Christ on the cross. Such passages like Mark 3:24-27 (Matthew 12:22-29) are used for support. It is not that Satan is bound totally, but he is bound so that he will not deceive the nations. In other words, Satan will not be able to thwart the efforts of missionary endeavors. Many who hold to this position stress the point that Satan is bound in reference to the nations, but he is not bound to the

¹⁹ More will be said about this below.

individual person. Hoekema summarizes this view when he says, "we conclude, then, that the binding of Satan during the gospel age means that, first, he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel, and second, he cannot gather all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church."²⁰

Yet, this view of Satan's binding has several problems which are contrary to it. First, the vision in Revelation 20:1-3 takes elaborate measures to show the confinement of Satan which do not fit the partial binding view. The angel²¹ has "a great chain" and "the key"²² which seems to project the picture that the angel will bind Satan with a great chain and lock him in the "abyss."²³ Hell, Hades and the abyss are not the same place. There is some debate about the contents of Hades before the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, after Christ's resurrection Hades is the place where all the unbelieving souls are kept until the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.²⁴ Hell or Gehenna is also called the "lake of fire" or "the second death." These terms refer to the final punishment for all the unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15). The word abyss is sometime translated "bottomless pit" and has two basic usages in the New Testament. Its predominant use describes the underworld as the "place of imprisonment for disobedient spirits" (Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) and the second use describes

²⁰ Hoekema, *The Bible And The Future*, p.228.

²¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 405 gives the following possibilities of the identification of the angel: "Christ, the Holy Spirit, the twelve apostles, one of the popes and Constantine the Great." I would agree with Thomas that the "angel" is an angelic being who is commissioned by God to do this task.

²² There are four keys mentioned in Revelation: "the key of David" (3:7), "keys of Death and Hades" (1:18), "key to the shaft of the abyss" (9:1) and "the key" (20:1). The last three seem to refer to the authority and control which God has given to who every holds the key(s) (Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 699).

²³ The word ἀβυσσος (abyss) is used in the following verses in the New Testament: Lk. 8:31; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

²⁴ MacLeod, "The Third, 'Last Thing': The Binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3), pp. 474-75 gives a good summary of these terms.

the “realm of the dead” (Rom. 10:7).²⁵ The abyss is the place where disobedient angels or demons do not want to go (Lk. 8:31), the source from where the beast (Rev. 11:7; 17:8) comes, the confinement of the terrible demonic creatures which are loosed to plague the earth (Rev. 9:1, 2, 11), and the location where Satan will be imprisoned (Rev. 20:1,3). The closest parallel to Revelation 20:1-3 is Revelation 9:1-12. Both texts have an angel who has a key to the abyss. In Revelation 9 the abyss confines the creatures from any contact on earth until the abyss is opened; while in Revelation 20 the angel uses the key to open the abyss to confine Satan from influence on the earth for a thousand years.²⁶

Notice also the elaborate words which John uses to secure Satan in the abyss: "shut it and seal it over him." The vision seems to fit more the idea of a complete cessation of Satan's work on earth. Powell is correct when he declares:

This is the most extensive description of imprisonment anywhere in the NT. If the other references to the imprisonment imagery refer to absolute confinement, then this passage must also. There seems to be no other reason for the extensiveness of the imagery. John went to great lengths to make clear that Satan is to be cut off

²⁵ J. Jeremias, “ἄβυσσος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:9-10.

²⁶ Charles E. Powell, “Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6: Some Overlooked Arguments,” pp. 10-11, n. 20 argues the following: “Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 984 sees the abyss as a synonym for ‘death and Hades.’ However, it seems that they are distinct. Only the demonic are related to the abyss in Revelation. Death and Hades seem mostly related to humanity. In Rev 6:8 death and Hades are personalized and represent the judgment of death upon humanity, death is the experience and Hades is the destination. Death and Hades are again used figuratively in 20:13-14 for those who dwell in Hades and have experienced death as judgment. In the NT, Hades always appears to be the place of the unbelieving dead (Matt. 11:23; 16:18; 10:15; Luke 16:23; 2:27; Acts 2:31; Rev. 1:18; Rev. 6:8; 20:13,14), and is a realm from which they cannot escape. Beale, 987, also argues that ‘the abyss is one of the various metaphors representing the spiritual sphere in which the devil and his accomplices operate’ and this sphere ‘represents a spiritual dimension existing alongside of and in the midst of the earthly.’ However, this does violence to the imprisonment imagery of both 9:1-11 and 20:1-3. In every reference to the abyss, the being or beings which are contained in it must emerge from it in order to interact with the human realm. This suggests that the sphere of the abyss, like the realm of the dead, is separate from the realm of living humanity, and those who dwell in the abyss have no contact with those outside that sphere. This may explain why the demons of Luke 8:31 pleaded with Jesus not to send them to the abyss. It is a place of judgment with no contact with the sphere of humanity.”

from the realm of humanity for [sic] 1000 years. In all the above cases where imprisonment, and not simply conquest, are involved, the imagery should be taken in a straightforward manner and is comparable to the effects of imprisonment in the human world in AD first century. Humans who are imprisoned, especially those in solitary confinement, have little or no contact with the outside world. Satan also will have no contact with the world outside of the abyss when he is imprisoned.²⁷

Secondly, if we examine Mark 3 and Matthew 12 we discover that the context of binding is different from Revelation 20. The parallels are not the same. Powell is correct when he argues:

The binding imagery used is in a parable about a thief plundering a house. The binding is neither meant to be completely restrictive, nor permanent. In this case, the context does limit the extent of the binding, but not through the use of purpose statement. Instead the activity of Jesus is clearly revealed, and the consequences for Satan are delineated. The parallel in Luke 11:22 demonstrates that the binding is not an image of imprisonment, but of conquest. The details of Rev 20:1-3 are quite different. It is part of a visionary sequence in which the imprisonment of Satan has an impact on the other elements of the sequence. In Rev 20:1-3 an angel imprisons Satan and he is prevented from deceiving the world. In Matt 12:29 and the parallels, Christ himself binds Satan, and Satan is helpless from keeping Christ from exercising His authority over the demons. The two passages have more differences than they do similarities.²⁸

Thirdly, there are several passages in the New Testament which indicate that Satan's

²⁷ Powell, "Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6," p. 4. Powell also states that "Beale, 990, argues that the concept of the 'abyss' in Revelation is non-absolute. He notes that in 6:8 'Hades' exercises its influence over the people of the earth. However, he mistakenly assumes that the realm of the dead (Hades) and the Satanic realm are the same. While Satan has the power of death, he does not have power over the dead. He cannot raise the dead, nor release the dead from Hades. In fact, it is only when the key is given him that he can release the demons in Rev 9:1-11 or, presumably, the beast in 11:7. In Rev 6:8, Death and Hades are personalized for the judgment of death that is executed on the earth. While Satan and his minions are certainly involved in this judgment, the inhabitants of Hades are not coming forth to execute it. The shutting up of the pit is metaphorical for an absolute removal of influence, rather than a limited curtailment of influence, but this does not rule out the probability that it is a sphere of the spiritual world which prevents access to the physical world" (Ibid., p. 12, n. 30).

²⁸ Powell, "Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6," p. 3. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 985 argues that the "context and not the metaphor by itself, must determine what degree of restriction is intended." He does not believe that the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 is absolute. Powell responds by saying, "While this is true per se, a purpose statement can only state why an action of imprisonment is taken, not the degree of restriction intended. . . The purpose statement does not determine the degree of restriction at all; it is determined by the language used for the restriction" ("Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6," p. 2). Powell demonstrates his point on pages 2-4 and concludes that Satan's imprisonment is absolute for one thousand years.

activity is not even partially bound. First John 5:19 says "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." First Peter 5:8 proclaims the freedom of Satan by saying, "Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." Then in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul tells us how Satan blinds the minds of men to the truth of the gospel, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel. . . ." ²⁹

Someone may say that these verses only apply to the activity of Satan who deceives individuals. But what is involved in deceiving nations if it is not the deception of individuals on a mass level? History itself does not indicate that Satan is bound so that he is unable to deceive the nations. One only has to look at the 20th century activity of Nazi Germany, Red China and Russia. G. C. Berkouwer is one amillennialist who does not believe that Satan is bound in this present age. He says:

The language Revelation uses here [20:2-3] is forceful and radical . . . Those who interpret the millennium as already realized in the history of the church try to locate this binding in history. Naturally, such an effort is forced to find evidence for a radical elimination of Satan's power in that 'realized millennium' . . . The necessary relativizing of John's description of Satan's bondage (remember that Revelation 20 speaks of a *shut* and *sealed* pit) is then explained by the claim that, although Satan is said to deceive the nations no more (vs. 3), this does not exclude satanic activity in Christendom or individual persons. I think it is pertinent to ask whether this sort of interpretation really does justice to the radical proportions of the binding of Satan—that he will not be freed from imprisonment for a thousand years. ³⁰

Fourthly, if the binding of Satan is the result of the finished work of Christ on the cross then can this deception be done after the thousand years? The answer to this question must be

²⁹ Other verses may be added such as Acts 5:3; 26:18; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14-15; Eph. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:26, etc.

³⁰ G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 305.

yes for Revelation 20:3 and 7-8 declare that after the thousand years are completed Satan goes out to deceive the nations again. Then how can Christ die and bind Satan from deceiving the nations with his finished work on the cross, but in Revelation 20:7-8 there is time when Satan will not be bound and can deceive the nations? We have a conflict here. The same finished work of Christ turns out to be the unfinished work in the future because Satan does in the future what he cannot do now because of Christ's work on the cross.³¹

There are those who believe the binding of Satan is only a general binding where he cannot thwart the spreading of the gospel to the nations. They believe the precise thrust of Revelation 20:1-3 is to prevent Satan from inciting the eschatological "war to end all wars," by deceiving the nations "to gather them together for the war" (20:8). Satan wants to rush God into judgment to some how destroy his plan, but God has bound him and will not let him do it until the appointed time.³²

The problem with this view is what kept Satan from initiating the final battle before the cross? If when he is unbound in the future he will incite this final war, what kept him from doing it before the cross? If we say God prevented him from doing it then what is the difference between God's prevention of the final war of all times before the cross and the so-called binding during this age? In Revelation 20:3 it says that this binding prevents Satan from deceiving the nations "any longer."³³ Therefore, Satan must have deceived the nations before this time. Before

³¹ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., Believers Chapel Tapes of Dallas, Tx.: "Divine Purpose series," tape #16.

³² David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance* (Fort Worth: Dominion Press, 1988), pp.500-506; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 984-89.

³³ As we have argued above the language in Revelation 20:1-2 indicates a binding which does not refer to decrease in attempts or failure in attempts, but *prevention* from any attempt to deceive the nations while the purpose clause ἵνα μὴ πλανήσῃ in Revelation 20:3 conveys the failure in Satan's deception. See also Richard A. Ostella,

the cross we see world wars and after the cross we see world wars. If the binding deals with wars then there is no difference here? We would agree that Satan is prevented by God to muster the final war of all times until God so directs, but the deception which Satan does must happen before the binding and after the binding according to Revelation 20:3 and 7-8. Yet, if this involves war then the age we live in is no different from the age before the cross. Matter of fact, in the 20th century we have had two world wars. We conclude that this understanding of the binding of Satan does not do justice to the text or to history.

White believes the premillennial chronological approach to Revelation 19:11 - 20:1-3 has a problem. Why would God want to protect the nations from Satan's deception (20:3) when God has allowed both the deception and destruction of all the nations in Revelation 19:19-21? ³⁴ First of all, the progressive chronological sequence of Revelation 19:11 - 20:3 has already been addressed above in this article. Secondly, not everyone in all the nations is destroyed in the battle of Revelation 19:15-21. Only the unbelievers will be destroyed at this battle but not the saints.³⁵ According to Revelation 12:5 and 19:15 Christ will rule the nations in the future. In the future new heavens and earth the nations will exist according to Revelation 21:24, 26; 22:2. This

"The Significance of Deception in Revelation 20:3," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (Winter 1975): 236-38; Powell, "Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6," pp. 6-7; and Jeffrey L. Townsend, "Is the Present Age the Millennium?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* ? (July-September 1983): 217.

³⁴ White, "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10," p. 321.

³⁵ There are other views concerning the identity of the nations in Revelation 20:3: (1) They are the beast and his demonic armies (Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:587); (2) Not all the people joined in the battle of Revelation 19:19-21 and later join Satan when he is loosed at the end of the millennium (Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:587; George Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972):262-63; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 353; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 702); (3) This is an example of the conflicting ideas found in the book of Revelation (Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, pp. 722,739); and (4) They are the rest of the dead who are raised and judged in Revelation 20:11-15 (J. Webb Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgment in Revelation 20* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 140-42).

is consistent with the Old Testament which indicates that the nations will come and worship the Lord (Psalm 86:9; Isaiah 2:2; 66:19-20; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 4:1-5; Zechariah 8:20-23; 14:16-19).³⁶ Therefore, Christ at his second advent will destroy all those who follow the beast (Revelation 13:7-8, 15-17; 16:13-14; 19:17-21) but the saints will not take the mark of the beast and thus many will be martyred (Revelation 7:9,13-17; 14:12-13). Some of the saints will survive the Tribulation and will enter the millennium while others will be resurrected to enter the millennium (Matthew 24:38-44; 25:31-46; Luke 17:22-37; Revelation 20:4). Thirdly, those saints who make it through the Tribulation will reconstitute the nations (Revelation 12:13-17; Zechariah 14:16-21).³⁷ Powell argues that “the protection from the nations from Satan’s deception is viewed as a whole, not at the beginning of the 1000-year period. With this in view, it is best to see τὰ ἔθνη [the nations] as entities in and of themselves, and not in terms of unbelievers versus believers. Indeed, unbelievers were victims of Satan’s deception in 16:1-16 and 19:20, and will be in 20:7-10, but this has an effect on the nations as a whole. It is this effect that the nations are protected from during the Millennium.”³⁸

In summary, we conclude that the binding of Satan refers to his activity of deception

³⁶ Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 252.

³⁷ Ibid.; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 411; Webb, “Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations,” p. 14.

³⁸ Powell, “Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6,” pp. 5-6. Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 276. give their first meaning to the ἔθνος as “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, *nation, people*.” This fits Powell’s mean of ἔθνος. The word nation (ἔθνος) is not used in John’s epistles and only used five times in the Gospel of John. Yet, each of these verses refer to the nation of Israel (John 11:48,50,51,52; 18:35 - being singular). However, it is used 23 times in the book of Revelation. Seven of these references are in the context of a phrase like “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” or “the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations” (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). It seems that BDAG’s use of ἔθνος fits these 23 uses in Revelation. (See also *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2:369. The context may allow one to be more specific.

upon all mankind who follows the beast and Satan. The binding of Satan is not connected to the cross in the sense that the binding is taking place in our age. It refers to a future incarceration of Satan after the second coming of Christ lasting a thousand years while the overcomers reign on the earth.

RESURRECTION: THE SAINTS COME ALIVE AND REIGN FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (20:4-6)

Who Are They Who Reign With Christ?

Revelation 20:4 begins with thrones being set up and those who sat on them were given the authority to judge. We must remember that Daniel 7 is the background of this section. As one reads Daniel 7, it becomes obvious that all the saints of all ages are involved here (cp. Daniel 7:9, 13-14, 18, 22, 27). The major debate here is who are those who will sit on the throne? There are four major views on this point. First, some identify the “they” in Revelation 20:4 with Christ, the apostles and some of the saints (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3).³⁹ However, the absent of any mentioning of the apostles in the context makes this difficult. Also Christ is the one who gives the right to judge and not the recipient of that authority.⁴⁰ Secondly, some propose that the twenty-four elders who represent the church sit upon the thrones.⁴¹ However, the context

³⁹ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1933), 6:458; H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977 reprint):261; G. R. Beasley-Murray, “The Book of Revelation,” rev. ed. in the *New Century Biblical Commentary* (London. Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1978):293.

⁴⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 414.

⁴¹ Chilton, , *The Days of Vengeance*, pp. 508-09; Walvoord, *Revelation*, 296; DÜsterdieck, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Revelation of John*, pp. 464-65.

does not mention how many thrones are set up nor does it mention the twenty-four elders.⁴²

There is also the difficulty in taking the twenty-four elders as a representative group where as those who sit on the throne are individuals.⁴³ Thirdly, some believe that the martyrs in the earlier part of the book are in view.⁴⁴ However, why are the martyrs the only ones in view when John elsewhere indicates that every believer will share in Christ's reign (2:26-28; 3:12, 21; 5:10; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3)?⁴⁵ The other difficulty with this view is that the resurrection of the martyrs and their reign with Christ is specifically spelled out at the end of the verse 4 which would make the previous part of the verse to be repetitious.⁴⁶ The fourth view seems to fit best. It claims that the saints will sit upon the thrones (v. 4a) and the martyrs are in view in verse 4b-c.⁴⁷ Thomas gives the best exegetical support when he goes back to the armies of Revelation 19:14, 19 as the

⁴² William Lee, "The Revelation of St. John The Divine," in *The Bible Commentary*, ed. F. C. Cook (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 reprint), 10:794-95.

⁴³ David J. MacLeod, "The Fourth 'Last Thing': The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (January, 2000): 55, n. 38; Jack S. Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," p. 63.

⁴⁴ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 739; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:582-83 and Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 355 believe there is a second group mentioned that did not worship the beast (20:4c). Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 705 says, "I believe it is indeed the martyrs who are the focus throughout 20:4 but that all the saints are also intended in the larger context." D. E. Aune, "Revelation 17-22" *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1997) 52C:1084-85 supports the martyrs position by saying, "The identity of those seated on the thrones is surely connected with the resurrected martyrs who are twice said to reign with Christ . . . according to 3:21, the one who conquers will sit with the exalted Christ on his throne. The narrative order of this pericope is not in proper temporal sequence, for John first sees the thrones and those seated on them, i.e., the souls of the martyrs who had been beheaded and who had experienced the first resurrection, an instance of *hysteron-proteron* (Allo, 285). The disorganized character of this pericope results both from the author's tendency to use the literary device *hysteron-proteron*, i.e., reversing the logical order of narrative events (a device he frequently uses elsewhere; see Rev 3:3, 17; 5:5; 6:4; 10:4, 9; 20:4-5; 22:14), and from his tendency to describe *where* an individual or group of people sits before describing them."

⁴⁵ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, pp. 413-14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 413. Charles, *Revelation*, 2:182-83 tries to rearrange the text.

⁴⁷ Ladd, *Revelation of John*, p. 263.

antecedent to the “they” in verse 4a.⁴⁸ Christ comes on His white horse to conquer the enemies on the earth (19:11-13,19) and the saints in their white clothes and white horses are following Him (19:14).⁴⁹ The inevitable principle that the conqueror takes dominion and rules over the conquered is seen here.⁵⁰ The glorified saints are promised to be apart of this rule earlier in Revelation 2:26-28 and 3:21. It seems plausible that this is the same group of people who are the Bride of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7-8.⁵¹ Some would also extend the armies of Christ as the saints of all ages. They would point to Daniel 7:18, 22 and 27 which indicate the Old Testament saints are part of the group. In Matthew 19:28 the twelve apostles are presented as part of the group and 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 would include the church saints (cf. Rev. 2:26-28; 3:21; 5:10).⁵² This all seems to fit nicely here, but Revelation 20:4 is not that explicit. There is nothing that seems to contradict this point, but there is nothing that seems to demand it. At least we can say from the context that the saints that make up the armies of the Lord (19:14, 19) and possibly the bride of the Lamb (19:7-8) are those who are sitting on the thrones.

In addition to the thrones and those who sat on them, John mentioned “the souls” of the martyrs who had been faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ and did not worship the beast or take his mark. Some have tried to maintain that there are two groups (2nd and 3rd group in 20:4) which

⁴⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 414.

⁴⁹ J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976 reprint):457; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p.388. See also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 960-61.

⁵⁰ Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, pp. 457-58.

⁵¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 414.

⁵² David J. MacLeod, “The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6),” p. 55; Ladd, *Revelation of John*, pp. 363-64.

are described as “those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.” The major problem with making a third group of people different from the martyrs (the second group) is, nothing is said about their death. If this third group is considered to be alive and different from the martyrs then it is difficult to see how the verb “they came to live” could apply to the third group.⁵³ Therefore, it seems that the phrase “and those who” (καί οἳτινες) should be translated “that is, those” or “even those” and continue with further description of the martyrs of the second group of people.⁵⁴ Or it may be best in the light of Revelation 13:15 to consider the third group is separate from the beheaded saints but still part of the martyrs.⁵⁵

⁵³ Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6,” p. 65; David J. MacLeod, “The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6),” p. 56, n.45; Ladd, *Revelation of John*, p. 263.

⁵⁴ The *καί* would be explanatory (“that is” or “namely”) or ascensive (“even”). Either case gives further information about the same group of people.

⁵⁵ Some would find two groups of people in Revelation 20:b-c because the antecedent of οἳτινες (“those who,” indefinite relative pronoun, nominative masculine plural) could not refer to τὰς ψυχὰς (souls) for it is an accusative feminine plural noun. Therefore, οἳτινες is the subject of new group of people. However, there is another way to understand this problem. Consider the following points. There are nine places where ὅστις is found in the book of Revelation (1:7,12; 2:24; 9:4; 11:8; 12:13; 17:12; 19:2; 20:4). Seven of the cases explain further the description of the previous point in the verse. However, 20:4 has a *καί* that precedes the indefinite pronoun. There is only three other places in the NT where this construction is found (Mt. 5:41; 23:12; Rev. 1:7). The two Matthew verses do not continue the identity of the previous group (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1001). However, these cases in Matthew have the *καί ὅστις* construction at the beginning of the sentence and not in the middle of the sentence like in Revelation 20:4. The only verse which is the closest parallel to Revelation 20:4 is Revelation 1:7. The indefinite relative pronoun in Rev. 1:7 is a nominative masculine plural and near the middle of the sentence. This construction introduces a group which is a subset of the previous group (Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6,” p. 65; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1001). This supports my interpretation. It is also interesting to see that relative pronouns that are not in formal agreement with their antecedent is not uncommon in the book of Revelation. (Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6,” p. 65 gives these examples: 1:15,19,20; 5:6; 11:4,9,11,15; 14:7; 17:3; 19:1) It is the phenomena called *constructio ad sensum*. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 337 concurs by saying, “not infrequently relative pronouns [RP] do not follow the basic rules of agreement. Sometimes the gender of the RP does not match that of the antecedent, usually because of sense agreement superseding syntactical agreement (*constructio ad sensum*).” Wallace goes on to illustrate that this phenomena can involve gender and case (p. 337-39) and this can apply to indefinite relative pronouns (pp. 343-45). This seems to help explain the gender change in Revelation 20:4. The case change of οἳτινες to a nominative is because it is the subject of the clause and the change in gender seems to be a *constructio ad sensum*.

There is a debate whether the “the souls” in verse 4 are disembodied souls⁵⁶ or resurrected embodied persons⁵⁷. Many premillennialists interpret the word “souls” as resurrected embodied persons and many amillennialists interpreted it as disembodied souls. Some scholars have pointed out the parallel between Revelation 6:9-11 and Revelation 20:4-6.⁵⁸ This is done to support their position that the saints in Revelation 20:4-6 are not bodily resurrected and enter the millennial kingdom, but they have died and their souls have entered the intermediate state in heaven where they are waiting the Lord's return. We must admit that Revelation 6:9-11 refers to intermediate state, but this doesn't mean that both passages are identical. Ramsey Michaels summarizes this argument:

The reference to "the souls of those who were killed for the word of God and for the witness which they had" (6:9) corresponds closely to "the souls of those who were slaughtered for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God" (20:4). Apparently the same group is in view in both instances . . . except that in chapter 6 the number is not yet complete (v.11). This exception, however, is important because it serves as a caution against simply equating the two passages. They are obviously related, but their relation is one of continuity rather than simple identity. There is a progression from 6:9-11 to 20:4-6, so that if the former refers to the intermediate state (as it clearly does), the latter must refer to a subsequent stage in the experience of the martyred saints. This can only be bodily resurrection at the coming of Christ. There is an incompleteness about the situation of the group described in chapter 6. They are waiting and crying out, "How long, O holy and true Master, before you pass judgment and avenge our blood from the dwellers on the earth" (6:10). Although they have died, they are still clearly on this side of the consummation . . . To put it in simplest terms, the prayer of 6:9-11 is answered in 20:4-6 . . . The intermediate state in Revelation is

⁵⁶ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 262; Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, pp. 230-31; James A. Hughes, "Revelation 20:4-6 and the Question of the Millennium," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973): 289.

⁵⁷ Seiss, *Lecture on the Apocalypse*, 459-60; Berkouwer, *Return of Christ*, p. 304; Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," p. 66-67.

⁵⁸ Webb, "Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations," pp. 30-32; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 998.

thus seen as a state of longing and anticipation, not unlike our physical existence here and now. The prayer "How long?" corresponds exactly to the prayers of the suffering righteous on earth in the Old Testament (e.g., Ps.13:2ff; 79:5; Zech.1:12). Though the saints are given a white robe and told to "rest" (6:11; cf. 14:13), this grace is only a temporary measure. The real answer to their plea is the glory of an actual resurrection, granted at last in 20:4-6.⁵⁹

John in Revelation 20:4 says that the disembodied souls “came to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years.” Therefore, the battle ground is whether Revelation 20:4 refers to physical resurrection or not. One piece of the puzzle which will help answer this question is where are these “souls” reigning? Is it in heaven or on earth? Webb has given the following arguments to point to the reigning on the saints to be on the earth:⁶⁰ (1) The pericope before and after 20:4-6 takes place on earth. Revelation 20:1-3 indicates that the angel descends from heaven to imprison Satan in the abyss and Revelation 20:7-10 depicts Satan leading a battle on earth against the Lord. (2) Revelation 5:10 promises that the saints are made to be a “kingdom of priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth.” Some may try to fulfill this in the new heavens and new earth, however, there is no explicit reference that connects with this period. Furthermore, there are only two passages (Rev. 5:10; 20:6; cf. 1:6) which connects the saints’ priesthood with reigning on the earth. This is not to say that the saints do not continue to reign in the new heaven and new earth, but John’s focus here is the millennial reign on earth.⁶¹

It is also important to consider when will the saints reign. Is it now or in the future? The

⁵⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels, "The First Resurrection: A Response," *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (Fall, 1976):107-108. Webb, "Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations," pp. 30-32 and MacLeod, "The Fourth 'Last Thing': The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6)," p. 56, n. 43 agree that the souls in verse 4 are disembodied souls who are then raised from the dead ("they came life") and given resurrection bodies.

⁶⁰ Webb, "Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations," pp. 32-34.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 34, n. 87.

writer has argued above that the context favors the time period and events which culminate in the second coming of Christ. The plot of the worship of the beast and the mark of the beast can be traced in Revelation 13-16 and 19-20. Most commentators place Revelation 19:20 in the context of the second coming of Christ.⁶² Here the beast and the false prophet are connected with the deception and worship of the beast and his mark and they are thrown into the lake of fire. The same topic is mentioned in Revelation 20:4. In this verse the saints did not worship the beast or receive his mark which places the events of verse 4 in the same time period which leads up to the second coming of Christ. Having these points firmly in place we can investigate the meaning of the phrase, “they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Who Are Those Who Will Live?

In Revelation 20:4-5 we see the important verb which is translated in verse 4 as “they came to life” and in verse 5 as “the rest of the dead did not come to life.” What does this mean? Before we answer this question, we need to notice that most of verse 5 functions as a parenthesis and the phrase, “This is the first resurrection” refers to the latter part of verse 4. The following translation may help: “and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.) This is the first resurrection.” Secondly, there has been some debate exactly how to translate the verb “live”(ζάω) in verses 4-5. It is probably best to translate it “they came to life” (ἔζησαν, an ingressive aorist) in v. 4, but in verse 5 the translation “they lived” (ἔζησαν, a constative aorist)

⁶² Postmillennialist would not accept this position.

is acceptable and does not play a major role in which millennial view one accepts.⁶³

Then what does it mean that "they came to life?" The word can be use of spiritual life (regeneration) in the NT, but it could not mean this here for the people who are coming alive have already died (cp. v. 4). We find no biblical support of anyone being born again after they are physically died.

Others try to say that it refers to the souls of men who have entered into heaven in the intermediate state prior to physical resurrection. However, the verb ζάω is rarely used for a soul living after death that doesn't refer to a bodily resurrection (cp. Lk.20:37ff).⁶⁴ In other words, this is a rare use of this word. Secondly, one of the problems with taking these verses as the intermediate state is that John calls this coming to life the first resurrection (ἀνάστασις) in verse 5. Out of about 41 other times the word resurrection is mentioned in the NT only one time does it fail to refer to a bodily resurrection.⁶⁵ Therefore, the use of the word "they came to life" in combination with "resurrection" strongly supports a bodily resurrection.⁶⁶

The immediate context strongly supports a physical resurrection as the meaning for "they

⁶³ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1000; Nigel Turner, "Syntax," *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, by James Hope Moulton, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1963), 3:7; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), p. 833; and Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 559 think it is better to take ζάω as an ingressive in verse 4.

⁶⁴ Hoekema, *The Bible In The Future*, p. 233. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1008-10 uses Lk. 20:37-38 and 1 Pet. 4:6 as examples from the New Testaments. He also mentions several other extra-biblical uses to bolster his position. However, ζάω is used 31 times in Johannine books and this use is not found unless Rev. 20:4 is the exception. Beale attempts to use Rev. 2:10-11 for support by saying "presumably, and plausibly, the reward of life commences at the point of death, so that the focus in 2:10-11 is on spiritual resurrection, which protects against spiritual death" (p. 1008). The "presumably, and plausibly" demonstrate the weakness of this possible interpretation..

⁶⁵ This reference is Luke 2:34. One more debated passage which they might claim would be Luke 20:28ff.

⁶⁶ We may also add that the Greek word translated "they came to life" is used by John with the same Greek tense in Revelation 2:8 as a reference to our Lord's bodily resurrection (cf.1:18). Then in Revelation 13:14 it refers to a physical resuscitation of a mortal wound.

came to life" (ἐζήσαν). The coming alive refers back to the context of the first half of verse 4 where it says the "souls of those who had been beheaded . . . and [even] those who had not worshiped the beast or his image. . . ." Since they lost their lives physically, it seems natural to think that they came alive physically.⁶⁷ Yet, a stronger argument is the context indicators from the parallel use of "came to life" in verses 4 and 5. Dean Alford has a classic word on this point:

If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain ψυχαὶ ἐζήσαν [souls lived] at the first, and the rest of the νεκροὶ ἐζήσαν [dead lived] only at the end of a specified period after that first, --if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave; --then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the whole primitive Church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope.⁶⁸

It can be concluded that Revelation 20:4 must refer to believers while the verb "did . . . come to life" (ἐζήσαν) in verse 5 must refer to unbelievers. If the ἐζήσαν in both verses refers to a physical resurrection, there is no problem. But if both verses refer to spiritual resurrection then we are confronted with insurmountable problems. This would imply the unbelieving dead of verse 5 would live spiritually in heaven after the thousand years are completed like the martyrs of verse 4. Yet, this would support universal salvation. If you make the first one spiritual resurrection in verse 4 and the last one in verse 5 physical resurrection then Alford's admonishment applies.

Therefore, some who hold an amillennial view contend that the word "until" (ἄχρι) in

⁶⁷ Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 718.

⁶⁸ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4:732-33. Alford also stresses this point in his "Prolegomena" section volume 4, page 252.

verse 5 does not imply that the unbelieving dead will live again. They say the phrase "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed" is equivalent to saying that "the second death had power on the rest of the dead during the thousand years and they also did not live after the thousand years were completed."⁶⁹

Yet, this argument does not hold up grammatically. There are two kinds of construction which follow the word "until." There are prepositional phrases (e.g., Rom.5:13) and there are clausal constructions (e.g., Rev.7:3; 15:8; 20:3, 5). Each time the clausal construction is used it refers to some change after the appointed time stated.⁷⁰ This is how the word "until" is used in Revelation 20:3. If John did not accept the implication of the "until" clause then why the clause? Why didn't he just say the "rest of the dead did not come to life? The "until" clause would not be needed.⁷¹ But the "until" clause is needed in the context. Therefore, we conclude that the two verbs "live" refers to bodily resurrection. The first resurrection is at the second coming of Christ just before the millennium. The second resurrection is after the millennium.

Meredith Kline proposes a double binary pattern to try to establish that the first resurrection as spiritual and the second as physical in Revelation 20:4-6.⁷² He sets up the

⁶⁹ James A. Hughes, "Revelation 20:4-6 And The Question of The Millennium," pp. 301-2; Hoekema, *The Bible And The Future*, p. 236.

⁷⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1016 agrees with Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," pp. 68-69 when he says, "Now ἄχρι occurs three times in Revelation with the aorist subjunctive (7:3 . . . 15:8 . . . 20:3). In each of these uses ἄχρι more than implies a change which 'occurs after the point to which it refers is reached.' Furthermore, exactly the same expressions are used in 20:3 and 20:5 . . . and 20:3 clearly contemplates a change after the thousand years are completed."

⁷¹ Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," p. 68-69; S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "The Divine Purpose," tape series #17.

⁷² Meredith G. Kline, "The First Resurrection," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (Spring 1975): 366-75. See also Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1005-07.

following chiastic arrangement:

first physical death of the saints-----first spiritual resurrection of the
saints

A

B

second physical resurrection of the wicked-----second spiritual death of the
wicked

B

A

Kline says the “two binary patterns are combined into a complex double pattern with antithesis between the parts with each pair (*i.e.*, the first-new contrast) and also between the two pairs themselves, the one having to do with death and the other with resurrection. As we shall see there is also a criss-crossing pattern of connection between the two pairs, ‘the first resurrection’ and ‘the second death’ being the explicit and metaphorical members of the two pairs, while the first death links with the second resurrection, both being implicit and literal.”⁷³ Therefore, Kline would conclude that the above exegetical observation provides evidences that the first resurrection in Revelation 20:4 to be spiritual and the resurrection in Revelation 20:5 to be physical. Thus in his mind establishing an amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5.

Kline begins his argument to distinguish between the two resurrections by trying to establish the understanding of *πρωτος* (“first”) not in a chronological sense but in an antithetical sense. Kline uses three places in the New Testament (Revelation 21; Hebrews 8-10 and 1 Corinthians 15) to establish this. After he develops this usage of *πρωτος* as antithetical it is

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 370-71.

applied to Revelation 20:4-6.⁷⁴ He would concluded that the first resurrection (spiritual) is antithetical to the second resurrection (physical).

However, the chronological usage of *πρωτος* is overwhelmingly used in the New Testament and especially in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:17; 2:4, 5; 2:8; 4:1, 7; 8:7; 13:12; 16:2). It is also important to stress that the subject is resurrection (20:5) and “came to life” (vv. 4, 5) in combination with *πρωτος*.⁷⁵ There is no other place that *πρωτος* and *ἀνάστασις* (resurrection) are found in close proximity (except Acts 26:23 though this verse does not help us here). However, the concept of first (“first fruits,” *ἀπαρχή*) is found with “has been raised” (having the thought of resurrection) in 1 Corinthians 15:20 and 23. We find no antithetical aspect in Paul’s order of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:20 and 23. Christ’s first fruits of resurrection is followed by the same concept of resurrection for “those who are Christ’s at His coming” (v. 23). This use of “first” and “resurrection” fits the chronological position of the premillennialist.

Kline uses the subject of the “new heaven and new earth” in Rev. 21, the Mosaic and New covenant in Hebrews 8-10 and the “first man, Adam” and the “last man” Christ in 1 Corinthians 15 to develop his antithetical use of *πρωτος*. Then he says, “An interpretation of *protos* in keeping with the usage and meaning of the word found in Revelation 21 is required in Revelation 20, specifically in the expression ‘the first resurrection.’”⁷⁶ He gives three reasons

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 366-72.

⁷⁵ Deere, "Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4-6," p. 72, n. 55.

⁷⁶ Meredith G. Kline, "The First Resurrection," p. 369.

why Revelation 21 concept of *πρωτος* “is required” in Revelation 20:⁷⁷ (1) “proximity of Revelation 20 and 21 contexts”; (2) “general thematic continuity between the two chapters”; and (3) “the striking fashion in which the first-(second) resurrection pattern is interlocked in the ‘thousand years’ context with the (first)-second death pattern of Revelation 21.”⁷⁸ Requirements #1 and #2 are not convincing since the subject of Revelation 20:4-5 is resurrection and the subject of Revelation 21 is the new heavens and new earth, the new Jerusalem, and the accomplishment of God and His provision to the overcomers. Therefore, the specific themes are different and the context is not that close. The third requirement can be called a double binary pattern.⁷⁹ Hoehner explains Kline’s view this way, “the first resurrection is metaphorical referring to the death of the Christian who is presently reigning with Christ (20:4), the second resurrection is the literal physical resurrection, the first death is physical and the second is metaphorical, which is the absence of spiritual life.”⁸⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels answers Kline in his article and part of his critique states:

Kline himself (correctly) sees the second death in close conjunction with the second resurrection (both coming to expression in Rev. 20:11-15), so it is hard to understand how he can at the same time refer to the former as ‘metaphorical’ and the latter as ‘literal.’ Both represent the realities beyond the scope of human experience. In that sense, neither can be described in human language without resorting to analogy or metaphor of some kind. Yet both seem intended by the author to be taken as real future events and therefore ‘literal.’

The implications of this for Kline’s thesis are clear. If the second death is not metaphorical, there is no reason to assume that the first resurrection is metaphorical either. If both deaths are in some sense ‘literal,’ why not both

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 370.

⁸⁰ Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 255.

resurrections?⁸¹

Michaels also demonstrates that though the concept of the first death and second resurrection is in the context, it is not in the text itself, therefore, cannot be the basis for reconstructing a “double binary pattern.”⁸² The evidence for both resurrections (20:4-5) being physical is still strongly supported. In the opinion of many Kline has not established his case.

What About the Thousand Years?

The extent of the thousand years has become an ongoing debate. The lack of space will only allow a brief survey. First, we must dispense with the shibboleth that the book of revelation is a symbolic book; therefore we should expect that the number one thousand to be symbolical. There are 174 cardinal numbers in the book of Revelation. In addition there are 19 numbers which are fractions (e.g., 1/3) or cardinal numbers with fractions (e.g., 3 ½). Finally, there are 61 ordinal numbers which make a total of 254 numbers in the book.⁸³ Davis enumerates four general categories by which numbers are classified in Scripture: conventional⁸⁴, rhetorical⁸⁵,

⁸¹ J. Ramsey Michaels, “The First Resurrection: A Response,” p. 101. Meredith G. Kline, “The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (Fall 1976): 110-119 attempts to answer Michaels.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 102-03.

⁸³ See appendix.

⁸⁴ John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology: A Basic Study of the Use of Numbers in the Bible* (Grand Rapid: Baker, 1986): 49-91. He defines this use “which is concerned primarily with the mathematical value of the numbers” (p. 49). The function of this category can be further divided into mathematical processes (adding, subtracting, etc.), specific quantities and rounded numbers (*Ibid.*, pp. 49-54).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-102. He goes on to say, “Whenever numbers are so used, they are not to be understood literally nor symbolically. . . The intention of the writer in this usage is not to emphasize the mathematical value of the number primarily, but to express either intensity or other concepts such as ‘few,’ ‘many,’ etc. (*Ibid.*, p. 93).

symbolic⁸⁶ and mystical⁸⁷. There is some debate over the numbers in Revelation, but the vast majority of the numbers should be categorized in the conventional use. John demonstrates the conventional use not only by telling us totals in number, but he also counts out the number of churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, woes and living creatures. Notice John tells us the total number of elders is 24, but he also talks to one of the elders (4:4; 5:5; 7:3). In Revelation 7 he correlates the four angels, the four corners of the earth and the four winds. Addition or multiplication is indicated in Revelation 7:4-8 with the 144,000 for they are broken up into 12 groups of 12,000 each. The mentioning of 42 months (11:2; 13:5) as 1260 days (11:3; 12:6) is the conventional use of time. In addition, one could add ½ an hour (8:1), 10 days (2:10), and 5 months (9:5, 10). Round numbers are rarely used in Revelation. It is reasonable to see round numbers in the fractions 1/10 (11:13) 1/4 (6:8), and 1/3 (8:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; 9:15, 18; 12:4). It is possible that the 7000 men killed in the earth quake (11:13), 200,000,000 armies and 1600 stadia could be round numbers. Therefore, the conventional use of numbers which involves mathematical operations, measurements, and around numbers involve all the numbers in the book of Revelation with thirteen exceptions.

All but one of the thirteen exceptions could be classified as rhetorical and idiomatic usages of numbers. Revelation 5:11 describes the number of the elders as “myriads of myriads [or “ten thousand of ten thousands”] and thousands of thousands.”⁸⁸ John uses this phrase to

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 103-24.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 125-49. He concludes that the mystical use of numbers is not helpful in understanding the Scripture (Ibid., pp. 148-49). The only possible use of mystical numbers in Revelation is 13:18. However, in this text John makes it clear that he is using this number in a different way.

⁸⁸ Some might want to place Revelation 9:16 here in this category, but one will notice it is not the exact same expression and therefore can be a conventional number.

describe a large indefinite number of angels usually understood as an expression from Daniel 7:10.⁸⁹ The most idiomatic usage in Revelation is the number one. Though one is also used in a conventional sense (5:5; 6:1 (2x); 7:13; 13:3; 15:7; 17:1, 10; 21:9; 21:21), it may also be used as an indefinite English article “an” (8:13; 9:13; 18:21; 19:17).⁹⁰ Other times it has the nuance of “uniform, or single” as in a single purpose (17:13,16). Still other times it connotes the nuance of “suddenness or abruptness” (18:8, 10, 17, 19)⁹¹ or a “very short time” (17:12).⁹² The only other verse which is difficult for any interpreter is Revelation 13:18. Some would put this in the symbolic usage while others may put it in the mystical usage. Whatever category one puts it, the writer, John, makes it clear in the text that it is not to be considered a conventional usage.

Secondly, it is often declared with emphasis that this is the only place where the kingdom is said to be a thousand years. We would agree with this, but we must also add that there are many places we can turn in the Bible to demonstrate there will be an earthly kingdom. On the other hand, it is interesting that this one place which mentions the time length of the earthly kingdom declares six times that it will be a thousand years.

A quick look at a concordance will indicate when a number is used with the word "year" it refers to a literal year. Everywhere there is a number with a time indicator in Revelation, such

⁸⁹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7 An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 403.

⁹⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 24, n. 70; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 559; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, (Nashville: Broadman, 1934): 674; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 359.

⁹¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 326; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 559; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, p. 266; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 622. Thomas says, “the locative does not express duration of time, but is a figurative way of expressing abruptness” (Ibid.).

⁹² Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 301; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 715; . Thomas calls it “an adverbial accusative of time” (Ibid.).

as days, months and years, one finds nothing in the text which would compel the reader to understand this to be anything other than a conventional use of numbers.⁹³ Even 2 Pet. 3:8 is not an exception. Peter is not saying that a thousand years are one day, but he is pointing out God's transcendence in respect to time. In other words, Peter is trying to give us some idea how God views time so he uses literal time.⁹⁴ It is also important to see that John does use phrases to indicate large indefinite numbers and short amounts of time even in Revelation 20, but he does not use numbers to do this. In verse 3 John indicates that Satan must be released after the thousand years "for a short time." When this release happens, it says in verse 8 that Satan gathers an army for war "the number of them is like the sand of the seashore." The uses of numbers in contrast with John's use of indefinite phrases for time and numbers help to support that cardinal numbers are to be understood in the conventional category.

Finally, we find that the structure of John's writing which gives us the vision in verse 4 and an interpretation of the vision in verses 5-6, gives strong support for a future literal thousand-year-kingdom. This is indicated by the past tense verb (aorist) "reigned" in verse 4 and the future tense "will reign" in verse 6. John writes in the past tense to indicate the consummation of the vision, but he declares that his interpretation of the vision is future from his time. Therefore, we have a thousand years mentioned in both the vision (verse 4) and in the interpretation of the vision (verses 5-6). The above argument is a strong indication that we should take the thousand years as a literal thousand years and this literal millennial kingdom is

⁹³ See for day(s) (2:10; 8:12; 11:3, 9, 11; 12:6) months (9:5, 10; 11:2; 13:5) and years (20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). See the discussion above for 1 hour and 1 day in 17:12; 18:8, 10, 17, 19.

⁹⁴ Hoehner, "Evidence from Revelation 20," p. 249; John F. Walvoord, "The Theological Significance of Revelation 20:1-6," p. 231.

future after the second coming of Christ. Furthermore, the thousand years in the vision are said to be a thousand years in the interpretation of the vision. Since the number thousand is not interpreted differently, it gives support that John is using the conventional use of numbers in Revelation 20:4-6. There are at least six other places in Revelation where the number in the vision is the same as the number in the interpretation:⁹⁵

Verses	Symbol	Interpretation
1:20	7 stars	angels of 7 churches
	7 lampstands	7 churches
4:5	7 lamps of fire	7 Spirits of God
5:6	7 eyes	7 Spirits of God
11:3-4	2 olive trees	2 witnesses
	2 lampstands	2 witnesses
17:9	7 heads	7 mountains
		7 kings
17:12	10 horns	10 kings

This pattern strengthens the understanding that the thousand years in Revelation 20 is a conventional number.

Where Will the Saints Reign for A Thousand Years?

The place where the saints will reign in this thousand years is the earth. The following arguments favor this view. First, in Revelation 19:11-16 we see Christ coming out of heaven to smite the nations who are on the earth and the saints will reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4). Then we see in Revelation 20:9 that the saints are still upon the earth after the thousand years for this is

⁹⁵ William E. Mouser, Jr., "The Hermeneutics of Numbers in the Revelation," (unpublished paper at Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976), p. 9.

where Satan comes to attack them.⁹⁶ This seems to indicate that the kingdom is on the earth. Secondly, Revelation 5:10 claims that the saints will reign as priest upon the earth while 20:6 says “they [the saints] will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” Therefore, this writer would agree with Webb that “this bi-fold description of the priestly and kingly functions of believers is mentioned explicitly (in a verbal way) in only three passages: 1:6; 5:10 and 20:6. It is not mentioned explicitly (i.e., through any clear verbal connection) in the new-heavens-and-new-earth material. Since 20:6 is the only place where the priestly-service and kingly-reign theme is explicitly reiterated within Revelation (and in the wording that echoes 5:10), perhaps it ought to be given some preference as the writer’s focal point for fulfilling the reign-on-earth promise of 5:10.”⁹⁷ Finally, the Old Testament Messianic prophecies like Psalm 2 looked forward to an earthly rule and reign in the kingdom.

WHEN WILL THE BATTLE OF REVELATION 20:7-10 TAKE PLACE?

The temporal article “when” (ὅταν) in 20:7 is a time indicator which connects back with the thought of 20:3 which says “after these things he [Satan] must be released for a short time.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Webb, “Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations,” p. 32; Doros Zachariades, “Making Sense of the Millennium Resurrection in Revelation 20,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 14 (August 2001): 44. The writer is not saying that the saint will not reign as priest in the new heaven and earth, but only it is not explicitly stated they would.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

⁹⁸ BDAG, p. 731 states that when ὅταν is used with an aorist subjunctive “the action of the subordinate clause precedes that of the main clause. Therefore,” when the thousand years are completed (an aorist subjunctive in a subordinate clause), Satan will be released” (main clause). Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 710, n. 17 makes this helpful statement: “Some (Beale 1999: 1021, noting Morris 1987: 238) overstate the force of ὅταν (*hotan*) as an indefinite relative (“whenever”) to stress the symbolic nature of the thousand-year period, but in the Koine period it had often lost its indefiniteness and had a force similar to ὅτε (“when”; cf. Zerwick 1963: §337).”

The text is indicating that after the millennium there is a short period of time for which the events of 20:7-10 take place. As we said above, this short time after the millennium is a difficulty for the amillennialist who believes that Revelation 20:7-10 is a recapitulation of Revelation 19:11-21. Those who believe in this recapitulation have to explain the short time of Satan after the second coming and from where the release of Satan comes. As discussed above, the premillennial viewpoint best explains the thought of John which understands this chapter as having visional progression with historical progression of events. The premillennialist believes that at the second coming of Christ Satan is confined in prison for a thousand years and then released for a short time after the millennium and comes to an end by being cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.

The main activity of Satan in Revelation 20:8 is the deception and gathering of nations, Gog and Magog, from the four corners of the earth to war. Magog is first mentioned in Genesis 10:2 and both names are mentioned in Ezekiel 38:2.⁹⁹ The identification of Gog and Magog in

⁹⁹ David J. MacLeod, "The Fifth 'Last Thing': The Release of Satan and Man's Final Rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (April-June 2000): 208, n. 28 lists the possible chronological progression of Ezekiel 38-39: "(1) The invasion will take place before the Tribulation (David L. Cooper, *When God's Armies Meet the Almighty* [Los Angeles: biblical Research Society, 1940], 80-81). (2) the invasion will take place in the middle of the Tribulation (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* [Grand Rapids: Dunham, 1958], 350-53; Leon Wood, A Commentary on Daniel [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973], 309). (3) The events will take place at the end of the Tribulation (William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation* [London: G. Morrish, 1874], 448; and Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* [Chicago: Moody, 1969], 218). (4) The events of Ezekiel 38-39 will spread over a period of time, with chapter 38 being fulfilled in the middle of the Tribulation and chapter 39 being fulfilled at its end (Harold Hoehner, "the Progression of Events in Ezekiel 38-39," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands*, ed. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994], 82-92). (5) The invasion will take place at the end of the millennium (H.L. Ellison, *Ezekiel, The man and His Message* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956], 133-34; A. B. Davidson, *The book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, rev. A. W. Streane [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916], 301; Mounce, *The book of Revelation*, 371; J. Paul Tanner, "Rethinking Ezekiel's Invasion by Gog," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 [March 1996]: 29-46; and Meredith G. Kline, "Har Magadon: The End of the Millennium," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 [June 1996]: 207-22). (6) Ezekiel's prophecy will be fulfilled in two events, one recorded in Revelation 19:17-21 and one in Revelation 20:7-10 (Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 256; and Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986], 6:937-40)."

20:8 with Ezekiel 38 has several difficulties. Hoehner details the differences:¹⁰⁰ (1) Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 are identified with a local northern power; in Revelation 20:8 Gog and Magog refers to the “four corners of the earth”; (2) in Ezekiel Gog is a prince and Magog refers to land; in Revelation 20:8 Gog and Magog refer to people; (3) in Ezekiel 39:4,17-20 the battle ends with a great feast of the corpses (which fits well with Revelation 19:17-21 – the battle at the end of the Tribulation at the second coming); in Revelation 20:10-11 fire comes down from heaven devours the nations and Satan is thrown in the lake of fire. John in the book of Revelation does not “always cite the OT with a strictly literal interpretation of proper names and events.”¹⁰¹ These two names, Gog and Magog, refer to the nations in the latter days of the millennium that will attack Jerusalem.¹⁰² As discussed above, the saints that survive the Tribulation enter the millennium and reconstitute the nations to become a great multitude like the sand on the sea shore. It is a testimony to the depravity of man to think that this multitude of people which make up the nations will live in the most perfect environment thus far in the history of man since the fall, will have the Lord Himself as head of the government and they will fall prey to the deception of Satan. This deception will demonstrate their unbelief and rebellion by warring against the Lord. The doom of the nations will come swiftly as they surround the

¹⁰⁰ Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 258.

¹⁰¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 424. Webb, “Revelation 20: Exegetical Considerations,” pp. 10-11 makes the same point, but the writer may differ on some points.

¹⁰² Ibid.; David J. MacLeod, “The Fifth ‘Last Thing’: The Release of Satan and Man’s Final Rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10),” p. 209; Lee, “The Revelation of St. John The Divine,” in *The Bible Commentary*, 801; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:587.

saints and Jerusalem¹⁰³ for fire will be sent out of heaven to devour them. Then Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet had already been thrown at Christ's second coming. They will not be annihilated¹⁰⁴, but will experience mental and sensory torment¹⁰⁵ throughout eternity. The expression "day and night" is expressing a figure of speech for continual torment; while the expression "forever and ever" (lit. "unto the ages of the ages" - εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων) expresses the extent of time which in this context is eternal punishment.¹⁰⁶

There are those who believe that Revelation 20:1-10 is the recapitulation of Revelation 19:11-21. They give at least four points for their support.¹⁰⁷ We will look at two of these points

¹⁰³ It is quiet probable that the "and" (καὶ) in Revelation 20:8 is ascensive ("even," expressing the point of focus) and could be translated, "even the beloved city" (Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 425).

¹⁰⁴ For the debate between eternal punishment and annihilation see William Crockett ed. *Four Views of Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); Christopher W. Morgan & Robert A. Peterson, gen. ed., *Hell Under Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004); and W. G. T. Shedd, *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment* (Carlisle, PA: Banner Truth, 1990 reprint). See also the five articles on hell by the Master's faculty in *The Master's Journal* 9 (fall 1998): 129-217.

¹⁰⁵ This punishment is described as the "lake of fire, outer darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), a never-dying worm and unquenchable fire (Mark 9:48)" and furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42.50) (Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 426).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; David J. MacLeod, "The Fifth 'Last Thing': The Release of Satan and Man's Final Rebellion (Rev. 20:7-10)," p. 210; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1030; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 716; D. E. Aune, "Revelation 17-22" *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2002) 52C:1100.

¹⁰⁷ White in "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10" argues from Rev. 15:1 that the wrath of God is complete after the return of Christ, thus, the wrath poured out in Rev. 20:7-10 after the thousand years in the premillennial view contradicts this verse (pp. 330-31). The writer has commented on this point in footnote 16. Secondly, White believes if Revelation 16:17-21; 19:11-21 and 20:9-11 "all recapitulate Christ's second advent in 6:12-17, we may conclude with good reason that 16:17-21; 19:11-21; and 20:9-11 are each parallel accounts of Christ's return in their own right" (p. 333). White acknowledges that just because there are some similarity of events, it does not prove identity (p. 333). The writer has argued in this article that the dissimilarities are sufficient to indicate that Rev. 20:7-10 is not a recapitulation of 19:11-21. See also Hoehner, "Evidence from Revelation 20," p. 260-61. Thirdly, White uses the motif of angelic descending and ascending in Rev. 7:2; 10:1; 18:1 and 20:1 to support his recapitulation position (p. 336-43). However, he states in his introduction "that this discussion does not *prove* recapitulation in chap. 20, but it does *support* that approach when taken in conjunction with factors such as the recapitulation of 19:11-21 in 20:7-10" (p. 336). Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," *Three*

in a more extensive way. First, White details descriptive imagery in Revelation 19:17-21 and 20:7-10 which he ties with the episode in Ezek. 38-39.¹⁰⁸ He concludes that the similarities demonstrate that Revelation 19:17-21 is recapitulated in 20:7-10.¹⁰⁹ The usage of the phrase “Gog and Magog” in Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20:8 has been discussed above and demonstrated that they are not identical. White also tries to identify the “fire”¹¹⁰ in Ezekiel 39:6 with Revelation 20:9. However, Ezekiel 39:9, 12, 14 in the flow of the same context speaks about a seven-year process of burning the war material and seven months of burying the dead after the war which ends with the second coming of Christ. If we take the sequence of White’s recapitulation, how do the seven years and the seven months fit in after the second coming of Christ when the eternal state is suppose to be established? One does not have this confusion if this recapitulation is jettisoned and a chronological progression is taken.¹¹¹ White has also linked Ezekiel 38:18-22 and Revelation 16:17-21 with Revelation 19:17-21 which is a difficulty for the postmillennialist, but he has not successfully linked these passages with Revelation 20:7-10.

Secondly, White suggests when John refers to the nations at war against Christ and His

Views on the Millennium and Beyond, ed. Darrel L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999):216-17, n. 86 gives six points in his critique of this argument.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 560 n. 58 offers two weaknesses of White’s assumption of recapitulation of Rev. 19:17-20 in 20:7-10 by arguing from Ezek. 38-39: (1) “inadequate allowance for the characteristic of OT prophecy whereby it ‘compresses’ or foreshortens future sequences without necessarily reflecting extended periods that may separate events named in the same prophecy;” (2) “inadequate consideration of John’s independence in his allusions to OT Scripture.”

¹⁰⁹ White, “Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10,” p. 326-28.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 326.

¹¹¹ Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 259 also mentions the confusion and inconsistency this position makes with the casting of the beast and the false prophet in Rev. 19:20 and the casting of Satan in the lake of fire in Rev. 20:10.

saints, the noun “war” (πόλεμος) is preceded by an article as seen in 16:14; 19:19; 20:8.¹¹² This is in contrast with lack of an article with πόλεμος when John refers to war in general (9:7, 9; 11:7; 12:7; 13:7).¹¹³ Therefore, since the war of 16:14 and 19:19 refer to the final battle at Christ’s coming so does Revelation 20:8. White also points out that all three passages have virtually the same phrase “to gather them for the war” which he says points to the same war. He says, “with the definite article in 20:8, the article’s presence makes it all but impossible to avoid the conclusion that the battle mentioned in 20:8 is the one previously described in 19:19 and in 16:14.”¹¹⁴ The interpretation of the kind of article which is present in Revelation 20:8 depends on the overall context of the passage. The article does not have to be referring back to a previous war, but to the characteristic of the kind of war that is at present being fought.¹¹⁵ The phrase “to gather them for the war” is not the only thing to consider. The writer has demonstrated above the differences between Revelation 19:11-21 and 20:7-10. Revelation 20:7 orients the war in verse 8 as coming after the thousand years. The thousand years will start after the war that ends in the return of Christ in Revelation 19:11-21. “The settings of each passage make it clear that they are

¹¹² White, “Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10,” p. 326-28.

¹¹³ Though the writer would argue that Rev. 11:7 and 12:7 refer to a specific war this does not overturn White’s argument for his argument is concentrated on Rev. 16:14, 19:19 and 20:8 which have an article with them.

¹¹⁴ White, “Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev 20:1-10,” p. 329.

¹¹⁵ The article in the Greek phrase τὸν πόλεμον in Rev. 20:8 could easily be a “well-known” article or “*par excellence*” article. Daniel Wallace, *Beyond the Basics*, p. 225 says the “well-known” article “points out an object that is well known, but for reasons *other* than the above categories (i.e., not anaphoric, deictic, *par excellence*, or monadic). Thus it refers to a well-known object that has not been mentioned in the preceding context (anaphoric), nor is considered to be the best of its class (*par excellence*), nor is one of a kind (monadic).” However, it may be better to classify this as a *par excellence* article. Wallace says of this article, “The *par excellence* article is not necessarily used just for the *best* of a class. It could be used for the *worst* of a class—if the lexical nuance (or contextual connotation) of that particular class suggests it. In essence, *par excellence* indicates the *extreme* of a particular class. “I am **the** chief of sinners” does not mean the best of sinners, but the worst of sinners. . . . The article *par excellence* and the well-known article are often difficult to distinguish. Technically, this is due to the fact that the article *par excellence* is a subset of the well-known article” (Ibid. p. 222).

different times.”¹¹⁶

WHAT ABOUT THE “GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT?” (Revelation 20:11-15)

Who Is Sitting on the Throne?

John introduces the last section of Revelation 20:11-15 with the chronological indicator καὶ εἶδον (“and I saw”). In this vision he sees a “great white throne and Him who sat upon it.” The concept of the throne is a dominant theme in Revelation 4-5, 7 and then there are a few references sprinkled through some of the rest of the chapters until chapter 20:11-15. The throne in Revelation 4-7 seems to emphasize God’s majesty and sovereignty as He rules and directs His eternal plan, while the awesomeness of this throne with its color white seems to express God’s sovereignty and authority in His holy and righteous judgment.

There is a debate about who is sitting on this throne. Some believe it is the Father¹¹⁷ while others believe it is Jesus Christ.¹¹⁸ Revelation 20:12 seems to allude to Daniel 7:10 and if this is the context for verses 11-15 then it points to the conclusion that the Father is sitting upon the throne. Couple this point with the numerous times in Revelation (4:2-3, 9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5) that the Father is sitting on the throne and it becomes strong case. However,

¹¹⁶ Hoehner, “Evidence from Revelation 20,” p. 260.

¹¹⁷ Charles, *The Revelation*, 2:192; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 748; Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 271; G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John Divine*, in the Harper New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 258; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:589; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 364; and Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 429.

¹¹⁸ Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p. 235; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 305; Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, p. 529-31; David J. MacLeod, “The Sixth ‘Last Thing’: The Last Judgment and the End of the World (Rev. 20:11-15),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (July-September 2000): 318.

the Lamb sits with the Father (3:21; 12:5; 22:1, 3, 12; cf. 5:6; 7:17; Hebrews 1:3) and judgment was given to the Son (22:12; John 5:19-27; cf. Matthew 25:31 ff; Acts 10:42; 17:31). Therefore, it is probably best to conclude that the oneness of the Father and Son (John 10:30; cf. John 8:16; Revelation 5:13; 6:16; 7:10, 17; 22:1, 3; 21:22-23) make both of them part of the judgment.¹¹⁹

What Happens to Heaven and Earth?

John describes heaven and earth as “fled away and no place was found for them.”¹²⁰ The question is whether this phrase is describing the dissolution of heaven and earth or is it only describing the change of the present order. Those who believe this are a change in the present order point to Romans 8:19-23 which gives the impression of a renewing of the creation. Jesus in Matthew 19:28 refers to the restoration of all things (cf. Acts 3:19-21) as a regeneration which also fits more of a change than a dissolution. Finally, they point out that “He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Revelation 21:5).¹²¹ Ladd believes that this phrase “suggests the renovation of what already exists.”¹²² Swete adds that the word “new”

¹¹⁹ Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, p. 299; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:589; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 364; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 720; Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 271; and Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 429.

¹²⁰ Mealy, *After the Thousand Years*, pp. 164-67 insist upon the translation, “And I saw a throne, great, white, and sitting upon it was he from whose face the earth and sky fled, and no place was found for them.” This translation bolsters his interpretation that Rev. 20:11-15 is “an event which is recalled as having happened earlier, before the scene opens. The question of *how much earlier*, however, is not addressed by v. 11. It could equally have happened more or less immediately before, or a thousand years before (or anywhere in between, for that matter)” (Ibid., p. 167). Even if Mealy’s exegetical point is correct the context (which he admits) is the determining factor. The writer has already argued above for a progressive chronology; and therefore, does not agree with Mealy’s equating Rev. 20:11-15 with the second coming.

¹²¹ Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 315-16 neutralizes the point that renovation is the better interpretation in Rev. 21:5 because John uses the ποιέω (make) rather than κτίζω (create). The word ποιέω is used in Mt. 19:4 where God used “both the word *create* (Gr., *kitzo*) and the word *made* (Gr., *poieo*) for the same act” (Ibid., p. 316). Therefore, ποιέω can be used to convey the meaning of create.

¹²² Ladd, *Revelation of John*, p. 276.

(καινός) “suggests fresh life rising from the decay and wreck of the old world.”¹²³ However, there are several points which seem to outweigh this evidence. The strong language in Revelation 20:11 stating that the earth and heaven “fled away and no place was found for them” with the description of Revelation 21:1 (“the first heaven and the first earth passed away”),¹²⁴ coupled with the statement that there is a “new heaven and a new earth,” strongly supports a dissolution of the present order.¹²⁵ The verb “passed away” (ἀπλθαν) in Revelation 21:1 suggests a removal of the old creation for it means “to discontinue as a condition or a state.”¹²⁶ The phrase “and there is no longer any sea” also suggests that “there is practically no substantial continuity between the old fallen order and the new redeemed order, but that the old order is completely swept away and replaced by something altogether new and different.”¹²⁷ Another passage to consider is 2 Peter 3:7, “But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” This passage seems to relate the dissolution of the present order to the time of judgment and destruction of the

¹²³ Swete, *The Commentary on Revelation*, p. 275. However, Johannes Behm, “καινός” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:447-48 defines καινός as “new in nature, better, superior or unusual.” Hermann Haarbeck, Hans-Georg Link & Colin Brown, “καινός” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Gen. ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 2:670 adds the following important point: “In secular usage *kianos* denotes that which is qualitatively new as compared with what has existed until now, that which is better than the old, whereas *neos* is used temporally for that which has not yet been, that which has just made its appearance. But the longer these words were used, the less strictly was the conceptual differentiation maintained.” Therefore, the word itself may fit either position.

¹²⁴ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1117; Charles, *The Revelation*, 2:193; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 305 and Thomas, *Revelation 8-22 An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 440.

¹²⁵ The dissolution of the heaven and earth is also indicated by Mt. 24:35 (Mk. 13:31; Lk. 21:33) and Lk. 16:17.

¹²⁶ BDAG, p. 102.

¹²⁷ Ladd, *Revelation of John*, p. 276.

ungodly people which Revelation 20:11-15 describes as the Great White Throne judgment.¹²⁸

Peter continues his description of the dissolution in 2 Peter 3:10-13. Therefore, it may be concluded that there seems to be topographic changes to the present order at the Lord's second advent but Revelation 20:11 involves the dissolution of the present order and it happens at the end of the millennium sometime before the new heaven and the new earth.

Who Is Being Judged at the Great White Throne?

There are those who believe the Great White Throne judgment is the final and only general judgment where all believers and unbelievers are judged (John 5:24-29). However, it was demonstrated above that there are at least two phases to God's judgment separated by a thousand years. Also at the pre-tribulational rapture of the church (seven years before the second advent),¹²⁹ all church saints will be resurrected or transformed (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53) and then will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10). At the second advent of Christ, the judgment of all the Old Testament saints (Daniel 12:1-2a) and the judgment of Revelation 20:4-5 will take place as well as the judgment of the nations in Matthew 25:31-46. Finally, a thousand years after Christ's advent and reign on earth, all unbelieving dead ("rest of the dead" of Revelation 20:5 and 12-15) will be

¹²⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To come: A Study in Biblical Eschatalogy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), p. 553. He also notes, "If it be held that this cannot refer to the same time since Johns says, 'from whose face the earth and heaven fled away' (Rev. 20:11) and Peter says, 'reserved unto fire against the day of judgment' (2 Pet. 3:7), it is sufficient to say that John's statement gives the fact that the old heaven and earth have passed away without giving the means by which this is accomplished, while Peter gives the means through which the dissolution takes place. There is no contradiction here" (Ibid.).

¹²⁹ See John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, revised & enlarged ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979); Paul D. Feinberg, "The Case for the Pretribulation Rapture Position," *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, Post- Tribulational?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984):45-86; and Thomas Ice & Timothy Demy, eds., *When the Trumpet Sounds* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995).

judged. The conclusion is that future judgment will come in a number of phases and the Great White Throne will be the last judgment.¹³⁰

The καὶ εἶδον (“and I saw”) in Revelation 20:12 continues the scene of the Great White Throne.¹³¹ “The rest of the dead” who do not “come to life until the thousand years were completed” (Revelation 20:5) become the primary focus in Revelation 20:12-15. There is little debate that this verb “come to life” in verse 5 is a physical resurrection and those who are called the “dead” will face the second death (Revelation 20:6). The phrase “standing before the throne” in verse 12 implies that the “dead” will be resurrected to face the Great White Throne judgment.¹³²

Some have proposed that Revelation 20:12 represent believers who will be judged and verses 13-14 represent unbelievers.¹³³ Those who are in favor of 20:12 being the righteous, support this view by connecting the phrase they are “standing before the throne” in 20:12 with a similar phrase in Revelation 7:9 which says that the saints are “standing before the throne.”¹³⁴ However, there are four places in Revelation (5:6; 7:9, 11; 20:12) that contains the verb “standing” (ἵστημι) in combination with the noun “throne” (θρόνος) and only Revelation 20:12

¹³⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 429.

¹³¹ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1081 states that the first καὶ εἶδον (“then I saw”) introduces the section of Rev. 20:11-15 and the second καὶ εἶδον (“and I saw”) emphasizes a particular scene in the vision.

¹³² Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 430; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, pp. 1081, 1101.

¹³³ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1033-34 connects Rev. 20:11-15 with Rev. 11:18 and believes both the saints and the wicked are involved as a general and final judgment. However, in Rev. 20:12-15 there is no statement about the destiny of those who will be recorded in the book of life. Rev. 20:5 opposes the concept of a general judgment where all people will be judged for it declares that there will be a thousand years between the judgment of the second advent and the resurrection and judgment of “the dead.”

¹³⁴ Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 721.

has the context of judgment. Therefore, the other verses do not help us here and the evidence is not established.

Secondly, this view of the righteous and the wicked in Revelation 20:12-15 is predicated upon several other points¹³⁵: (1) The opening of the book of life in verse 12 but not in verse 13; (2) Daniel 12:1-2 where the positive side is reflected in 20:12 and the negative side in 20:15; and (3) Revelation 14:14-15 parallels 20:12 and Revelation 14:17-20 parallels 20:13-15. An overall critique of these points involves the context and the possible style of the author, John. Aune states that 20:13 “appears to be a doublet or reduplication of v 12 . . . Some scholars argue that v 13 originally came before v 12, while others contend that v 13 is an elaboration of v 12.”¹³⁶ Though the writer does not agree that verse 13 ever came before verse 12, he does agree that verse 12 is the same group of people which are expanded in verse 13-15. Aune also indicates that verses 12-13 could be yet another instance of John’s use of a *hysteron-proteron*, which is “the arrangement of events in their reverse of their logical order.”¹³⁷ If so, then this will help support that verses 12-13 are not two groups of people, but one group of wicked people who will be judged.

The context of Daniel 12:1-2a is not the Great White Throne judgment but the second advent of Christ. Daniel 12:1 says, “And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time.” It is at this time that “everyone who is found written in

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 721-22.

¹³⁶ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1081.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 1102. Aune also see *hysteron-proteron* in 3:3,17; 5:5; 6:4; 10:4,9; 20:4-5; 22:14. The writer does not agree with Aune in Rev. 20:4-5. More information on *hysteron-proteron* may be found above in footnote 44.

the book, will be rescued.” Then in Daniel 12:2a it states there will be resurrections for “those who sleep in the dust of the ground.” Jesus speaks of the same period of time in Matthew 24:21-31 which is the 3 ½ years of unprecedented judgment on the earth (“great tribulation” in Matthew 24:21 and “time of distress” in Daniel 12:1) which ends in the second advent. The last part of Daniel 12:2 is the only part that refers to Revelation 20:12-15 and this is where Revelation 20:4-6 explains that there is a thousand years between the resurrections. Therefore, Daniel 12:2b is the only part that refers to Revelation 20:11-15 and Daniel says that the judgment of these people will be “disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Often in the Old Testament prophecies the future events are compressed and appear to be speaking about the same period of time, but subsequent revelation makes it clear that the time periods are different (e.g., Isaiah 61:1-2).¹³⁸

The final point on this subject that needs to be investigated is the parallel of Revelation 14:14-20 with Revelation 20:12-15. Aune correctly contends that Revelation 14:14-16 and 17-20 are a doublet which brings forth parallel thoughts of one eschatological judgment. Therefore, it cannot be used to support believers and unbelievers at the judgment in Revelation 20:12-15. He presents five main arguments for his conclusion:¹³⁹ (1) Both Revelation 14:14-16 and 17-20 are a clear allusion to Joel 3:13 which is also a doublet using the same imagery but referring to only one judgement; (2) The word “sickle” which is used in both parallel accounts in Revelation 14 is primarily a negative symbol which involves judgment and punishment; (3) The phrase “the hour of His judgment has come” in Revelation 14:7 can be construed to parallel the phrase “the hour to reap has come” in 14:15; (4) Though the concept of reaping the harvest is a metaphor of

¹³⁸ See footnote 108, point one.

¹³⁹ D. E. Aune, “Revelation 6-16” *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1998), 52B:802.

divine judgment (Isa. 17:5; 18:4-5; 24:13; Hos. 6:11 Joel 3:13; Mic. 4:12-13; Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43; Mk. 4:29), Matthew 3:11-12 uses the reaping imagery of both the saved and unsaved. (5) The eschatological gathering of God's people is found in the Gospels and the epistles, but it is strikingly absent from the book of Revelation, even Revelation 19 which presents the second advent of Christ. Finally, the event of Revelation 14:14-20 is best understood as a preview of Revelation 19:11-21 which is the second advent and not the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:12-15.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the "rest of the dead" in Revelation 20:5 do not experience the first resurrection and they will be resurrected and enter into the Great White Throne judgment. Notice that no living person will enter into this judgment, only the dead of all ages which Revelation 20:13 represents as "death and Hades."¹⁴¹ In Revelation 20:12 the books are opened (cf. Dan. 7:10) and the book of life is opened. The books represent the deeds of each individual which demonstrates what kind of life the person lived. Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9) but his deeds will demonstrate that he or she has a saving faith (Eph.2:10; Jas 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:3-11). Thomas is correct when he says, "The point of the passage is not to prove salvation by works, but condemnation by works"¹⁴² (John 5:29; Rom. 2:5-9; Rev. 22:12; cf. Mt. 25:31-46). The book of life (cf. Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27) is the ultimate judge whether one will spend eternity in the lake of fire (20:15). Apparently, the books will demonstrate their sin and

¹⁴⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 220.

¹⁴¹ It seems that the saint in the millennium will not experience death (Zech. 14:11; Isa. 65:20, 22, 25) and will be protected by God from the war of Rev. 20:7-10. We assume that God will give them glorified bodies which will prepare them for immortality in the new heavens and new earth (Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 431).

¹⁴² Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 433.

guiltiness and this reflects why their name is not written in the book of life.

The “Sea” and “Death and Hades” and the “Lake of Fire”

In Revelation 20:13, the “sea” and “death and Hades” give up the dead for judgment. A problem arises when verse 13 is compared with verse 11. How can the sea give up the dead when verse 11 indicates the dissolution of heaven and earth and Revelation 21:1 parallels this point and adds that the sea is also no longer? Thomas response by saying that the sea could have yielded up the “dead simultaneously with the disappearance.”¹⁴³ However, it seems best to explain this as a *hysteron-proteron* (a reversal of the logical order of events) as we discuss above.¹⁴⁴ Some have made the sea in verse 13 to be a personification of evil¹⁴⁵ or a symbol of the realm of evil or the rule of evil forces.¹⁴⁶ Since the sea is associated with death and Hades, this is a possibility. Thus, it would be concluded that the sea has a negative or evil connotation and would be destroyed in the new heaven and new earth (21:1).¹⁴⁷ However, the figurative use of the word “sea” in Revelation is not always negative (cf. 4:6; 15:2 [second reference]). Secondly, if the sea in 20:13 is the evil realm or forces (like 13:1), what is the difference between the

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1102; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 723.

¹⁴⁵ Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 722.

¹⁴⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1034.

¹⁴⁷ The word “sea” (θάλασσα) is used 25 time in Revelation. Without considering 21:1 or 20:13, the figurative use of the “sea” is seen in 4:6 and 15:2 (twice) as a simile describing a sea of glass in heaven and a sea of glass mixed with fire which seems to be the bowl judgments that is to be pour out. Finally, there is Rev. 13:1 which seems to be a figure for the abyss as one compares this with the origin of the beast in Rev. 11:7. The 19 other references are the literal use of the word “sea” as they are connected with creation (5:13; 10:6; 14:7), or used in the phrase earth and sea (7:1,2,3; 10:2,5,8; 12:12), or in the context of creatures living in the sea or ships on the sea (8:8 [twice],9; 16:3 [twice]; 18:17,19,21).

meaning of the “sea” and “death and Hades” in 20:13? Why is not the sea thrown in the lake of fire like death and Hades? One may give the answer that 21:1 indicates the dissolution of the sea. However, Matthew 25:41 says the eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels and not to be annihilated. Therefore, it seems best to take the sea in 20:13 as literal.¹⁴⁸

The understanding of “death and Hades” in 20:13-14 is also debated (cf. Revelation 1:18; 6:8).¹⁴⁹ It seems most likely that the phrase is a personification where “death” refers to the ruler¹⁵⁰ or state¹⁵¹ of death and “Hades” as the place of death. The mentioning of both the “sea” and “death and Hades” could possibly mean that all the dead associated with the sea¹⁵² and all the dead associated with the land (i.e., death and Hades¹⁵³) were resurrected to the Great White Throne judgment. However, it is most likely a doublet where the sea is a subset of all the

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 433; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:589-90; Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1102-03; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 366; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, p. 302; Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 308; Swete, *The Commentary on Revelation*, p. 273; Ladd, *Revelation of John*, p. 273; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 749.

¹⁴⁹ There are several options: (1) The personification of death and the realm of death (Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1103; Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, p. 303; Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, p. 749; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:590; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 366; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 723; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 433); (2) A symbol of demonic forces which are rendered powerless (Swete, *The Commentary on Revelation*, p. 273; Morris, *Revelation in Tyndale New Testament commentaries*, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 242; Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, p. 260; Osborne, *Revelation*, p. 723); (3) A metonymy (i.e., the container for its contents) referring to unbelievers cast into the lake of fire (20:15) (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1035); (4) A symbol of the physical death that is swallowed up into the second death which is eternal (Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 1035). Each have some merit but the first view is preferred by the writer.

¹⁵⁰ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1103.

¹⁵¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, p. 433.

¹⁵² It was a common belief among the Greeks and the Romans that they abhorred the thought of drowning at sea or being buried at sea. There was even a belief that those who died at sea did not go to Hades but remained in the sea. Some have associated this background sources with why John mentions the dead in the sea (Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, pp. 1102-03; Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, pp. 432-33.)

¹⁵³ Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, p. 1103.

unbelieving dead who are in Hades awaiting the time of the Great White Throne judgment.¹⁵⁴

In Revelation 20:14 the intermediate holding place of all unbelieving dead is thrown into the lake of fire. The unholy threesome (Satan, the beast and the false prophet), all the multitude of unholy angels (cf. Matthew 25:41) and all unbelieving people (cf. Revelation 20:15; 21:8) are punished in the lake of fire. It is also stated that the lake of fire is the second death. This concurs with 1 Corinthians 15:26 and 54-55 where death, the last enemy, will be in its rightful submissive state in God's plan. Death will no longer disturb the peace of the new heaven and earth (21:4).

Finally, how should the lake of fire be understood? First, it is a place where no one will escape and they will be tormented consciously, continually and eternally (Revelation 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8).¹⁵⁵ Secondly, this punishment is both physical and spiritual. The language of Revelation 20:12-15 indicates that the unbelievers are resurrected with new bodies (cf. Daniel 12:1-2; John 5:28-29; Matthew 10:28). This body is different from their earthly body but nevertheless it is a body made out of a substance that can be felt and has flesh and bone (like our Lord's glorified body - Luke 24:39) which the immaterial part of man is a part. Why would the unbeliever be resurrected if hell is only spiritual? "The whole point of the resurrection is to reunite body and soul. God could easily send souls directly to hell. But he does not. He raises all

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew Waymeyer, *Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Pub., 2001): 83-84 gives the following characteristics of hell in the New Testament: "fire" or "unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:10,12; 7:19; Mk. 9:42; cf. Mk. 9:48); "the fiery hell (Mat. 5:22; 18:9; cf. Jas. 3:6); "furnace of fire" (Mat. 13:42,50); "the eternal fire (Mat. 18:8; 25:41); "the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7); "the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries" (Heb. 10:27); "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 22:13; 25:30; cf. Mat. 13:42); "eternal punishment" (Mat. 25:46); "eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Th. 1:9); "eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:2); and "the black darkness" (2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13).

people from the dead and then sends that person to hell.”¹⁵⁶

There is a debate whether the word fire in connection with eternal punishment is literal or metaphorical.¹⁵⁷ In either case, the Scripture is describing the horrible eternal punishment which awaits the unbeliever. This punishment is also described as darkness (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13), weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) and “where the worm never dies” (Mark 9:47-48).¹⁵⁸ Scripture paints this grim picture so that nothing short of endless punishment and agony for the unbelievers are conveyed. Therefore, the admonishment to every unbeliever who is still alive is to flee the punishment to come by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ’s substitutionary work on the cross. The justice of God demands that every sin must be paid. Either the person will spend eternity in hell paying for his or her sins or Jesus Christ paid for them on the cross. Trusting in Christ for eternal salvation is the one decision which must not be put off for it has eternal consequences.

WHY WILL THERE BE A MILLENNIAL KINGDOM?

With the above arguments in this article one could answer this question concerning the millennial kingdom with the declaration that Revelation 20 tells us there must be a millennial kingdom. It is this kingdom which the Old Testament predicted, our Lord spoke about in his ministry and the apostles asked about in Acts 1:6-7 during the Lord’s post-resurrection

¹⁵⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, “Hell: Spiritual or Physical or Both?” http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=405, November 2004, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ See William Crockett ed. *Four Views of Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

¹⁵⁸ Robert L. Thomas, “Jesus’ View of Eternal Punishment,” *The Master Seminary Journal* 9 (Fall 1998): 163-64; Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit & Tremper Longman III, eds., “Hell,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998): 377.

ministry.¹⁵⁹ However, there are also theological arguments why there is a millennial kingdom:

1. During the Millennium, Christ will manifest his kingdom in world history and will fulfill all the Old Testament covenant promises which God made to his people.¹⁶⁰

2. "The Millennium will reveal that man's rebellion against God lies deep in man's own heart, not in the devils' deception. Even when Satan is bound and righteousness prevails in the world, some people will still rebel against God. The final release of Satan will openly draw out this hidden evil."¹⁶¹ This is another way of showing how sinful man's heart really is. With a perfect environment and a perfect rule of Christ on earth, the unregenerate man will still act in rebellion against God.

3. The very world where Christ was rejected will be the very place where His glory will be manifested. The creator of the world (Revelation 4:11) will be proven to be the Lord of the world and history.¹⁶²

4. Tertullian (ca. 160-225), an early premillennialist, believed the millennium was a necessary hope for all the believers to be rewarded on the very scene where they suffered and labored for the Lord. According to Luke 19:11-27, our Lord promised authority over cities in His kingdom

¹⁵⁹ For more information on the kingdom see: Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974 reprint); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958): 427-75; Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1994 revised).

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:581; Macleod, "The Fourth 'Last Thing': The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6)," p. 60.

¹⁶¹ Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:581.

¹⁶² Macleod, "The Fourth 'Last Thing': The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6)," p. 60.

to those who are faithful (cf. Revelation 2:26-27).¹⁶³

5. Finally, the millennium is the completed work of God's redemption in history. Creation is linked with man in the Fall for when man fell judgment was also placed upon the creation. Just as the Fall took place on the earth in history and affected both man and creation, so in the kingdom it will be shown on earth in history that not only has man been redeemed by the Son but also the creation will have its curse lifted and participate in the glory of the accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom is a necessary event to demonstrate to the glory of Jesus Christ the effect of his saving work not just on individuals who come to faith, but also in the cosmic significance of His saving work. It touches all of creation (cp. Col.1:20).¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

It is our conclusion that the best interpretation of Revelation 20:1-15 is the premillennial view. We believe that the visions of Revelation 19-20 are in chronological progression not only within the visions, but from one vision to another. Therefore, in the future Christ will come the second time. He will judge the nations and will throw the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire. Then an angel will come and bind Satan and shut him up in the abyss so that he will not deceive mankind for a thousand years.

The believers of all ages will be bodily resurrected and will reign with Christ on earth for

¹⁶³ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.24 said, "We say that this city has been provided by God for receiving the saints on their resurrection, and refreshing them with the abundance of all really spiritual blessings, as a recompense for those which in the world we have either despised or lost; since it is both just and God-worthy that His servants should have their joy in the place where they have also suffered affliction for His name's sake." (cf. Macleod, "The Fourth 'Last Thing': The Millennial Kingdom of Christ (Rev. 20:4-6)," p. 60).

¹⁶⁴ S. Lewis Johnson, "The Divine Purpose," tape #16.

a thousand years. Satan will also be loosed at the end of the thousand years and he too will be judged and thrown into the lake of fire. Then after the thousand years the unbelieving dead from all the ages will be raised, judged and thrown into the lake of fire to be consciously, continually and eternally punished.

APPENDIX

Numbers in the Book of Revelation

The numbers are listed in the order in which they appear in the book. Cardinal numbers and fractions are entered in Arabic numerals and ordinal numbers are written out.

Verses	Numbers	Reference	Verses	Numbers	References
1.4	7	churches	5.6	7	eyes
	7	spirits		7	spirits of God
1.11	7	churches	5.7	4	living creatures
1.12	7	lampstands		24	elders
1.16	7	stars	5.11	10,000 (2x)	angels
1.20	7 (2x)	stars		1,000 (2x)	angels
	7 (2x)	lampstands	5.14	4	living creatures
	7 (2x)	churches	6.1	1	of the 7 seals
2.1	7	stars		7	seals
	7	lampstands		1	of the 4 living creatures
2.4	first	love		4	living creatures
2.5	first	deeds		4	living creatures
2.8	“first	and last”	6.3	second	seal
2.10	10	days		second	living creature
2.19	first	beginning works	6.5	third	seal
3.1	7	spirits of God		third	living creature
	7	stars	6.6	4	living creatures
4.4	24	thrones		3	quarts of barley
	24	elders	6.7	fourth	seal
4.5	7	lamps		fourth	living creature
	7	spirits of God	6.8	1/4	of the earth
4.6	4	living creatures	6.9	fifth	seal
4.7	first	living creature	6.12	sixth	seal
	second	living creature	7.1	4	angels
	third	living creature		4	corners of the earth
	fourth	living creature		4	winds
4.8	4	living creatures	7.2	4	angels
	6	wings	7.4	144,000	sealed ones
4.10	24	elders	7.5-8	12,000 (12x)	sealed ones
5.1	7	seals	7.11	4	living creatures
5.5	1	of the elders	7.13	1	of the elders
	7	seals	8.1	seventh	seal
5.6	4	living creatures		½	an hour
	7	horns	8.2	7	angels

Verses	Numbers	Reference	Verses	Numbers	Reference
8.2	7	trumpets	11.3	1260	days
8.6	7	angels	11.4	2	olive trees
	7	trumpets		2	lampstands
8.7	first	angel or trumpet	11.9	3 ½	days
	1/3	of the earth	11.10	2	prophets
	1/3	of the trees	11.11	3 ½	days
8.8	second	angel	11.13	1/10	of the city
	1/3	of the sea		7000	people
8.9	1/3	creatures in the sea	11.14	second	woe
	1/3	ships		third	woe
8.10	third	angel	11.15	seventh	angel
	1/3	rivers and springs	11.16	24	elders
8.11	1/3	waters	12.1	12	stars
8.12	fourth	angel	12.3	7	heads
	1/3	sun		10	horns
	1/3	moon		7	diadems
	1/3	stars	12.4	1/3	stars of heaven
	1/3	them (all the above)	12.6	1260	days
	1/3	it (day)	12.13	2	wings
8.13	1	eagle	13.1	10	horns
	3	angels		7	heads
9.1	fifth	angel		10	diadems
9.5	5	months	13.3	1	of the heads
9.10	5	months	13.5	42	months
9.12	first	woe	13.11	2	horns
	2	more woes		first	beast
9.13	sixth	angel	13.12	first	beast
	1	voice	13.18	666	number of the beast
	4	horns of the altar	14.1	144,000	(sealed)
9.14	sixth	angel	14.3	4	living creatures
	4	angels		144,000	(sealed)
9.15	4	angels	14.4	first fruit	first portion
	1/3	mankind	14.8	second	(angel)
9.16	200,000,000	armies of horsemen	14.9	third	angel
9.18	3	plagues	14.20	1600	stadia
	1/3	mankind	15.1	7	angels
10.3	7	peals of thunder		7	last plagues
10.4	7 (2x)	peals of thunder	15.6	7	angels
10.7	seventh	angel		7	plagues
11.2	42	months	15.7	1	of the 4 living
11.3	2	witnesses			creatures

Verses	Numbers	Reference	Verses	Numbers	Reference
15.7	4	living creatures	18.21	1	angel
	7	angels	19.3	second	(time)
	7	golden bowls	19.4	24	elders
15.8	7	plagues		4	living creatures
	7	angels	19.17	1	angel
16.1	7	angels	19.20	2	(beast & false prophet)
	7	bowls			
16.2	first	angel	20.2	1000	years
16.3	second	angel	20.3	1000	years
16.4	third	angel	20.4	1000	years
16.8	fourth	angel	20.5	1000	years
16.10	fifth	angel		first	resurrection
16.12	sixth	angel	20.6	first	resurrection
16.13	3	unclean spirits		second	death
16.17	seventh	angel		1000	years
16.19	3	parts	20.7	1000	years
16.21	a talent	hailstones	20.8	4	corners of the earth
17.1	1	of the 7 angels	20.14	second	death
	7	angels	21.1	first	heaven
	7	bowls		first	earth
17.3	7	heads	21.4	first	things
	10	horns	21.8	second	death
17.7	7	heads	21.9	1	of the 7 angels
	10	horns		7	bowls
17.9	7	heads		7	plagues
	7	mountains	21.12	12	gates
	7	kings (Gk. text)		12	angels
17.10	5	(kings)		12	tribes
	1	(king)	21.13	3 (4x)	gates-east,north,south, west
17.11	eighth	(king)			
	7	(king)	21.14	12	foundation stones
17.12	10	horns		12	names
	10	kings		12	apostles
	1	hour	12.16	12,000	stadia
17.13	1	purpose	12.17	144	cubits
17.16	10	horns	12.19	first	foundation stone-
17.17	1	purpose			jasper
18.8	1	day		second	sapphire
18.10	1	hour		third	chalcedony
18.17	1	hour		fourth	emerald
18.19	1	hour	21.20	fifth	sardonyx

Verses	Numbers	Reference
21.20	sixth	sardius
	seventh	chrysolite
	eighth	beryl
	ninth	topaz
	tenth	chrysoprase
	eleventh	jacinth
	twelfth	amethyst
21.21	12	gates
	12	pearls
	1	of the gates
22.2	12	fruits
22.13	“first	and the last”