

## CHAPTER 20

***"And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."***

**(20:4)**

Chapter 20 is a theological battleground chapter. In it four issues are brought to the forefront: (1) Satan being bound 1,000 years, vv. 1-3; (2) the saints reigning with Christ for 1,000 years, vv. 4-6; (3) Satan's rebellion after the expiration of the thousand years, vv. 7-10; and (4) the Great White Throne judgment, vv. 11-15.

According to B. W. Newton,

The twentieth chapter should commence at the *eleventh* verse of the *nineteenth* chapter, beginning, "I saw heaven opened," and be continued to the end of the *eighth* verse of the *twenty-first* chapter: for the subject of all this passage is strictly consecutive. It begins by a vision of the state and glory of the heavenly Bridegroom, prepared to go forth against His enemies, and to subdue the earth--next the destruction of Antichrist and his armies--then the binding of Satan--the millennial reign--the concluding apostasy--the passing away of the first heavens and earth--the judgment of the dead--the creation of the new heavens and earth, and the descent of the heavenly city into the new earth. These events are spoken of consecutively, as they will really happen; and therefore the passage which treats of them in unbroken continuity should be read as one chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The main issue at stake is the millennium, a period of 1000 years when Satan is bound and imprisoned, and when the Lord Jesus Christ rules on the earth in righteousness. However, as noted in the introduction to this study, the amillennial interpretation will not be addressed. Over the centuries amillenarians have failed among themselves to come to any consensus as to what the binding and imprisonment of Satan means. When so many theories are offered, it seems clear that they themselves are essentially at a loss as to what it means. A future and literal 1000 years provides the only foundation on which to build.

Alexander McCaul, after giving many scriptural proofs of the certainty of Christ's reign on earth, writes the following:

The apostle St. John, in the Apocalypse, teaches the same doctrine. He tells us that the hope of the redeemed in heaven is, that they shall share Christ's kingdom upon earth. Their song to the Saviour is, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Yea, the universal expectation is the fulfilment of those glorious words, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

That, therefore, Jesus of Nazareth is to have a kingdom upon earth can be doubted by none who receive the authority of the New Testament. Sin and sorrow are not

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1 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pp. 344-345.

to find here an eternal habitation--violence is not for ever to fill the earth--nor Satan to be always the god of this world. Christ and his apostles have taught us to believe, to pray, and to wait for that happy period when 'God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things shall have passed away, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall say, behold I make all things new.'

How astonishing that any should be found in whose eyes a hope like this should appear inconsistent with the spirituality of the gospel, or unworthy of the Saviour of the world. Is it possible that any one, free from the taint of Gnostic delusion, can regard the restoration of this earth to its state of primitive blessedness, the exaltation of its inhabitants to their more than original purity, and the deliverance of all creation, animate and inanimate, from the taint and curse of sin, and the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh as a carnal expectation? Can the difference of locality cause a change so mighty as to make that unholy and unspiritual on earth which is holy and spiritual in heaven? What is it that sanctifies the abodes of cherubim and seraphim and constitutes the glory of the courts of heaven? Is it not the manifestation of Christ's presence, and the blessed influences of God the Holy Ghost? And cannot the same presence and the same influence make earth a paradise, and this or any other world the blessed abode of holiness and joy? There is nothing in heaven's materiality to cause a difference. It possesses no intrinsic, no uncreated, no essential holiness. Considered as portions of creation all localities are alike. The will of God, or the perversity of his rational creatures alone can cause the diversity. In Christ's presence, wherever it be, there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

The objection, therefore, that Christ's return to reign on earth is carnal or unworthy of the Holy One and Just, is devoid of all solid foundation, and can be plausible only to the unthinking. But it is far worse than invalid, it is based on the most presumptuous principle of infidelity, and leads directly to an entire rejection of Christianity. If the professed believer in Jesus of Nazareth rejects Christ's kingdom upon earth, as being unworthy of the now incarnate Son of God, how would he have answered the Gnostic or the Docete of old--yea, how is he to answer the Jew or the Deist of the present day, who makes the very same objection to the possibility of God's manifestation in the flesh? If his reason is able to judge of the one, he cannot deny that the heretic's reason is competent to pronounce concerning the other; and thus we must proceed from the rejection of Christ's reign upon earth to the rejection of his incarnation, and thence to the rejection of the Old Testament, and rest at last in the mere ideal God of the deist, or the aeon of the early heretics.<sup>2</sup>

G. H. Trench writes,

I am aware that the idea of a literal millennium (Rev. xx. 2-7) is not in favour

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander McCaul, *The Messiahship of Jesus: The Concluding Series of the Twelve Lectures on the Prophecies*, pp. 110-113

among Catholics; but no one can read the Fathers of the first four or five centuries of our era without recognizing their strong and unanimous belief in it.<sup>3</sup>

When reflecting upon the churches of the New Testament era, we must remember, as John Lillie notes, "that *all* the Christians of that age, Gentile and Jewish alike, shared equally in the earnest expectation and hope of the speedy establishment on earth of that glorious kingdom, in which they too were to reign as kings and priests."<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Binding of Satan for 1000 Years***

*Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while (vv. 1-3).*

Tenney provides some additional introductory material that should prove helpful as we consider this subject of the millennium:

The first word of Revelation 20:1-10 is "and." *And* is always a connection, implying that the words following it belong in some measure with the words preceding it. The ten verses of this controversial section cannot be divorced from the preceding text which deals with the phenomena of consummation surrounding the return of Christ to the earth. The general unit of Revelation to which it belongs opens at 17:1 with the appearance of one of the angels who had the vials containing the final plagues to be poured out upon the earth. (Cf. 17:1; 15:1) He exhibited to John the fall of the great harlot, Babylon (Rev. 17-18), after which the seer described the heavenly action following the collapse of the evil world-system. He saw "heaven opened," out from which came He that "was called Faithful and True" (19:11), followed by the celestial armies equipped for war. They were prepared to "smite the nations" (19:15). In the battle following the beast and the false prophet were vanquished, captured, and flung to their eternal doom in the lake of fire, and the organized rebellion of earth against heaven was utterly crushed. At this point 20:1-6 states that the devil whose deceit was responsible for the rebellion was seized, chained, and confined for a period of one thousand years in the bottomless pit, while the saints reigned with Christ during the same period. Following that reign, Satan shall be loosed from his prison and shall deceive the nations of earth again, after which he shall suffer final doom and the last judgment of the white throne shall take place, followed by the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth.

Although there are in the book of Revelation some passages which leave room for argument as to whether they speak of simultaneous or consecutive events, this

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3 G. H. Trench, *A Study of St John's Gospel*, pg. vi.

4 John Lillie, *Lectures on the First and Second Epistles of Peter*, pg. 148.

passage leaves no doubt that the events of which it speaks are consecutive. Irrespective of whether they are figurative or literal, the book presents them as following one another in the order given above: first, the destruction of Babylon; second, the appearing of Christ in conquest; third, His reign for [a] thousand years; fourth, a final rebellion and judgment; and fifth, the introduction of the eternal state. Each of these stages is as figurative or literal as any or all of the others. Each is as necessary to the given scheme of procedure as any of the others. The only fair conclusion is that the "thousand years" must be a definite period or episode which belongs in the given order, and which is as real as the return of Christ and the judgment. It cannot be dismissed as unreal simply because its interpretation is attended with difficulties. It must be recognized as a distinct item in the program of God.<sup>5</sup>

Walvoord also makes a most relevant observation:

Much has been made of the fact that these verses are found in a book largely given to symbolic presentation and visions. It is true that John is seeing a vision in these early verses of chapter 20. The passage reveals, however, something more than what he saw. John visually saw the angel bind Satan and cast him into the pit. John could not see visually how long Satan was to be in the pit nor could he see the purpose, namely, that the devil should deceive the nations no more and that he should be loosed again after the thousand years. This purpose had to be given to John by divine revelation which constituted an interpretation of the vision. If the record had given only what he saw without any indication as to the meaning of the passage, it might have lent itself to diverse interpretation. But with the vision recorded as it is, accompanied by the divine interpretation, expositors are not free to inject their own preconceived ideas but must accept the plain statements and interpretations of the passage as given.

It is most important to observe that while the thousand years are mentioned in verses 4 and 5 in the vision of John, they are also mentioned in verse 6 in the interpretation. The expositor is not free to spiritualize the interpretation of the vision but must accept the interpretation in its ordinary and literal meaning. If this is done, there is no other alternative than the premillennial interpretation which holds that at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound for a thousand years.<sup>6</sup>

A similar observation is made by Leon Wood:

The duration of the millennium is clearly established in Revelation 20:1-7 as one thousand years. Though the figure is used in Scripture only here, its manner of usage makes the literal intention unmistakable. It is mentioned no less than six times, and each time it is in reference to a distinct feature of the period. The force of this is to say, in six different ways, that the duration will indeed be of this length. In verse 2, it refers to the length of time Satan will be bound; in verse 3,

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5 Tenney, "The Importance and Exegesis of Revelation 20:1-8," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April, 1954.

6 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 293.

to the time nations will not be deceived by him; in verse 4, to the time martyred saints will reign with Christ; in verse 5, to the time during which the "rest of the dead" (i.e., the wicked dead) will wait until their resurrection; in verse 6, to the time those who rise in the first resurrection will reign with Christ; and in verse 7, to the time which will elapse before Satan will again be loosed from his confinement in the bottomless pit.

Adherents of both amillennialism and postmillennialism deny the literalness of this reference. They hold that the thousand years are to be understood symbolically, with most taking them to refer merely to an indefinite, long period of time. These same scholars, however, believe that other elements from the passage are to be taken literally, such as the resurrections mentioned, Satan, heaven, the angel, and the binding or restraining of Satan. The question becomes pertinent, then, as to the reason for making a distinction with the thousand years. The writings of the early church fathers show that it was interpreted literally by those near to the Apostles, and also later by the church in general for at least three hundred years.<sup>7</sup>

Yet there are those who maintain that Christ's kingdom is spiritual only, calling upon John 18:36 as proof: *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."*

An interpretation common among many commentators and discussions of the kingdom message of Jesus is that when Jesus declared, "My kingdom is not of this world," He was clearly and unmistakably insisting that He had no plan, then or ever, to establish on earth a visible realm . . . Those who take Old Testament prophecies of Messiah and His Jewish kingdom seriously and who yet follow this interpretation of the above text frequently then discover a "spiritual" or strictly symbolic interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies of Messiah's visible earthly kingdom. . . .

A better explanation than the ones described above will be furnished by a closer examination of "My kingdom is not of this world" and "now my kingdom is not from hence" (v. 36). . . . There is a presently inaugurated aspect of the kingdom of God, which, though as real as sunshine, is presently invisible to faithless men. It was inaugurated at the ascension of Christ and His session at the Father's right hand. The disciples (and certainly Pilate) evidence no understanding of this until Peter first expressed it (Ac 2:29-36). But there is an aspect of the kingdom that will be visible in the world when "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). This aspect of His kingdom, as our Lord carefully and painfully explained to his followers shortly before His passion, would transpire only "after a long time" (Mt 25:19, cf. the whole context of the parable of the talents). The disciples were in error, Luke distinctly indicates, "because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear" (Lk 19:11, cf. context to follow in the parable of the pounds). Now certain interpreters would like us to believe that the two parables teach that the visible kingdom of God on earth was *never* to appear. But the

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<sup>7</sup> Wood, *The Bible & Future Events*, pp. 166,167.

Scripture, including Jesus' pregnant words, cannot be made to say it without wresting the Scriptures. Quite to the contrary, the apostles still were looking forward to a visible earthly kingdom of Christ after the resurrection of the Lord. Jesus, on His part, during His post resurrection ministry, while informing them that the visible kingdom was, indeed, as He had previously taught, to be delayed, gave no hint of a suggestion that it would never appear (see Ac 1:6-8). It is to be, as both of these parables amply demonstrate, at His second advent (see Rev 19:11-20:4). So, whether the present invisible inaugurated kingdom or the future visible consummated kingdom, the kingdom of Christ is not "of this world." The words, "of this world," translate *ek tou kosmou toutou*, that is, out of this world. Source rather than realm is the sense. Christ's kingdom comes from heaven and needs no human soldiers to fight for it. The "zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Is 9:7). The present reign of Christ in heaven was to be secured by redemption, not by military conquest; it is fully visible only in heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of God, not in Rome or Jerusalem. Pilate need feel no challenge to his authority from such a king as this. The future consummation of the kingdom of Christ cannot rightly be said to be beyond history. No indeed! It will occur in history and is history's goal.<sup>8</sup>

One final comment from Ladd should be noted here regarding the reality of a literal millennium:

There is, however, one passage in Paul which may refer to an interim kingdom if not a millennium. In 1 Corinthians 15:23-26 Paul pictures the triumph of Christ's kingdom as being accomplished in several stages. The resurrection of Christ is the first stage (*tagma*). The second stage will come at the parousia when those who are Christ's will share his resurrection. "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." The adverbs translated "then" are *epeita*, *eita*, which denote a sequence: "after that." There are three distinct stages: Jesus' resurrection; after that (*epeita*) the resurrection of believers at the resurrection [parousia]; after that (*eita*) the end (*telos*). An unidentified interval falls between Christ's resurrection and his parousia, and a second undefined interval falls between the parousia and the *telos*, when Christ completes the subjugation of his enemies.<sup>9</sup>

### ***The Saints Reign with Christ for 1000 Years***

*And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until*

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<sup>8</sup> Culver, *Toward a Biblical View of Civil Government*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>9</sup> Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, pp. 38-39.

*the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.<sup>10</sup> Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (vv. 4-6).*

These three verses prompt four specific questions:

- (1) How many groups are being distinguished?
- (2) To whom does the pronoun "they" ("they sat"/"they lived and reigned") refer?
- (3) When is the first resurrection?
- (4) Who participates in the first resurrection?

### ***Questions (1) and (2)***

Questions (1) and (2) necessarily must be considered together. How many groups are we to distinguish, and to which group, if not all, does the pronoun "they" refer? According to Ladd, there are two groups set apart:

Many interpreters recognize only one group and limit this "first resurrection" to the martyrs, maintaining that God has some special blessing for those who have died because of their faithful witness to Jesus. However, the RSV correctly reflects the Greek idiom, which could be literally translated: "And I saw thrones, and [people] sat upon them, and judgment was given to them; and [I saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded . . . ." The language suggests two different groups: one group to whom judgment was given, and a smaller group who are the martyrs of the great tribulation. In Greek, the language is quite ungrammatical, which leads Charles to treat the first phrase as a gloss. However, it may well be that John actually envisaged two groups: a larger group of all the saints and then a smaller group--the martyrs--whom he singles out for special attention. This would accord with the biblical theology as a whole, which gives to the saints a share in the eschatological rule of Christ. Christ himself had promised through John the prophet a share in his throne to all who overcame (3:21); and we found no reason to limit this promise to martyrs. It is a promise to all victorious believers."<sup>11</sup>

Tregelles apparently also sees two groups. He uses the following translation in his book *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*:

In Rev. 20 we read of "the first Resurrection". The whole scene is thus described: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; and judgment was given unto them; and I

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<sup>10</sup> See the Appendix at the end of this chapter to read J. W. Brook's explanation of "This is the first resurrection."

<sup>11</sup> Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, pp. 263-264.

saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and [those] which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. . . . This is not only a vision, but also an explanation. John is taught what the thrones with certain sitting on them meant. They are the faithful in Christ in general (i.e., the whole family of faith from Abel onward), and one special class, those suffering for the witness of Jesus; and the glory given to them is explained to be the first resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

According to Reese, three groups are set apart; but he is not clear, at least to me, as to how many of these groups reign with Christ:

There are three distinct classes mentioned in the passage [20:4-5].

(a) First, there are those of whom John says: "I saw thrones and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" (4a).

Who are these? The whole body of saints who live to see the Parousia at this time; they are transferred from earth to occupy thrones in the kingly rule of Christ; it is the Rapture of the survivors in 1 Thess. 4:17. It is not said that this class was raised from the dead, but simply that they took the thrones prepared for them. We have seen them suffering and enduring throughout the book. Now they are seen as overcomers who inherit the sovereignty in the kingdom. . . . The language is clear and decisive on the point. John says: "I saw thrones"; obviously they were empty. Then he adds: "and they sat upon them"; that is, he sees a company *in the very act of sitting down on their thrones*.

(b) John mentions a *second* class that is honored at this time: "I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God" (R.V.).

(c) Thirdly, he speaks of "such as worshipped not the beast neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand."

Of these two classes we read that "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."<sup>13</sup>

Canon Faussett definitely agrees with three groups and makes it clear that all three shall reign with Christ:

Three classes are designated to live and reign with Christ as 'priests of God and of Christ, a thousand years'; first, the saints caught up to meet and return with the Lord: 'they sat upon thrones'; secondly, the martyrs beheaded for the witness of Jesus; thirdly, 'such as worshipped not the beast' (world-power).<sup>14</sup>

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12 Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*, pg. 29.

13 Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pp. 82-83.

14 Cited by Reese from the *British Weekly* debate of 1887. See *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 87.



Erich Sauer comments on this reigning in his chapter on the judgment seat of Christ. He states: "Those who at the judgment seat of Christ had been adjudged worthy of the prize will be made judges of the world. They will be the ruling aristocracy in the eternal kingdom of heaven."<sup>15</sup> More from this helpful chapter will be included later in the section on the Great White Throne Judgment.

I have found only three commentators who remark specifically about the pronoun "they" used in verse 4, those being Robert Culver, Merrill Tenney, and Alva J. McClain. According to Culver,

John writes that following his vision of the binding of Satan he "saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

Many of the Amillennial writers argue from the use of the word "soul," as does Hamilton:

". . . the first resurrection is the new birth which reaches its culmination and consummation when the soul of the believer leaves the body and goes to reign with Christ in heaven. The deliberate choice of the word "soul," which almost universally means soul as distinct from the body, as applying to the believers now reigning with Christ in glory, seems to make it plain that the first resurrection is just that (*The Basis of Millennial Faith*, 132)."

The answer to this will not be in denial that the word "souls" does probably refer to disembodied souls. The obvious connection with Revelation 6:9-11 where disembodied souls is clearly meant makes it very likely that the same is meant here. Rather, the answer will be found in determination of the relationship of these "souls" to the group who are said to have "lived and reigned."

Observe that whoever the "souls" are, the ones of whom it is said at the end of verse 4, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," are obviously the same persons of whom John says in the beginning of verse 4, "I saw thrones and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them." Who are these? Who are the ones entered as subject of the verb *ekathisan* (they sat) and who must be the antecedent of the pronoun *autois* (unto them)? They are not the devil (20:2) or the angel (20:1) or the slain beasts and their armies (19:19-21). They can hardly be other than those described in 19:14 as follows: "the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure." Commentators unite in recognizing these as the redeemed of the ages. The clear necessity for some antecedent to the pronominal subject of the first verb, and to the pronoun "them" in verse 4, is the reason why the "recapitulation" theory cannot be adduced to make a break between chapters 19 and 20. So whoever the "souls" are,

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15 Erich Sauer, *The Triumph of the Crucified*, pg. 116.

they are certainly not the total of participants in the first resurrection. They are mentioned only by way of eminence, to show the fulfillment of their prayer for deliverance and vindication before their enemies (6:10).<sup>16</sup>

Tenney writes,

Two aspects of resurrection are connected with the establishment of the millennial kingdom. One concerns the souls of the righteous that "lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4). The verb *lived* can equally well be rendered "came to life," implying a sudden event rather than a process. Since the subject is "those who had been beheaded," the verb cannot mean "they had lived and reigned," for their death occurred before the thousand years began. The sentence refers to the future and demands a restoration of the righteous dead who will share in the rule of Christ.

The second aspect relates to "the rest of the dead [who] lived not [did not come to life] until the thousand years should be finished" (20:5). Since the resurrection of the second group is manifestly an event, and not a process, a correct analogy demands that the resurrection of the first group also be an event. The righteous, then, will be summoned back to life in order that they may reign with Christ; the wicked, "the rest of the dead," will be haled to judgment. When they shall have been judged and their final status fixed, death itself will be destroyed (20:13,14). That which the resurrection of Christ began the resurrection of men will conclude.<sup>17</sup>

McClain's exposition on this passage is as follows:

A question now arises: Who are the persons seated on the thrones seen by John? The passage does not *name* them. They cannot be angels, for judicial action is no part of their proper activity. Nor can these enthroned judges be the martyrs mentioned in the next clause of verse 4, as Beza and others have thought. Lange is right in saying that "The context also is against it. First, John saw the thrones and those who seated themselves upon them; and *then* the beheaded ones who revived and reigned with Christ"; but he overlooks the most important clue pointing to their true identification. This is a question which is best settled within the context of the Book of Revelation itself. The only persons who appear on thrones elsewhere in the book are the twenty-four elders of 4:4 and 11:16. And since the judges of chapter 20:4 are brought before us *unnamed*, as if readers were expected to know who they are, exegetical logic and good sense point back to the same persons. These were associated with the pre-Kingdom judgments of chapters 6-19 poured out from *heaven*; and what could be more reasonable than to find the same group associated with the judgments with which the Kingdom now beings on *earth*? As already indicated in the forgoing argument, these elders represent the Church of the present age, the Body and Bride of Christ. Only to this group of the saved is reserved the exalted assignment of judicial responsibilities in the Kingdom

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16 Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, pp. 207-208.

17 Tenney, *The Reality of the Resurrection*, pp. 89-90

of Our Lord. They are to act, under Him, as associate justices in the affairs of the Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

### **Questions (3) and (4)**

Questions (3) and (4) also need to be addressed together. When is the first resurrection and who participates in it?

### **Old Testament Background**

Going back to the Old Testament, we find resurrection spoken of in Daniel chapter 12. However, not all scholars agree as to its being identical with that of Revelation 20.

*At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (12:1-3).*

Tregelles has a rendering of verse 2 which is preferable to that of the King James: *"And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those [the rest of the sleepers, those who do not awake at this time] shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt."*<sup>19</sup>

We note, first, that we are reading here of the last days. Resurrection, judgment, and rewards make this obvious. Second, it will be a time of trouble for the Jews, "your people," that is, Daniel's people. Third, a physical resurrection of literal bodies will take place following the tribulation, when Daniel's people are delivered; in other words, at the Day of the Lord.

That Daniel 12:2 records literal and physical resurrection cannot be doubted. "If a resurrection of the body is not here declared, it will be difficult to find where it is, or to imagine words in which it can be."<sup>20</sup> Tregelles also notes, "If such language is not declaratory of a resurrection actual and literal, is there such a thing as a resurrection spoken of in any passage of Scripture (or at least of the Old Testament) at all?"<sup>21</sup> One more quote, this one from Reese, should settle this matter:

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18 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pg. 484. Note that McClain's view here reflects his dispensationalism.

19 Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, pg. 136.

20 Robinson, quoted by Biederwolf, *Millennium Bible*, 236, and cited by Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, pg. 172.

21 Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, pg. 136.

If the terms used in Dan. 12:2-3 do not describe a literal resurrection, with the heavenly glory that follows, can our opponents tell us what terms can describe such a resurrection? We read of "sleepers" in the "dust of the earth" "awaking" to "everlasting life," and then of their "shining" like the brightness of the stars in the firmament. If these expressions do not mean literal resurrection from the dead, then literal resurrection must be something different from the idea usually entertained.<sup>22</sup>

Resurrection is also spoken of in Isaiah 26:19. *"Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."* Reese writes:

Now the question that concerns us is whether we have any indication in this section of Isaiah concerning the time when this momentous event takes place? To an impartial mind there can be no doubt about the answer; this resurrection is to take place at the Day of the Lord, when Jehovah shall come, and Israel shall be reconciled to Him. The proofs of this are incontestable. The principal signs and events of the whole prophecy move, to use figurative language, within the cycle of the sixth and seventh seals of the Apocalypse. Here we have the Coming of the Lord, the conversion of Israel, the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and the sidereal signs in heaven that immediately precede them. Living Israel is restored, and the sleeping saints are brought to life, at the beginning of the Messianic Reign, not some years or decades before.<sup>23</sup>

### ***The Two Resurrections in Revelation 20:4-5***

Let us return, for the moment, to the resurrection in Revelation 20:4-5:

*Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

In this *first resurrection* some live and reign with Christ and others do not live again until after the thousand years are finished. Can this "resurrection" be spiritual and the other physical (verses 11-15)? There are two types of arguments that support the view that the "first resurrection" is a physical resurrection of the righteous dead: (a) general arguments, and (b) arguments based on its link via verse 5 to the resurrection in 11-15.

(a) General Arguments that the "First Resurrection" is a Physical Resurrection of the Righteous Dead

Kromminga bases his argument on the greater context of the New Testament. After listing the

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<sup>22</sup> Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

likenesses between the man of sin and the seven-headed beast, thus establishing them as being one and the same, he goes on to say,

Since the Lord Jesus shall slay the man of sin with the breath of His mouth and the manifestation of His coming, II Thess. 2:8, and since Paul expressly uses the appearance and the destruction of the man of sin for the purpose of fixing the time of the day of the Lord, vs. 2 and 3, it follows, that the day of Christ and the manifestation of His coming precedes and brings about also the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet of the Apocalypse, and that the scene of Rev. 19:11-16, is the scene of Christ's second advent and identical with the scene of Matth. 24:30. And, since that second advent brings a resurrection of the saints that are asleep, I Thess. 4:16, together with the change of the living saints, I Cor. 15:51, 52, and the rapture of both groups, I Thess. 4:17, as well as the ingathering of the elect of which He speaks in Matthew's Gospel, it also follows that the scene of Rev. 20:4-6, must be interpreted as presenting a picture of the first resurrection in the physical sense; or, rather, a picture which presupposes the first resurrection as an actual event and which pictures the resulting state and condition of the ones restored to their bodies.<sup>24</sup>

McClain bases his argument on verse 4 itself:

Concerning these disembodied souls, John says that "*they lived and reigned*" with Christ! Here instead of following the clear thought connection of the context, the opposers of a premillennial resurrection of saints have expended much labor and ingenuity in efforts to show that the verb rendered "lived" does not refer to a resurrection of the body, but rather to the giving of *spiritual* life. According to their argument, the souls here are *regenerated* instead of resurrected. Against this view the following facts are presented:

First, although the verb *zao* is used of both physical and spiritual life, the context of Revelation 20:4 is decisive in favor of the former. That the beheading in the passage is literal and physical not many have had the hardihood to deny, though they cannot agree among themselves as to just where and when it takes place. Upon this one admission of literality their entire case goes to pieces. For, if the people involved were beheaded *physically* and then lived again, common sense would suggest that they received back the same category of life that had been lost.

Second, to argue that the life here is the kind of life received by the sinner in regeneration, is to introduce theological confusion into the passage. For the people who "lived" are the same people who had earlier lost their lives "for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God" (vs. 4). Thus we would reach the absurdity of having souls being regenerated *after* they had been beheaded for their faithfulness to Christ! If the verb "lived" in Revelation 20:4 means that these souls were made alive *spiritually*, then it follows that they must have been *dead* spiritually until that time. But how could unregenerated people have been faithful in their witness

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<sup>24</sup> Kromminga, *The Millennium*, pg. 83.

to Jesus, as the passage declares that they were?<sup>25</sup>

(b) Specific Arguments Based on the Link between the "First Resurrection" and the Resurrection in 11-15 Via Verse 5

The Greek scholar Henry Alford states the following:

It will have been long ago anticipated by the readers of this Commentary, that I cannot consent to distort words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense: and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned, where certain ψυχὰι ἐζήσαν [*psuchai ezēsan* = "souls lived/came to life"] at the first, and the rest of the νεκροὶ ἐζήσαν [*nekroi ezēsan* = "dead lived/came to life"] 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.<sup>26</sup>

John Gill will also prove helpful:

If this living again before the reign, or at the beginning of the reign of the thousand years, is to be understood of a spiritual resurrection, then the living of the rest of the dead, that is, of the wicked, at the end of the thousand years, must be understood in the same sense, that they shall live a life of grace, being raised from the death of sin; for it is expressly said, *The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished*; which supposes they will live when they are finished, and live in the same sense as they will who will live at the beginning of them; that is, a corporal life, being raised from the dead; not, surely, a spiritual one. . . .

This resurrection is of such who died a corporal death, either a violent one, being slain for their testimony for Christ and the gospel; or in a natural way, not having given into antichristian principles and practices; and therefore their living again, or their resurrection, which is called the first, must be a corporal resurrection; for

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25 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp. 487-488.

26 Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. IV, pp. 732-733.

as is their death, so must be their resurrection from the dead. . . . Of such a resurrection, is the living again of the wicked dead, at the end of the millennium; for as their living then cannot be interpreted, neither of a spiritual resurrection, nor of a civil one, it must be of a corporal one; and if theirs, who are the *rest* of the dead, is a corporal one, then those who lived before them, being raised from the dead, must be a corporal one likewise; for that one part of the dead should be raised, and live in one sense; and the rest be raised and live in another sense, is not reasonable to suppose.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the above arguments, the "first resurrection" of verse 4 must be a physical resurrection of the righteous dead at the second advent. Ladd points out how important this conclusion is to the interpretation of the millennium issue in chapter 20.

What is the "first resurrection"? Is it literal, a resurrection of the body, or spiritual, a resurrection of the soul? If we can find the answer to this question, we shall have the key to the solution of the millennial question in this passage.<sup>28</sup>

Most amillenarians take *nekroi ezēsan* ("dead lived/came to life") in verse 5 as a reference to verses 11-15, which are accepted by all as a physical resurrection of the dead. The problem for them is that once it is acknowledged that the "first resurrection" is a physical resurrection, then *both* are physical resurrections with some raised at the beginning of the thousand years (v. 4) and "the rest" at the end of the thousand years (v. 5). This creates a thousand-year gap between these two resurrections. That is why amillenarians try so hard to make the first resurrection a spiritual resurrection--i.e., regeneration--rather than a physical resurrection parallel to the physical resurrection at the end of the chapter. That way the description in verses 11-15 can then stand alone and refer to a "general judgment" (for all) at the second advent. However, the above arguments show that the first resurrection of verse 4 must be of the same nature as the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" in verse 5, that is, *ezēsan* ("lived/came to life") must have the same meaning in both verses.

However, there is at least one amillenarian, Anthony Hoekema, who seeks to avoid the problem created by taking *ezēsan* in two different senses by taking it as a reference to spiritual resurrection in *both* verses 5 and 6.<sup>29</sup> This view maintains consistency in the use of *ezēsan*, but it totally divorces verse 5 from verses 11-15 in a most unnatural way. Moreover, as Ladd states in his response to Hoekema,

He reads it [v. 5] to mean, "The unbelieving dead . . . did not live or reign with Christ during this thousand-year period . . . This however is not what the text says. "The rest of the dead did not come to life [did not live] until the thousand years were ended." A natural reading of the text clearly suggests that after the thousand years the rest of the dead did come to life. "Until" (*achri*) clearly implies this. Hoekema's effort to get around the natural meaning of the text is completely

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27 John Gill, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 656, 657.

28 Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, pg. 35.

29 Anthony, Hoekema, "Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, pg. 169.

unconvincing.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Other New Testament References to the First Resurrection***

Turning now to the Apostle Paul, we find resurrection mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54:

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

What is the time of this resurrection?

Paul not only describes the resurrection and transfiguration of the saints; he emphatically indicates the time for the fulfillment of these wonderful events. Here are his words: "So WHEN this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (v. 54).

Nothing could be clearer than the Apostle's argument here. The resurrection and transfiguration of the faithful dead will take place in fulfillment of an O.T. prophecy. This occurs in Isaiah 25:8, which we have already considered. . . . the resurrection of the saints, and the victory over death, *synchronize with the inauguration of the Theocratic Kingdom, the Coming of Jehovah, and the conversion of living Israel*. Following are Isaiah's words (25:6-9 R.V.): "And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." Here we have the inauguration of the Kingdom under the figure of a banquet. "And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He has swallowed up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." Here we have the resurrection, which, according to Paul, includes the raising of Christians.<sup>31</sup>

Another interesting statement of Paul's concerning resurrection is recorded in Acts 26:6-8. J. W. Brooks comments on it as follows:

The words of St. Paul (Acts xxvi. 6-8) plainly evince, that the expectation of the Apostle in regard to the promised land was, that it should be fulfilled to the

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30 Ladd, "An Historic Premillennial Response," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, pg. 191; bracketed phrase, "[did not live]," original.

31 Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pp. 63-64.



patriarchs by a resurrection. "And now (he says) I stand and am judged for the *hope of the promise* made of God unto our *fathers*; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should *raise the dead*?" Here the *promise* to the Fathers is coupled with the resurrection of the dead, which are both evidently in the mind of the Apostle. But what was the promise to the Fathers? There is no express mention to *them* of a resurrection; and though several things are included in the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, yet there is not one of them which requires a resurrection to fulfil it, except the promise of the land. It was this which must have led Paul to couple the promise of the Fathers with the resurrection from the dead.<sup>32</sup>

Paul mentions resurrection again in I Thessalonians 4:13-18:

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet<sup>33</sup> the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

Paul speaks of the rapture here only in order to show the relation of the sleeping to the living saints at the one Advent in glory. He is, in particular, comforting those who will survive until the Advent with the news that they will have no advantage over their dead loved ones.<sup>34</sup> Does

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32 J. W. Brooks, *Essays on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ*, pg. 41.

33 Concerning the word "meet," Brooks states the following: "The word used in the original is *απαντησις*-- not the verb, but a noun; and literally is 'caught up into the air to the meeting of the Lord.' The word *απαντησις* occurs in three other places in the New Testament, and invariably signifies a meeting for the purpose of receiving and welcoming the individual and to escort him back. Thus it is in Matthew xxv. where the ten virgins are first said to go forth and *meet* the bridegroom, (v. 1,) and then are surprised in their slumber by the cry, 'Go ye out to *meet* him.' (v. 6.) It occurs the third time in Acts xxviii. 15:--'And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to *meet* us, (εις απαντησιν ημιν) as far as Appii Forum and the three taverns, whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. And when we came to Rome,' &c. It is evident here, that they met Paul, not to stay with him at the three taverns, but to continue with him by going back with him. And the whole context in Thessalonians seems to require, that we explain it of the saints going out to welcome the Lord in the air: not to continue in the air with him; but to accompany him on his visit here, and therefore to return with him. For unless the saints *return* with Christ, the wicked must also be caught up for that *judgment*, which the anti-millennarians always suppose happens at the same time with this event." *Essays*, pg. 64.

34 "Now, the idea that perplexed and distressed the Thessalonians seems to have been something of this sort; that, when the Lord came, their deceased friends would be found to have suffered serious loss, in that, while they would ultimately, no doubt, be raised again, they would yet have no part in the joy of

this passage speak of the time of this resurrection? It does not.

His [Paul's] point being established that the dead in Christ shall be on terms of equal advantage with those found alive at Christ's coming, he leaves undefined here the other events foretold elsewhere (as not being necessary to his discussion), Christ's reign on earth with His saints (1 Cor. 6:2-3), the final judgment and glorification of His saints in the new heaven and earth.<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting to note that in this passage we have mentioned the last trumpet (there is only one "last trumpet"), Christ's coming in the clouds (he comes only once), and the resurrection of the saints. This resurrection is the first resurrection (of which there is only one "first resurrection," but of necessity implying at least one more).

*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power (1 Cor. 15:20-24).*

The text points out three groups in the resurrection: (1) Christ the firstfruits, a group of one only; (2) they that are Christ's at his coming, namely, every saint from the creation to the last saint to die before Jesus' return; (3) the end group, that of the wicked dead.

Tregelles makes the following comment:

In Rev. 20 we read of "the first Resurrection". The whole scene is thus described: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them; . . . They are the faithful in Christ in general . . . and one special class, those suffering for the witness of Jesus; and the glory given to them is explained to be the first resurrection. This is in full accordance with other Scriptures; for instance, 1 Cor. 15:23, where the *order* of the resurrection is taught: "Every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward (*i.e.* next in order), they that are Christ's at His coming." The concluding part of 1 Thess. 4 equally connects the resurrection of the Church with the coming of Christ, so that there can be no resurrection of the saints till then. And so in this passage in Rev. 20; for the narrative, both in vision and in explanation, runs on from the time when He whose "name is called the Word of God" is seen on the White Horse, when the beast and the king of the earth and their armies are gathered to make war with Him, and when destruction falls upon them: then it is that those recently suffering under the persecuting power of this beast are sharers in the first resurrection. Until the beast and his persecution are destroyed together, there can be no first resurrection."<sup>36</sup>

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welcoming Him back to His inheritance of the redeemed earth, and in the triumphant inauguration of His reign." John Lillie, *Lectures on the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*, pg. 247.

35 Canon Faussett, cited by Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 67.

36 Tregelles, *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*, pp. 29-30.

### ***Is There a "General Resurrection"?***

We will conclude this discussion of resurrection by turning to John 5:25-29, which reads as follows from the NKJV:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*

Quoting now from Scott,

The doctrine of a general resurrection, of good and bad alike, of just and unjust, is disproved in our text. It must be frankly conceded that the Lord's words in John 5:28, 29 *seem* to teach a general resurrection: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" or judgment. The "hour" referred to embraces a thousand years, at the commencement of which the righteous are raised, and at its close the wicked. We are not giving an arbitrary force to the term *hour*, as in the very chapter quoted from, the *hour* of spiritual quickening, that is, of the soul, has already lasted nigh two thousand years (v. 25).<sup>37</sup>

On this text Ladd writes the following:

Here is first a spiritual resurrection, to be followed by an eschatological bodily resurrection. Nonmillenarian interpreters argue that Revelation 20 should be interpreted in a way analogous to John 5.

This passage does not provide a real analogy to the passage in the Apocalypse, however. There is this all-important difference. In John the context itself provides the clues for the spiritual interpretation in the one instance and the literal in the other. Concerning the first group who live, *the hour has already come*. This makes it clear that it refers to those who are spiritually dead and who enter into life upon hearing the voice of the Son of God. The second group, however, are *in the tombs*. They are not spiritually dead but physically dead. Such dead are to be brought back to life again. Part of them will experience a "resurrection of life," a bodily resurrection into the eternal life of the Age to Come. The rest will be raised to a "resurrection of condemnation," to the execution of the decree of divine judgment which rests upon them because they have rejected the Son of God and the life he came to bring (John 3:18, 36). The language of these words makes it indubitable

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<sup>37</sup> Scott, *Exposition of The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 403.

that Jesus wishes his hearers to know that he is speaking of two kinds of "living": a present spiritual resurrection and a future bodily resurrection.

In Revelation 20 *there is no such contextual clue for a similar variation of interpretation.* The language of the passage is quite clear and unambiguous. There is neither necessity nor contextual possibility to interpret either *ezesan* spiritually in order to introduce meaning to the passage. At the beginning of the thousand years some of the dead come to life; at the conclusion, the rest of the dead come to life. There is no evident play upon words here. The passage makes perfectly good sense when interpreted literally.

This is reinforced by the fact that the same word is used in reference to coming to life twice elsewhere in the Revelation. In Revelation 2:8 we read, "The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life" (*ezesan*). Here is a clear reference to the resurrection of Jesus. In 13:14 we read of the beast "who was wounded by the sword and yet lived" (*ezesan*). From 13:3, we know that the wound was "a mortal wound," a wound unto death.<sup>38</sup>

Our last quotation on this text in John is from B. W. Newton:

It is at the commencement of the millennium that the Son, by raising His saints, will give the great manifested proof of His having life in Himself; and during the millennium He will exercise the judgment or kingly rule here spoken of, as the Son of Man glorified.

But this is not all. Not only does He quicken the souls of His saints (verse 24), not only will He quicken their bodies at the time of the first resurrection (verse 25), not only will He exercise the authority of the millennial kingdom (verse 27), He will do more, He will also call ALL the dead out of their graves at the close of the millennial reign; that is, all the wicked dead of all ages and the righteous who have died in the millennium. This is taught us in the next verse, "Marvel not at this, for the hour cometh in which ALL that are in the graves shall hear His voice (in the former case *some* only hear) and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." Two periods of resurrection for saints (and only two) are as plainly taught in this passage as in that we have before considered in the Corinthians.<sup>39</sup>

### ***The Nature of the Reign for 1000 Years***

Moving away now from the issue of the resurrection itself, we turn our attention to what actually transpires during the millennium. Many questions come to mind. For example: Are there unbelievers among the inhabitants? What kind of government is in existence? Does life function pretty much like it does now? How can immortal beings coexist with mere mortals? What relation

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38 Ladd, "Historic Premillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, edited by Robert G. Clouse, pp. 36- 37.

39 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pg. 105.

is there between Israel and the Gentiles?

Here in Revelation chapter 20, however, we find that the 1000 years of Christ's righteous rule are not described, and although much is said of this period in the Old Testament,<sup>40</sup> we are, nevertheless, consigned to a certain amount of speculation. So in addressing these questions, I begin with a quotation from T. W. Chambers:

The ordinary conditions of human life are not to be reversed; but on the contrary the infusion of grace will be so large and general that every rank and class will feel it, and its effects will be seen in all the relations of life, purifying and elevating without upturning or destroying. In business, in recreation, in politics, in art, in literature, in social life, in the domestic circle, there will be a distinct and cordial recognition of the claims of God and of the supremacy of his law. There will be no divorce anywhere between religion and morality, no demand that any department of human activity shall be deemed beyond the domain of conscience. When even the bells on the horses bear the same sacred inscription which once flashed from the diadem of the High Priest, nothing can be found too small or too familiar to be consecrated to the Lord. The religious spirit will prevail everywhere, securing justice, truth, kindness, and courtesy among men; doing away with wars, contentions, jealousies, and competitions; hallowing trades and handicrafts; softening the inevitable contrasts of ranks, gifts, conditions; binding men to one another by their devotion to a common master in heaven; and thus introducing the true city of God on earth for which all saints long with an ever increasing desire.<sup>41</sup>

Buswell remarks as follows:

If a vast multitude of people from the nations of the world are going to rebel against the rule of Christ at the end of the Millennium, it is then factually implied that the Millennium is not an age of final perfection. It is an age of the perfect rule of Christ, but an age somewhat analogous to the Garden of Eden before the fall of man, in the sense that when God permitted temptation, sin broke forth.

There are many indications in the Scripture that Christ will personally reign over this world in a perfect government, participated in by His resurrected saints, but in a world in which absolute perfection has not yet been completely restored. . . . Paul describes the Millennial reign of Christ when he says, "He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet," the last of which enemies is death itself (I Corinthians 15:25,26).

Isaiah, in his last chapters, suggests millennial conditions in certain sentences. Let me suggest that Isaiah is speaking of the Millennium in chapter 65:20,21. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them;

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40 Psalm 72 gives us a picture of abiding peace, nations bowing before the Lord, abundant crops, and prosperity.

41 T. W. Chambers, *Lange's Commentary on Zechariah*, pg. 114 (1898).

and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them."

I am inclined to think also that Isaiah's reference to a nation being "born in one day" (Isaiah 66:8) is a reference to the turning of Israel as a whole unto the Lord, after the rapture of the church, as Paul predicts in Romans 11:26. I suggest also that Isaiah 66:19,20 refers not so much to the present missionary age, although these statements can be so implied, but I suggest that these verses apply more directly and literally to the early years of the millennial reign of Christ during which people in isolated places, who had not accepted the mark of the Beast nor yet accepted Christ, will be evangelized. I am intrigued with the thought of bringing men to the Lord "on litters and on mules and on swift beasts!"

Isaiah 66:23,24 might be construed as a description of conditions in the "new earth" if we understand the reference to "carcasses" as figuratively describing the eternally lost experiencing "the second death" in the "lake of fire"; but it seems much more clearly applicable to the Millennium which precedes the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" (Revelation 20:5, 12-15) . . .

When Christ predicted that His apostles would judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30) and when Paul declared that we are to judge the world, and therefore we ought now to be able to judge affairs of this life (I Corinthians 6:1-4), the implication clearly is that there will be matters to be judged, and there will be problems to be administered.<sup>42</sup>

I found this explanation of Isaiah 65:20,21 by Thomas Newberry quite helpful:

We have no evidence of death during that period excepting as we find it written in Isa. lxx. 20: "The child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner *being* a hundred years old shall be accursed." That is, if sin is committed, judgment will be speedily executed, but the offender, though a hundred years of age, will be considered only as a child, because of the Millennial length of days.<sup>43</sup>

The objection brought up by many amillenarians concerning the absurdity of Christians in glorified bodies dwelling with those in their natural bodies is addressed by Buswell: "The Scripture indicates that in the resurrection our bodily nature will be like the bodily nature of Christ on earth during the forty days subsequent to His resurrection (Philippians 3:21). We have, in Christ's intimate association with His disciples during that period of forty days, a definite illustration of the possibilities of the association of immortals with mortals."<sup>44</sup>

An interesting observation concerning our glorified bodies is made by Brooks:

Another particular is, that the saints will have the power of conveying themselves, in the manner of angels, through the heavenly regions. This is evident, first, from the circumstance, that they will rise to meet the Lord in the air. And secondly, it

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42 Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 501-502.

43 Thomas Newberry, *Notes on the Book of the Revelation*, pp. 117-118.

44 Buswell, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 503.

may be clearly gathered from the assurance, that they are to be *ισαγγελοι*, "equal to the angels;" whose bodies, however fashioned, unquestionably possess this locomotive power.<sup>45</sup>

Horatius Bonar addresses this same problem in his book *Prophetical Landmarks*.<sup>46</sup>

There has been ever since man was upon the earth an intermixture of what appears to me a far more perplexing kind. I mean that of angels. I do not refer to the angelic *appearances* recorded in Scripture. I admit that these fall short of proof in this difficulty. They do not touch the exact point of the objection, viz., the continual intercourse of the two classes of beings alluded to. But is this all that is revealed of angelic visitation, angelic intercourse, angelic ministry. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." Do they not continually encompass us about? Are they not on our right hand and on our left, day and night? It is only occasionally that they have come forth from their invisibility, and held personal intercourse with men. Yet, though invisible, they are always with us, and, as Owen shows at great length, watching over us, suggesting good thoughts, preserving us from evil, warding off the assaults of Satan, attending upon us in our going out and coming in. Here is an intermixture which some might pronounce carnal. And if this be going on unceasingly between holy angels and unholy men, why may not the like intercourse be carried on between the perfect saints and imperfect inhabitants of earth? In this age, angels are God's messengers. But the "world to come" he hath not put into subjection to angels, but to man, even to his own Son and his raised saints. They are to be God's ministers, God's kings, God's priests, to fulfil his purposes among the children of men upon the new earth.<sup>47</sup>

In answering the question concerning Israel and the Gentiles, McClain takes us back to the Old Testament book of Isaiah:

Nothing in the whole field of Old Testament prophecy could possibly surpass the brilliance and grandeur of the 60th chapter of Isaiah; and its central theme is the restoration and world supremacy of the nation of Israel. According to all the principles of sensible interpretation, the people under consideration in Isaiah 60 are the same as in chapter 59. It can only be theological prejudice which sees in chapter 59 "the sins of the Jews" and in chapter 60 "the glory of the church." The prophet begins with a dramatic address to this people: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60:1). Then he sees them as they return from their world-wide dispersion back to their own land and city (vss. 4-9). The nations which had afflicted them now come to pay homage to them as the chosen people of God (vs. 14). Foreign kings shall minister to them (vs. 10). The wealth of the nations will be devoted to their prosperity and the beautification of the sanctuary of their God (vss. 11, 13, 16, 17). The days of their

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45 Brooks, *Essays*, pg. 99.

46 The entire book can be found on this web site under Classic Reprints.

47 Bonar, *Landmarks*, pp. 155-156.

mourning will be ended (vs. 20). Violence and destruction will no more invade their borders (vs. 18). Their political supremacy will be guaranteed by the edict of Jehovah: "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (vs. 12).

But this world supremacy of Israel, as set forth in the prophets, is never an end in itself. Its grand purpose is the welfare of all nations, as asserted in the original covenant, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). All the hard discipline of the centuries has had only one divine intention--the preparation of a nation to be the channel of divine blessing to a world unable to solve its own problems. To see this clearly sweeps away all objections to the idea of a "chosen nation." For along with the divine election of Israel to a place of world supremacy, there was attached a solemn responsibility. The nation of Israel has been chosen above all other nations to be the "servant" of God to bring good to those very nations (Isa. 41:8-9). All anti-Semitic prejudice (as well as narrow Semitic pride) arises out of blindness to the benevolent purpose of God. Once the eyes of men are opened to this divine purpose, the world must rejoice in the favor of God to Israel (Isa. 49:13).<sup>48</sup>

Let us take to heart the above words and remember the Jewish people in our prayers, as well as praying for the peace of Jerusalem--God's chosen city.

### ***Satan's Rebellion After the 1000-Year Reign***

*Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (vv. 7-10).*

John is taken directly to the end of the millennial period when Satan is loosed from his prison. An observation of interest, albeit somewhat lengthy, is made by John Cumming:

If there is to be a Millennium of a thousand years with Christ and his own people in the midst of the earth, how is it that when Satan shall be loosed that there shall be found a people in the four corners of the earth called Gog and Magog, who shall be gathered together in battle and war against the saints of God in the resurrection body? . . . I will give what I think the probable solution of an admitted and perplexing difficulty. Do you perceive that it is here stated, that when the dead in Christ have risen and ascended to the Lord, the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished? I suppose, then, that "the rest of

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48 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pg. 212-213. His chapter on "The Blessings of the Prophetic Kingdom" is thorough and very uplifting. This is a book well worth the investment.



the dead," that is, the unconverted, are raised from their graves just at the moment that the thousand years are completely closed, and that "the rest of the dead" raised in their bodies are those enemies who make war with the saints in their resurrection bodies; the unjust shall arise as well as the just; the one shall have their bodies restored as well as the other, the imprimatur of eternity stamped upon the one, the imprimatur of eternity stamped upon the other--the one an eternal capacity of woe, the other of bliss. I suppose . . . that the enemies that come from the four corners of the earth are just "the rest of the dead," raised at the close of the Millennium; and then and there, with all their vice unextirpated, their natures unregenerated, their hearts in the gall of bitterness, they shall be headed by the archangel's energy, and the archfiend's hate, and shall make one last, dying, and desperate attack upon the saints of God that dwell in the new Jerusalem, and who there magnify and worship the Lamb.

. . . it is not said, when the statement is given about the great white throne, that the rest of the dead *then* rose. It is remarkable that in the commencement of the chapter it is said, "the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished;" and when the great white throne is set, it is not said that the rest of the dead were summoned from their graves, but it presupposes that they had already arisen, and perhaps implies an interval, during which interval they make their last attack. It is stated that all had risen at the end of the thousand years, and they stood before the great white throne, to receive judgment according to the deeds done in the body; "and as many of them as were not found written in the Lamb's book of life were cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."<sup>49</sup>

Going back to the duration of the thousand years themselves, it does seem likely that not all will be saved during that interval. "It would seem, indeed, as though the millennium were the dispensation which is intended more than any other to teach us the hopelessness of the evil of the heart of man."<sup>50</sup> Many, I imagine, will be harboring resentment at living under a reign of righteousness. It is after the thousand years are over, during the eternal state, that sin is no more.

Will not a thousand years under the beneficent sway of Christ and the manifested glory of God suffice to render men immune to his [Satan's] temptations, will they not have radically changed for the better, and become by the altered conditions of life and the absence of Satanic temptations, children of God and lovers of His will? Alas! It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God.<sup>51</sup>

McClain writes,

Although Satan has indeed been the originator of much of the evil of our fallen

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49 Cumming, *Apocalyptic Sketches*, pp. 458,459.

50 B. W. Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pg. 340.

51 William Hoste, *The Visions of John the Divine*, pg. 161. Cited by Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 302.

race, he cannot be charged with all of it. Yet the alibi of Eden--"The serpent beguiled me"--has never ceased to be the excuse offered by men for their sins. Our Lord struck at this alibi when, after enumerating a terrible catalogue of human iniquities, He declared that their source was "from within, out of the heart of men" (Mark 7:21-23). Yet men--even Christians--have been loathe to believe that this is altogether true. Through the ages of God's dealing with a fallen race, He has tested its members under many different conditions; and in every test, apart from the grace of God, man has always proven to be a failure. But *sinful* men have never been given an opportunity to "prove" what they will do in an environment from which the great deceiver of souls has been completely banished. The purpose here is not to acquaint *God* with something which He does not now know, but rather to prove to *men* themselves how desperately wicked they really are. The complete immobilization of Satan for a thousand years, therefore, will lay the basis for God's final argument against the popular doctrine of the inherent goodness of man when placed in the right kind of environment. It might be thought that all orthodox theologians would recognize the value of such a demonstration of the doctrine of total depravity, but such is not the case.<sup>52</sup>

In this last rebellion of Satan we read that Gog and Magog "*surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.*" What is meant by "Gog and Magog" and who is attacked?

The assumption that the saints who are mentioned at the end of the millennial period as being in immediate danger of attack from Gog and Magog are identical with the ruling saints, whether these are resurrected or without their bodies, who sit on the thrones, is an insufficiently based assumption. It overlooks the plain fact, that the text lets all the nations enter the millennium in the same condition without any differentiation, but that at the end it plainly depicts a difference between some of those nations and the rest; a difference, which can have sprung up between them only in the course of the millennium. It unquestionably represents the effects which the rule of the saints has upon earthly society. Gog and Magog comprise a definite group of nations, as the text expressly declares; and in the absence of any contrary indication it is only reasonable to identify the saints whom they seek to attack with another part of the nations, that is, of human society on earth. The uprising of Gog and Magog is therefore a last social disturbance that sets two parties in earthly human society at war, and not an uprising of mortal men against resurrected and glorified saints, much less against disembodied souls.<sup>53</sup>

In his commentary, Walvoord explains the contrast between "Gog and Magog" here in this passage and "Gog and Magog" in Ezekiel 38 and 39:

In describing the nations, the term "Gog and Magog" is used without any explanation. From the context it would seem that this is not the same event as that described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 where Gog and Magog are prominent; and the battle which follows is entirely different and separated by at least a thousand years

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52 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp. 482-483.

53 Kromminga, *The Millennium*, pp. 49-50.

from that of Ezekiel's prophecy. . . .

While many explanations have been made, one of the intriguing ones is that Gog refers to the ruler and Magog to the people as in Ezekiel 38. Hence, what the passage means is that the nations of the world follow Satan, including the rulers (Gog) and the people (Magog) under the rulers. Another plausible explanation is that the expression is used much as we use the term "Waterloo" to express a disastrous battle, but one not related to the historic origination of the term. Many contrasts can be observed between this battle and that of Ezekiel in that Satan is prominent in this whereas he is not mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. The invasion of Ezekiel comes from the north whereas this invasion comes from all directions. Ezekiel's battle probably occurs previous to the battle of the great day of God Almighty before the millennium, whereas this occurs after the thousand years have been finished. The number of those who rebel against God and follow Satan is described as innumerable "as the sand of the sea." Thus the last gigantic rebellion of man develops against God's sovereign rule in which the wicked meet their Waterloo.

As the battle is joined in verse 9, the great host led by Satan and coming from all directions compasses the camp of the saints. The word for "camp" (Gr. *parembole*) refers to those engaged in battle and who are in battle array, hence a "camp," "fortress," or "citadel." Here the term seems to refer to the city of Jerusalem itself which is described as "the beloved city" (cf. Ps. 78:68; 87:2). Apparently Christ permits the army to assemble and encircle the capital city. No sooner has the army of Satan been assembled, however, than fire comes down from God out of heaven, and the besiegers are destroyed, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus is shattered the last vain attempt of Satan to claim a place of prominence and worship in attempted usurpation of the prerogatives of God. Thus ends also the false theory that man under perfect environment will willingly serve the God who created and redeemed him. Even in the ideal situation of the millennial reign of Christ, innumerable hosts immediately respond to the first temptation to rebel. This is the end of the road for the nations who rebel against God as well as for the career of Satan.<sup>54</sup>

D. D. Buck notes that

The use of metaphoric language implies a knowledge or idea of what would be understood if such language were applied literally. No one ever uses figures without having in view the literal things from which the figures are derived. If we speak of a man as the *pillar* of the state, we have in view the nature of a literal column at the same time. If we say Christianity is the sun of the world, it implies that we have a previous understanding of the nature and fact of the sun. . . .

This is the agreement between John and Ezekiel: what Ezekiel represents *literally*, as the closing up of the ante-millennial dispensation, John uses *symbolically* to illustrate the closing up of the Millennium itself. . . .

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<sup>54</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 303-304.

And, if any object, that he has used as a symbol something of which we are yet in doubt,--something which is still future to us,--the answer is ready: He wrote *this* part of his Revelation for the special admonition of those who will survive during the Millennium, and will be in danger at the close of that period of being deceived by the devil, who will then for a little season be released from prison. And at *that* time, the history of Gog and Magog will be as well understood as is now the history of Babylon or Rome.<sup>55</sup>

We will leave the time of the millennium with one last encouraging quote from A. R. Fausset:

A mighty purification will be effected by Christ's coming. Though sin will not be abolished--for men will still be in the flesh (Isa. 65:20)--sin will no longer be a universal power, for the flesh is no longer seduced by Satan. He will not be, as now, "the god and prince of the world"; nor will the world "lie in the wicked one": the flesh will be evermore overcome. Christ will reign with His transfigured saints over men in the flesh (Auberlen). The nations in the millennium will be prepared for a higher state, as Adam in Paradise, supposing he had lived in an unfallen state.<sup>56</sup>

We are ready now to address the last section of this 20th chapter of Revelation.

### ***The Great White Throne Judgment***

*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (vv 11-15).*

What a vivid image we have here before us:

Heaven and earth flee from the unidentified figure who sits on the majestic white throne. The language of poetic imagery captures the fading character of everything of the world. Now the only reality is God seated on the throne of judgment, before whom all must appear. His verdict alone is holy and righteous . . .

A moment of tension arrives. The books are opened. It is sobering to ponder that in God's sight nothing is forgotten; all will give an account of their action.<sup>57</sup>

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55 Buck, *An Original Harmony and Exposition*, pp. 229, 246, 247.

56 Cited by Alva J. McClain in *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pg. 483.

57 Johnson, *Revelation*, pg. 589.

Those words --"all will give an account of their action"--are indeed sobering. Now is a good time to bring in some insight from Erich Sauer on the judgment seat of Christ. Although this judgment is not found in the book of Revelation, it is, nevertheless, quite relevant to these last days. It is true that we will not stand at the Great White Throne Judgment, but we will stand before Christ to give an account of our works.

The return of Christ is the "blessed hope" of the church (Titus 2:13). Nevertheless it is connected not only with heavenly privileges but also with holy responsibility. Even as the rapture is a refreshment for the heart, so is the judgment seat of Christ a spur to the conscience. . . .

True it is that he who believes on the Son is free from the final judgment of condemnation . . . but the question of faithfulness (I Cor. 4:2-5) and the determining of the reward (I Cor. 3:14; Col. 3:24), or of the loss (I Cor. 3:15; II John 8), demand a special day of judgment (I John 4:17) even for believers. Here it is not a question of salvation but definitely as to the measure of the reward of grace.

*The severity.* "The Lord will judge his people" (Heb. 10:30). Even for His own the day will be "revealed in fire" (I Cor. 3:13). Therefore, in strict connexion with the judgment seat of Christ, Paul speaks of a "terror of the Lord" (II Cor. 5:10,11). "Damage" and "loss" (I Cor. 3:15; 2 John 8), a shrinking with shame from Him at His presence (I John 2:28), "burning up" of one's whole life work (I Cor. 3:13-15), oneself saved, but only as a brand out of the fire, as one who escapes from a burning building with his bare life . . . these are possibilities which *we* must look in the face. . . . To be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ is a more serious matter than perhaps we often think. Mere reference to "gain" or "loss" seems scarcely to do full justice to such extremely serious statements of the New Testament.

*The standard* is our faithfulness (I Cor. 4:1-5; Matt. 25:21, 23), the sum total of our life, the product of our development: not only our deeds but also our possibilities, not only what we were but what we might have become, not only our actions but also our omissions (Jas. 4:17); not the work but the worker, not the number but the weight of our deeds (I Sam. 2:3); not only what we attained but also what we strove after. Of our works, sacrifice counts for most; of our disposition, only selfless love; of our possessions, only what we employed in service. . . .

*The result* will be very varied. Even with His own people the Lord is "the righteous Judge" (II Tim. 4:8). One has built of wood, hay, and stubble--his work will be burned up; the other has built of gold, silver, and costly stones--his work will stand the fire (I Cor. 3:12-15). . . .

Thus each receives his due . . . Salvation depends upon faith, reward upon faithfulness. As sons we receive His life, as servants His recompense. "Behold, I come quickly, and my wages with me" (Rev. 22:12).

But finally all will be saved and all will shine, if in different degrees of glory and splendour (I Cor. 15:40-42). There will be great and small vessels in the future, but all will be filled. . . .

But the faithful will be specially crowned: the victorious warrior--with the crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:8); the steadfast racer--with the unfading crown (I Cor. 9:25-27); the one faithful unto death--with the crown of life (Rev. 2:10; Jas. 1:12); the unselfish worker--with the crown of honour (I Thess. 2:19, comp. 3-6; Phil. 4:1); the example to the flock--with the crown of glory (I Pet. 5:3, 4).<sup>58</sup>

Lillie's observation is noteworthy:

It would be well for us all, Christian brethren, every morning that we rise from our beds, thoughtfully to repeat, each one to himself, those words of inspiration: "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." . . . There is such a thing as having 'the entrance ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'--entering the harbor, as I have seen it expressed somewhere, with all sails set; and there is such a thing as 'seeming'--though it may be only seeming--'to come short' of the heavenly rest--being cast ashore, as from shipwreck.<sup>59</sup>

These are weighty thoughts. Just to think of backing away in shame as we stand before Christ should convict us all of our base ingratitude to such a Savior, He who gave his very life for us. How can it be that we give back in return the most measly pittance of our time and thoughts?

Now let us go back to our passage here in Revelation. Why is the Book of Life mentioned in this passage when the dead are being judged according to their works? Archer writes: "Note that the book of life is also consulted; hence there must be at least some true believers among this throng. These can only be the generations that have grown up and died during the Millennium itself . . ."<sup>60</sup> Revelation does not give us many details of the 1000 years, but surely Archer must be correct when he states that there will be true believers among the inhabitants.

Walvoord's view is somewhat different:

The question has been raised concerning the judgment of those who die in the millennium. It is clear that the unsaved who die in the millennium are included in this judgment. The Scriptures are silent, however, concerning any rapture or translation of saints who survive the millennium and concerning the resurrection of saints who may die in the millennium. . . . Though men are judged according to their works, the book of life is introduced as the deciding factor as to where they will spend eternity. . . . The resurrection of the wicked dead is in sharp contrast to the resurrection of the righteous dead. Although the passage does not state so explicitly, the implication in this judgment is that there are no saved. Nothing is

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58 Sauer, *The Triumph of the Crucified*, pp. 112-115.

59 Lillie, *Lectures on the First and Second Epistles of Peter*, pg. 75.

60 Archer, unpublished class notes.

said here of the reward of the righteous.<sup>61</sup>

Gundry gives his view on this matter:

The judgment of the sheep and the goats becomes the pattern for the great general judgment at the end of time. Epistolary writers refer to that aspect which has to do with Christians simply because they address only Christians in their letters (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). In Revelation 20:11-15 John mentions only the wicked dead because he has already mentioned, repeatedly and prominently, the saints of the first resurrection (vv. 4-6,9). Even in a pretribulational scheme, we would have to place here the final judgment of both the righteous and the wicked who will live on earth as subjects of Christ's millennial rule. The conditional clause "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life" (v. 15) naturally implies the presence of believers whose names *will* be found written in the book of life.<sup>62</sup>

Chapter 20 should give us all pause for serious consideration. Yes, the millennium will be a time of unimagined glory and joy for the redeemed. But after the millennium, then what? "*But the rest of the dead,*" those who died in their sins, "*did not live again until the thousand years were finished.*"

It is not that there was unconsciousness; there was no human existence, and no human life until the expiration of that period, and then their bodies will again be given them, those bodies which were once used as instruments of unrighteousness, and in those they will be judged. Those hands once stretched forth in sinful acts; those feet once swift to shed blood; that tongue once used for deceit; those lips under which were once the poison of asps; that mouth once full of cursing and bitterness; those once wanton eyes; all those guilty members will be there to testify to the righteous judgment which consigns the resurrected sinner to eternal death; an endless, unchanging, unmitigated state of misery and despair. . . .

What unhappy recognitions will there be in that day! The deceived and the deceiver will meet again; the betrayed and the betrayer; the murdered and the murderer. No alibi can be proven; no change of venue allowed; no advocate will hold a brief for an accused client; no suborned witnesses will testify to an innocence which does not exist. The throne before which they are arraigned is great, it is insurmountable; it is white, it is set in perfect righteousness, and the Judge at whose presence the heaven and earth flee away, who is He? It is the One who stood before Pilate's judgment seat; the One who patiently endured the mocking, the scourging and the spitting of His wicked creatures. . . . The prisoners are disposed before the throne. Antediluvians and postdiluvians are there; unbelievers of every form, and from every clime. Those who were great in that world which has passed away, and those who were of no repute. All the past history of every child of Adam will be found recorded in the books as they are opened; and then it will not be a chain of circumstantial evidence, forged link by

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61 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 307-308.

62 Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, pg. 167.

link, but positive and conclusive. The names are not found written in the Lamb's book of life, if so they would not have been among the dead; they are cast into the lake of fire. Their bodies had been in death, their souls had been in hades, both death and hades are emptied into the lake of fire.

No words can equal the intensity of meaning conveyed in this brief announcement. There they have stood on the page of sacred writ in all their terse and awful import, for well nigh nineteen centuries; and there they will stand till the end of time, warning passengers on the broad and easy road of the place to which it leads. No superfluous words cloud the meaning, or permit another interpretation; there is no ambiguity, no uncertainty; a child cannot misunderstand them, nor an infidel disavow them; and the remorse which those will know, who, having learned God's purpose of judgment through His word, and with careless indifference disregarded it, will be profound; will be unremitting; will be eternal.<sup>63</sup>

We close this discussion of Revelation chapter 20 with this sobering thought: "The only revelation that has been given concerning the eternal state recognizes two destinies only: one of blessedness in the presence of the Lord, the other of eternal punishment."<sup>64</sup> Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18).*

## **APPENDIX**

### **Rev. 20:1-6**

Now it is much disputed, whether this description is to be understood figuratively or literally. This however does not appear to me to be the proper question; and I again lament, that some of the advocates of Millenarian doctrine, by thus taking up the subject, have given their opponents *another* advantage. I am persuaded, that it is a passage which is both figurative and symbolical, and that it cannot be successfully defended on the ground of a strictly literal interpretation. But admitting it to be figurative, the question which then presents itself for discussion is,--What is intended to be *signified* by this figure? To which I answer, that the thing signified is, in the *plainest* and most *literal sense*,--THE FIRST RESURRECTION. I maintain that the words, "*This is the first Resurrection,*" are expository, and intended to be literally understood; which, I think, may be clearly demonstrated.

In order to prove this I observe, that the Apocalypse is figurative throughout; with the exception, that there are incidental passages of a literal character, such as are necessarily interwoven with

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63 J. H. McNairn, *The Apocalypse. A Dissertation Thereon*, pp. 226 -229.

64 Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pg. 310.



all prophecies, and without which they could have no definite meaning or application: and with the further exception also--that there is disposed throughout the Book a complete series of explanatory indices, which, like buoys and lighthouses at sea, are intended to afford us special intimation of our bearings. I will instance some, and terminate with the passage in question, marking what I consider to be literal expository matter in italic letters.

"The seven stars *are the angels of the seven churches.*"--Chap. i. 20.

"There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, *which are the seven Spirits of God.*"--iv. 5.

"In the midst of the elders stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, *which are the seven Spirits of God.*"--v. 8. See also Zechariah iii. 9, and iv. 16.

"The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, *which are the prayers of saints.*"--v. 8.

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"--"*These are they which came out of THE great tribulation, &c.*"--vii.13-16.

"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, &c." "*These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth.*"--xi. 3, 4. See also Zechariah iv. 2, 3, & 11-14.

"Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, *which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, &c.*"--xi. 8.

"I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the dragon, beast, and false prophet.--*For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, &c.*"--xvii. 13, 14.

"The ten horns which thou sawest--*are ten kings.*"--xvii. 12.

"The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, *are peoples, multitudes, and nations, and tongues,*"--xvii. 15.

"The woman which thou sawest *is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*"--xvii. 18.

"The fine linen *is the righteousness of saints.*"--xix. 8.

"The testimony of Jesus *is the spirit of prophecy.*"--xix. 10.

"The dragon, that old serpent, *which is the devil and Satan.*"--xx. 2.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, &c.--*This is the first resurrection.*"--xx. 4, 5.

Now, without going further, it is clear to me, that this last example is of the same nature with the former; and the expository clauses must necessarily have a reference to something plain and

obvious to all, or to subjects which were, or ought to have been familiar to believers, or they would not serve the purpose of explanatory marks. I conclude therefore by asking, what could the index "*This is the first Resurrection*" point to? What notion could those to whom these things were revealed have had upon the subject, unless it was derived from those very texts of Scripture, to which I have appealed in defence of the doctrine of THE FIRST RESURRECTION?<sup>65</sup>

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65 Brooks, *Essays*, pp. 67-69.