

Revelation 20 - Binding of Satan; Millennial Kingdom; Gog/Magog Uprising; Great White Throne Judgment

IV. After These Things (Rev 4:1—22:21)

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Revelation 20

(3) After the Tribulation (20:1—22:21)

(a) Kingdom (20:1-10)

(i) Satan: The Great Chain (20:1-3)

(a) The Prisoner (20:1-2)

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a greatchain in his hand.

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- "Then" - supports the idea of chronological sequence; it implies a continuation of the events John had just revealed in Rev 19 (Armageddon and the Second Coming)

- "...angel" - after Jesus throws the Beast and False Prophet into *Gehenna*, He sends a nameless, common angel (not even an archangel) to do away with Satan

— Not to disparage the angel, but it didn't take God Himself to bind Satan...an angel did it (without a struggle)

— This angel is among the rank of "common" angel, the lowest order of celestial beings; yet, he will be able to bind a cherub who was the "anointed cherub" (Ezek 28:14), who sealed "up the sum in wisdom and beauty" (Ezek 28:12)

— Angels are the lowest form of celestial beings, with Michael being the archangel. Above angels are seraphs/seraphim, and above them are cherubs/cherubim. Satan was created a cherub, superior to both angels and seraph

- "...key" - this nameless angel was equipped with the tools for the spiritual police action in which he was commanded

— This suggests that absolute authority and control over the bottomless pit had been delegated to him

— This is probably the same key to lock or unlock the shaft that leads down into the abyss as in 9:1 (Cf. Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7)

- "...abyss" - *aboussso*, the "abyss" or "bottomless pit"; a place of incarceration for fallen angels (Cf. 9:1,2,11); this will be the fifth abode of Satan

— The Antichrist originally came out of the *aboussso* (11:7; 17:8)

— This is not *Hades/Sheol* or *Gehenna*; the *aboussso* is the prison in which fallen spirits are detained before their final judgment (Luke 8:31)

— In Rev 9, this is where the demon locusts originated from, which were the fallen angels from Gen 6 (see notes on Rev 9:1-3)

- "...great chain" - *megas halysis*, a "mega" chain

2 And he took hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

2 He captured the dragon, that ancient serpent, also known as the Devil and Satan, and tied him up for a thousand years.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

- After throwing the Antichrist and False Prophet alive into the Lake of Fire, it is logical that Jesus should next deal with Satan

— Previously God cast Satan out of heaven, to the earth (12:9); this is now the end of Satan's "short time" in which God allowed him to wreak havoc on the earth (12:12)

— Today, Satan has considerable freedom to attack God's people and oppose his work (Cf. 2;13; 3:9; Eph 2:2; 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8)

— It's important to realize that Satan is not a counterpart of Jesus Christ. Satan was created by Jesus...they are not on the same plane.

- "...took hold" - *krateō*, took him into custody; seized him; to exercise power over

— The same word used in Matt 26:50 of the arrest of Christ

— The verbs "took hold" (*ekratesen*, v2), "bound" (*edesen*, v2), "threw" (*ebalen*, v3), "shut" (*ekleisen*, v3), and "sealed" (*esphragisen*, v3) are all in the aorist tense, indicating decisive, completed actions. None of these verbs is in the imperfect tense, which would indicate continuous action in the past until today.

- Four names of Satan:

1. "...the dragon" - *ton drakonta*, sought the life of the Man Child (Rev 12:4); gave his authority to the Antichrist (13:4); this title links him to the political powers of the earth that he seeks to influence.

2. "...serpent of old" - subtlety and poison; recalls deception of Eve in Garden of Eden that brought sin onto the entire human race

3. "...the devil" - denotes in opposition to someone; accuser, slanderer, adversary; attempts to separate God from His people

4. "...Satan" - similar to Devil; adversary; he disputes God's right to rule and seeks to defeat Christ's right to rule

- "...bound him" - to immobilize, to render ineffective; this is what Satan is doing everything in his power to avoid

— God has complete control over evil. He is completely sovereign, even over the Satanic realm.

— Currently, Satan is not bound (contrary to amillennialism); Scripture makes it clear that Satan is currently the ruler of the world

- The only way to view Satan as bound before this point in the future, after the Second Coming, would be to construe his binding as a *restriction* of his activity, not a *cessation* of it
- Satan's confinement to the abyss renders him completely inoperable in the lives of people and a complete termination of his activity on the earth
- This is likely the same binding of the angels in 9:14, which prohibited their movement and activity
- "...a thousand years" - *chilia*, those in early church history who believed in a thousand year rule of God on earth were called "chiliasts"
- These church fathers talked so much about this thousand year kingdom on the earth that they began to call themselves "chiliasts"
- Today we call this belief "premillennialism" which is Latin: *pre*, "before"; *mille*, "thousand", *anum*, "year"; premillennialism is the belief that Jesus returns to earth *before* setting up the thousand year kingdom (Rev 19 comes before Rev 20)
- Against the view of premillennialism is amillennialism, which has been the dominant view in church history since the 4th century
- Amillennialism - the "a" is an alpha privative, a negation (i.e. a-theist); thus, amillennialism is the belief that there will be no future reign of Christ on the earth. This has been the dominant eschatological view of the church since the 4th century (thanks to Augustine), and it is the view of most denominations.
- Rather than waiting for Jesus to return at the Second Advent to start the kingdom, they believe He started the kingdom at His First Advent back in the 1st century. They believe we are living between the two advents of Christ, and the kingdom is on the earth now.
- Post-millennialism is nearly identical to amillennialism, except for the idea of "progress": they believe that the church is going to expand and "Christianize" the entire world. They are going to be so good at "Christianizing" the world that they are going to bring in the kingdom for Christ now, while the King is absent. And they will be so successful at bringing in the kingdom, without the King, that at the end of the kingdom Christ will return and take over from there.
- The desire to spiritualize the text always places the burden of proof on the interpreter. Without objective proof, the result will be a subjective interpretation.
[OT reference: Gen 3:1,13-14; Is 24:21-22]

Names & Titles Demonstrating Satan's Post-Fall, Earthly Authority (Job 1:7; 2:2; Luke 4:5-8; Rom 8:19-22)

- Prince of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
- God of this age (2 Cor 4:4)

- Prince and power of the air (Eph 2:2)
- Who the believer wrestles with (Eph 6:12)
- Roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)
- Whole world lies in his power (1 John 5:19)

Satan's Progressive Defeat

1. Initial eviction from heaven (Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17)
2. Eden (Gen 3:15)
3. Pre-diluvian world (1 Peter 3:19-20)
4. Cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8)
5. Midpoint of the Tribulation (Rev 12:9)
- 6. Beginning of the millennium (Rev 20:2-3)**
7. End of the millennium (Rev 20:10)

Is Satan Bound Today?

The Bible states that Satan is from a high order of angelic beings and was created good (Ezek 28:12,15). He is the supreme illustration of good gone wrong. He heads an army of rebel angels, that is, demons, whose moral nature is like that of their king (9:11).

Amillennialists and Postmillennialists believe Satan was bound at either Jesus' resurrection or His ascension (they can't decide which). They use the following passages to prove this past binding: Matt 12:29; Luke 10:17-18; Mark 3:27; John 12:31-32; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8. Their supreme example, Matt 12:29, is an event when Jesus cast out one demon from one person. Augustine saw Christ's binding of the strong man in His first coming (Mark 3:27) as the binding of Satan in Rev 20:2. If Satan had been bound completely at that event, then all demon-possessed individuals should have been delivered simultaneously. However, many remained demon-possessed in the gospel period, during the apostles' ministry, and today.

There is no statement in the Gospels or Acts that Satan was bound in the past. In fact, the Bible clearly teaches that Satan is extremely active in the present age.

- He snatches the Word of God from unbelieving hearers of the gospel before it can take root (Matt 13:19; Luke 8:12)
- He mixes truth with error (Matt 13:25-28)
- He entered Judas and influenced him to betray Christ (Luke 22:3; John 13:37)
- He sought to sift Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31)
- He tells lies (John 8:44)

- He filled the heart of Ananias and influenced him to lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3)
- He sent a messenger to buffet the apostle Paul (2 Cor 12:7)
- He thwarted Paul from traveling to Thessalonica (1 Thess 2:18)
- He has unbelievers under his dominion (Acts 26:18)
- He tempts believers (1 Cor 7:5)
- He seeks to take advantage of believers (2 Cor 2:11)
- He is called the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4)
- He blinds the minds of the unbelieving (2 Cor 4:4)
- He seeks to deceive believers as he did with Eve (2 Cor 11:13)
- He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14)
- He is at work in unbelievers to influence them to live as they do (Eph 2:2)
- He seeks to deceive believers as he battles against them (Eph 6:11-12)
- He morally deceives and traps unbelievers (2 Tim 2:26)
- He holds unbelievers captive to do his will (2 Tim 2:26)
- He prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8)
- He is the father of those who practice sin (1 John 3:8-10)
- He holds unbelievers in his power (1 John 5:19)
- He deceives the nations (12:9)
- He is called the "accuser of the brethren" (12:10) because he is always calling on God to banish Christians because of their sins

How could Satan be bound yet be so active at the same time? The Amillennialist/Postmillennialist answer to this question is that Satan and his power have been "greatly reduced" and he has been "bound in some sense" in this present age. They also state that, "The binding of Satan does not entail the cessation of his activity (Cf. 1 Peter 5:8), but it does mean that he is no longer able to prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations." However, this belief runs completely counter to Scripture (Cf. Matt 13). If Satan is bound today, why was he dwelling in Pergamum, where his throne was (2:13)?

Satan's regular way of working is to deceive and get people to err without any suspicion that what they are thinking and doing is not right. He plays on their pride, willfulness, unrealism, addictions, stupidities, and temperamental flaws to induce all forms of mental and moral folly—fantasies, cults, idolatries, unbelief, misbelief, dishonesty, infidelity, cruelty, exploitation, and everything else that degrades and

dehumanizes God's image-bearers. Love, wisdom, humility, and pure-heartedness—four basic components of Christlikeness—are special objects of his attack. That is why 20:1-3 should be a real encouragement to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. The passage teaches that a time is coming, namely, the millennial age, when Satan's activities in the world will cease.

We look at this broken world and ask: What if Satan's evil and opposition were removed from earth forever? What would it be like to no longer be surrounded by the devastation of sin? When Jesus comes back, every believer will live in His visible, powerful presence.

(b) The Prison (20:3)

3 and he threw him into **theabyss** and **shut *it* and sealed *it*** over him, so that he would **not deceive the nations any longer**, until **the thousand years** were completed; after these things he **must be released for a short time**.

3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

3 He threw him into the bottomless pit, locked it, and sealed it over him to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were over. After that, he must be set free for a little while.

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

- "...abyss" - *aboussso*, the place where Satan will be chained and incarcerated for 1000 years (see note on v1)

- "...shut *it* and sealed *it*" - the three-fold means of incarceration (chaining, imprisonment, sealing) is a guarantee that the dragon will be helpless to deceive the nations during the thousand years

— This phase of punishment does not include suffering, which will come later

— Satan had his minions "seal" Jesus' tomb to keep His body in the grave (Matt 27:66); some type of mark or object was used to prevent it from being opened. Their effort was futile.

— In this case, an angel will seal the prison of Satan, and he will be completely powerless and without influence for 1000 years

- "...not deceive the nations any longer" - the purpose for Satan's incarceration; prior to this time, Satan will be deceiving the entire world (Cf. 12:9; 13:14; 16:13-14)

— During the Messianic Kingdom, Satan will be inactive. There will be no such thing as satanic or demonic influence. All sin during the Kingdom period will originate from the

sin-nature of man.

— This is conclusive proof that we are not in the kingdom period now, because it's indisputable that Satan is deceiving the nations of the world today

— "the nations" - the nations that are now freed from Satan's deceptive ploys are not the same nations as those Christ destroyed at His Second Coming (19:11-21). They will be a new crop of nations emerging from the faithful mortals who populate the millennial kingdom at its inauguration.

- "...the thousand years" - *chilia ete*, where the term "chiliastic" comes from; this duration is specified 6x in this chapter. How many times does God need to say it before it is true?

— Amillennialism believes the millennium has already begun. If so, Satan's chain is too long...

— They have come up with multiple reasons why they take the 1,000 allegorically.

These include:

1. The time span "thousand years" doesn't occur elsewhere in the NT eschatological passages
2. Revelation is a symbolic book, so "one thousand" must be taken symbolically
3. One thousand is 10^3 and denotes "fullness"
4. There is no mention of Jews, Israel, Jerusalem, or the Temple in Rev 20, so the one thousand years could not be literal
5. Inappropriate allegorical interpretations of Ps 50:10; 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8 are the "legs" that those who allegorize "a thousand years" in Rev 20:1-10 stand on. They believe that "thousand" is non-literal in these passages, thus it must also be non-literal in v1-10. However, not only does this argument ignore the six reasons below for taking "thousand" literally in v1-10 (see note: **Reasons for Understanding "a thousand years" Literally** below), it also misinterprets each of these passages:

Ps 50:10: "For every animal of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. This verse is written in the genre of Hebrew poetry. Unlike the poetry that Westerners are accustomed to, Jewish poetry rhymed *ideas* rather than *sounds*. Therefore, the Jews employed parallelism in their poetry. Thus, both clauses in any given verse must be understood together or in harmony with one another. Ps 50:10 represents a subset of Hebrew poetry called synonymous Hebrew parallelism, where the second line restates the same idea found in the first line, but in different words. In such a context, "thousand" is obviously symbolic and non-literal since it is restating the notion that every beast of the forest belongs to the Lord through the figurative use of "thousand." In other words, we know that "thousand" in Ps 50:10 is

non-literal/figurative because both the context, and synonymous Hebrew parallelism, demands it.

Ps 90:4: For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or *like* a watch in the night.

In the same way, it is futile to argue for a symbolic meaning of "one thousand years" in Rev 20:1-10 on the basis of Ps 90:4. This verse does not say that a thousand years are a day. Rather it points to God's transcendence in respect to time.

2 Peter 3:8: But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. In this verse, Peter is alluding to Ps 90:4. The context of the passage is that God is outside of time, and it has no bearing on Him. His primary objective in history is not to adhere to some schedule, but rather that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Peter is making the point that what appears to be a delay from man's perspective is not a delay from God's perspective, and everything is going exactly according to His plan. So to take "a thousand years" here literally, when it is clearly figurative, and take "a thousand years" in Rev 20:1-10 as figurative, when it is clearly literal, is to completely botch Bible interpretation to fit a preconceived narrative or theology.

— Paul was certain that Satan was loose (Eph 6:10ff); John agreed with him (2:13; 3:9)

— He was cast out of heaven in 12:9; now he is cast off the earth

- It's interesting that at Gadera (Mark 5; Luke 8) when Jesus encountered the demoniac who had the legion:

— The demons recognized Him before He presented Himself publicly. They asked if He was going to torment them before their time because they knew their destiny was in the *Aboussou*, but they didn't want to go there yet if they could avoid it. So they petitioned for Him to put them in the swine, and He obliged.

— Why did Jesus do this? Maybe so that we'd recognize that these are real beings...not some psychiatric disorder. They are very powerful beings, but nevertheless are subject to Him.

- "...must be released" - *dei*, means that Satan's release is a divine necessity. Why must Satan be loosed for a short period of time?

— The final answer on why God sees Satan's temporary future release as a necessity, which will spark another worldwide rebellion against God, is hidden in the counsels of God (Cf. 1:1; 4:1; Is 55:8; Mark 8:31; 13:7; Luke 24:26,44).

— Yet one purpose may be that through his future release, and the resulting worldwide rebellion against Christ, it will be evident that even after 1000 years of imprisonment, Satan is still evil to the core and incurably wicked.

— It will also be crystal clear that man's heart, because of his sin nature, are still perverse enough to allow him to gather an army of immense size to rebel against and attempt to overthrow a perfectly fair and just political, economic, environmental, and judicial system. See additional notes on v7

- "...a short time" - *mikron chronon*, "a little time"; this is different than the "short time" (*oligon kairon*, 12:12) for Satan on the earth after his permanent expulsion from heaven (3-1/2 years)

— If John/Holy Spirit wanted to communicate the length of Satan's binding in the abyss or the length of the millennial kingdom, he easily could've used a generalization, such as here, rather than give an explicitly definite period of time

— If John/Holy Spirit wanted to communicate a very large symbolic number, why did he not use 144,000 (7:1ff; 14:1ff), 200,000,000 (9:16), "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (5:11), or an incalculably large number (7:9)?

— The fact is that no number in Revelation is verifiably a symbolic number. On the other hand, non-symbolic (literal) use of numbers is the rule:

- the churches, seals, trumpets, and bowls are all literally seven in number
- the three unclean spirits of 16:13 are actually three in number
- the three angels connected with the three last woes (8:13) add up to a total of three
- the seven last plagues amount to exactly seven
- the equivalency of 1,260 days and three and a half years necessitate a non-symbolic understanding of both numbers
- the twelve apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel are literally twelve (21:12-14)
- the seven churches are in seven literal cities

— Textual confirmation to interpret a single number in Revelation as symbolic is impossible

Amillennialism suffers from a suspicious peculiarity. It appears to mean little or nothing in the life of the Church. Where is the joy, the comfort, the triumph of knowing that Satan is bound, even if only partially? Who is thrilled about living in the millennium? When and where are we told about its blessing and its power? Churches that embrace amillennialism live in a state of near if not complete eschatological unawareness.

1,000 Years

Most of the information regarding the conditions of the millennial kingdom have already been anticipated and explained in prior Scripture, especially the OT. Yet, v1-10 provides an important detail since it is the only passage that specifies the kingdom's duration of

1,000 years. Here, John makes six references to the kingdom's 1,000 year length. See also: [The Coming Kingdom 35_The Millennial Kingdom - Part 2 \(Rev 20:1-10\)](#).

Reasons for Understanding "a thousand years" Literally

1. It is the plain statement of the text six times! It is doubtful that any symbolic number, if there is such a thing, is ever repeated so many times.
2. John knows how to use indefinite concepts when he wants to. In v8, John uses the simile "*like the sand of the seashore*" to describe the number of those involved in the final rebellion. Yet such a conspicuous figurative expression is absent in any of John's six uses of "a thousand years." Moreover, John, in v3 says Satan will be released for "a short time" (*mikros chronos*). Had John wanted to indicate the Millennium will last "a long time" it would have been very easy for him to do so. In fact, other biblical writers use the expression "a long time" (*polys chronos*). For example, Matthew employs it in order to depict the lengthy yet chronologically undefined period of time between Christ's advents (Matt 25:19). Here, however, John does not employ either of these expressions but instead provides a specific number.
3. The mention of "a thousand years" is not limited to the binding of Satan. John received the information by direct revelation apart from the symbols of v4,5,6).
4. In the rest of the Greek NT, when a number is associated with the word "year" or "years" this linguistic combination always refers to a literal duration of time. Why should the six-fold repetition of the 1,000 years found in v1-10 be the sole interpretive exception to this rule?
5. If the number "one thousand" here is not literal, how then do we interpret all of the other numbers in the Book of Revelation? What do we do with two witnesses (11:3), 7,000 people (11:13), four angels (7:1), seven angels (8:6), 144,000 Jews (7:4), 12,000 from each tribe (7:5-8), 24 elders (4:4), 42 months (11:2), and 1,260 days (11:3)? Thus, not taking "thousand" literally in v1-10 casts suspicion upon every other number in Revelation, thereby rendering them non-sensical and meaningless.

6. While Revelation is a symbolic book, not everything in the book is a symbol. Generally, when the author wants us to take something symbolically he tells us so. For example, we do not take the woman in Rev 17 literally, because the last verse in the chapter tells us that the woman represents a city (17:18). Thus, an overt clue is given to alert the reader to the fact that a non-literal interpretation of the woman is intended. The same can be said of the dragon or the serpent, who is interpreted as Satan within the immediate context (20:2). However, in Rev 20, "thousand" is listed over and over again with nothing in the text telling us that anything but a literal number is in view.

*It is anti-chiliastic (anti-premillennial) prejudice and party loyalty, not biblical exegesis, that continues to provide the impetus for scholars to engage in hermeneutical experimentation to find excuses to ignore the clear teaching of this text. In terms of the traditional interpretation of the thousand years as a literal reality, whether in the a- or pre- or post- millennial sense of the word, no other view than the premillennial is possible for an exegesis that puts scripture above the harmonistic demands of doctrine or tradition. [Harry R. Boer, amillennial scholar, *The Reward of the Martyrs*, 7.]*

The Basis for Belief in the Messianic Kingdom

[Messianic Kingdom: Basis for Belief, Characteristics, Government, Israel's Role, Gentiles](#)

The basis for the belief in a Messianic Kingdom is two-fold: (1) there are the unfulfilled promises of the Jewish covenants, promises that can only be fulfilled in a Messianic Kingdom, and (2) there are numerous unfulfilled prophecies of the Jewish prophets.

1. The four unconditional, unfulfilled covenants that God made with Israel, and the unfulfilled prophecies of the Jewish prophets.
 - The covenants are unconditional and so rely solely on God for their fulfillment, not on Israel. Since God is One who keeps His promises, they must be fulfilled in the future, only within the framework of a Messianic Kingdom.
 - The first of these is the Abrahamic Covenant, which promised an eternal seed developing into a nation that will possess the Promised Land with some definite borders. While that nation—the Jews—continues to exist, never in Jewish history have they possessed all of the Promised Land. For this promise to be fulfilled, there must be a future Kingdom. Besides, the possession of the Land was not merely promised to Abraham's seed, but to Abraham personally when God said, "to you will I give it, and to your seed forever" (Gen 13:15). For God to fulfill His promise to Abraham (as well as to Isaac and Jacob), there must be a future Kingdom.

- The second covenant is the Land Covenant, which spoke of a worldwide regathering of the Jews and repossession of the Land following their dispersion. While the dispersion has already occurred and is in effect today, the regathering and repossession of the Land still awaits fulfillment in the future. This, too, requires a future Kingdom.
- The Davidic Covenant is the third covenant, and it promised four eternal things: An eternal house (dynasty), an eternal throne, an eternal kingdom, and an eternal Person. The Dynasty became eternal because it culminated in a Person Who is Himself eternal: Jesus the Messiah. For that reason the Throne and Kingdom will be eternal as well. But Jesus has not yet sat on the Throne of David ruling over a Kingdom of Israel. The re-establishment of the Davidic Throne and Messiah's rule over the Kingdom still awaits a future fulfillment and thus requires a future kingdom.
- The last of these covenants is the New Covenant, which spoke of the national regeneration and salvation of Israel, encompassing each individual Jewish member of that nation. This, too, awaits its final fulfillment and requires a future kingdom.

2. Unfulfilled OT prophecies

- There are numerous prophecies of the OT that speak of the coming of the Messiah who will reign on David's Throne, and rule over a peaceful Kingdom (Ps 2; 24; 72; 96; Is 2; 9:6-7; 11-12; 63:1-6; 65-66; Jer 23:5-6; 30:8-11; Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:1-8; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 8:1-8; 14:1-9; Matt 19:28; 25:31-46; Acts 15:16-18; Rom 11:25-27; Jude 14-15; Rev 2:25-28). There is a great amount of material in the OT pertaining to the Messianic Kingdom, and the belief in a Messianic Kingdom rests on the basis of a literal interpretation of this material. It is in light of this extensive material that it is possible to understand why so much of the book focuses on the Great Tribulation and so little on the Millennium.

There are two things about the Messianic Kingdom that were not revealed in the OT:

1. The length of the Messianic Kingdom. While the OT prophets foresaw a long period of time of a peaceful messianic reign, they did not reveal just how long this would last. To answer this question, Revelation states that it will be exactly one thousand years.

2. The circumstances by which the Kingdom would come to an end and how this would lead into the Eternal Order. This is also revealed in Revelation. These two items are all that Rev 20 added to the knowledge of the Messianic Kingdom. The belief in a Messianic Kingdom does not rest on this passage, but is based on the numerous prophecies of the OT prophets.

While much of the material in Rev 4-19 is found scattered in the pages of the OT, it is impossible to place these events in chronological sequence using only the OT. The Revelation provides the framework by which this can be done. On the other hand, all of the various features and facets of the Messianic Kingdom have already been revealed in the OT. It portrays the general characteristics of life in the Kingdom, which do not raise the problem of an order of sequence. Hence, there was no reason to spend a great deal of time on the Messianic Kingdom in the Book of Revelation. Most of what was needed to be revealed was already known from the OT.

The Messianic Kingdom: The Reign of Christ on Earth

- The promise of the angel Gabriel to Mary will at last be fulfilled: "The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33).
- The age-long request of the Church, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10) will finally be granted.
- The promise of Jesus to His own will be honored, "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5)
- The apostles' question, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6), will be answered
- Creation
 - The earth they inherit will be changed from its present condition (Is 35)
 - Environmental crimes will be righted, and beauty will reign in nature (Is 30:23-25; 35:1-10)
 - The deserts will flower as new streams of water appear, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, and the lame will leap for joy (Is 35)
 - The lion will lie down with a lamb (Is 11:6), and all nature will be fruitful, benign and filled with wonder
 - All of nature and all mankind will look to God, lean on God, and delight in God (Is 42:1-12; 60; 65:17-25; Joel 2:24-29)
- Nation of Israel

- Israel will be converted (Rom 11:26) and returned to her land (Is 14:1), and her temple and rituals shall be restored (Ezek 40-48)
- Jerusalem
 - The Lord Jesus Christ will dwell in Jerusalem (Zech 8:3), and the nations will call that city, "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Is 60:14; Cf. 2:3; Ps 2:6; 48:2; 110:2) and "the City of Truth" (Zech 8:3)
 - This King will be characterized by a love of righteousness and a hatred for lawlessness (Heb 1:8-9)
- Rule of Christ
 - The redeemed from all ages will be associated with the Lord Jesus in His reign (v4-6)
 - The United Nations will not be trying to solve differences between nations with conflicting political philosophies and ideologies. The millennium will be a "Christocracy," wherein the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16) will rule the nations with a "rod of iron" (19:15). He will rule with complete power and complete authority.
 - All dissension among nations will be removed and war will not exist (Is 2:4)
 - A time when the great anointed Son of David will judge and rule the earth (Is 11:1-9), treating all classes of people fairly and immediately crushing all wickedness
 - The poor and needy will be given protective care (Ps 72:4,12-13)
 - People will sleep without weapons in their laps (Is 32:14-20)
 - Every human being will be tenderly guarded (Is 42:3)
 - Truth will be exalted in every phase of the kingdom; the King will "faithfully bring forth justice" (Is 42:3)
 - God's moral standards will be imposed on all society (Is 32:5; 40:4; 42:3; Mal 4:4)
 - Ps 15:1-5 describes the righteousness that will characterize a citizen (most, but not all) in the Kingdom
 - Jesus the King will be characterized by a love of righteousness and a hatred for lawlessness (Heb 1:8-9)
 - The Messiah will rule (19:15), and everyone will be held responsible for his or her actions (Ezek 18:3-29)
 - There will be no warfare; it will be an era of worldwide peace (Ps 46:9; Micah 4:3)

- Disease and deformity will be divinely controlled, and the length of human life will be greatly prolonged (Is 33:24; 35:5-6; 65:20-22)
- Everything worthwhile in human life will be fostered (Is 42:3)
- All international power will be vested in Jesus Christ, who will judge between the nations (Is 2:2,4)
- The moral virtue of truth will be exalted in every phase of the kingdom. In contrast to the rulers of today—who seem to justify any sort of untruth on the ground of political expediency—the coming King will “faithfully bring forth justice” (Is 42:3).

Two kinds of people will be living on the earth at that time:

1. Resurrected, glorified, immortal people of God, who will walk the earth in sinless perfection with bodies like that of the glorified Christ (Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2)
2. Living Tribulation Saints who came to Christ during the Tribulation, and were not martyred or killed in the midst of the judgments. These will enter the millennium without resurrection bodies. Life for them will continue with the natural processes of marriage (Jer 33:11), procreation, birth (Zech 8:5), and growth (Is 60:22).

Children born to the second group during this time will be sinners just as today, with sinful natures and sinful tendencies; they will need to turn to Christ for salvation or be lost in their sins. No doubt part of the work of those who will reign with Christ will be to evangelize the nations. This helps explain why Satan will be released at the end of the millennium.

(ii) Saints: The Great Reign (20:4-6)

(a) The Resurrection of the Just (20:4a)

(b) The Resurrection of the Unjust (20:4b-6)

4 Then I saw **thrones**, and **they** sat on them, and **judgment was given** to them. And I *saw* the **souls** of those who had been **beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus** and because of the word of God, and those **who had not worshiped the beast** or his image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands; and they **came to life** and **reigned with Christ** for a thousand years.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

4 Then I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or hands. They came back to life and ruled with the Messiah for a thousand years.

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

- "Then" - another in a chronological sequence of visions John had in 19:11—20:6; this parallels the eschatological chronology of Dan 7:

- "...thrones" - plural; these are the thrones of believers who will be ruling and reigning with Christ, under His delegated authority, throughout the millennial kingdom (Cf. Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:2-3; Rev 3:21; compare 1:6 with 5:10)

- v6 adds that those who will sit on these thrones will be priests of God and Christ, and again confirmed that they will reign with Christ for 1000 years

- In the Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-27) Jesus spoke of differences in authority in the kingdom. Some will have authority over 10 cities (v17), others over five cities (v19), etc. Apparently the authority granted to them will be during the millennial kingdom, and be dependent on the extent of their faithfulness in this present life.

- "...they sat" - *ekathisan*, the difficulty of this verse is in identifying the occupants of these thrones, since no specifics are given

- The antecedent for "they" are the Lamb's "bride" (19:7-8) and the "armies" who return with Christ (19:14). Both groups represent raptured Church Age believers, although the "armies" likely includes the angelic realm, who will not be seated on thrones during the millennium

- Those who win a war (even though the armies have no weapons and do not actively participate) become the ones who assume rulership over the conquered entity

- In addition, to be enthroned one must have already been bodily resurrected and judged/rewarded, which this bride/army will have been by this time

- If you understand the incarceration of Satan (v1-3) as a parentheses, His army last mentioned in 19:19, the correlation is more obvious

- Ruling and reigning with Christ is the promise given to Christ's bride earlier in the book (Cf. 2:26-28; 3:12,31).

- Scholars and others have put forward various other options for "they" but all can be fairly easily discounted:

- 24 Elders - but the absence of this specific group from the context here, and the absence of a specific number of thrones (24), point to another group
 - Tribulation martyrs - the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs does not occur until later in v4. To identify them with the verb *ekathisan* here would make that verb repetitious.
 - Apostles & some saints (with Christ?) - based on Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor 6:2-3 some identify the occupants of the thrones as the 12 apostles and some saints, with the possibility of Christ included. However, the absence of any mention of the apostles or other believers makes these groups unlikely as well.
- "...judgment was given" - indicates those to whom the right has been given to serve as judges, not those in whose favor judgment is given
- As is common throughout Revelation, *edothē* (BLB = *didōmi*, "was given") is an action by God. It is the Father who gives the right to judge to these resurrected/raptured believers.
- This is the moral judgment of living humanity referred to by Paul in 1 Cor 6:2. This is not a judgment determinative of eternal destiny, but rather of authorization to take charge of the domain of the defeated beast.
- "...souls" - John did not see resurrected bodies as in v12 at the Great White Throne, but rather the souls of those not yet resurrected
- He subsequently saw these souls' bodies come to life (the resurrection of Tribulation Saints), but here they are seen in a pre-resurrection state, like that of the multitudes in heaven (7:15)
- However they are ready to be resurrected because the full number of those martyred has now been completed (Cf. 6:11), and their deaths have now been avenged
- "...beheaded" - *pepelekismenōn*, the method of martyrdom for many of the Tribulation Saints
- These martyrs were previously mentioned under the 5th Seal (6:9-11; Cf. 18:24; 19:2)
- "...because of their testimony of Jesus" - the testimony in which Jesus bore; earlier references to martyrdom give the same or similar reason (Cf. 6:9; 12:17). John himself was persecuted for the same reason (1:9).
- "...who had not worshipped the beast" - those who refused allegiance to the beast and the mark of necessity gave up their lives (Cf. 13:15)
- Most interpreters believe this refers to Tribulation Saints who were not martyred, but rather died from natural causes or are killed by one of the many judgments or natural catastrophes
- It certainly cannot refer to living believers who make it through the Tribulation alive because earlier in the verse it says John saw their "souls" and later in the verse it says

they were resurrected

- "...came to life" - *zaō*, ingressive aorist tense best translated as "came to life"; it means to live, breathe; not lifeless or dead

— We know from Dan 12:2 that at the end of time, there will be two great resurrections, one "to everlasting life" (first resurrection) and the other "to disgrace and everlasting contempt" (second resurrection)

— This final phase of the first resurrection is the "gleanings" (Paul explains the various phases in the first resurrection in 1 Cor 15:20-23; see notes there)

— The following people groups will be part of this final phase of the first resurrection, which will happen after the Second Advent and before the inauguration of the kingdom:

1. OT Saints (Dan 12:2)

2. Tribulation Saints & Martyrs

- Those who were beheaded for their belief in God (6:9-11)
- Those who died for their testimony of Jesus during the Tribulation
- Those who died because of the Word of God (Jesus)
- Those who did not follow the Antichrist's worship system (13:4)
- Those who did not worship the image of the beast (13:15)
- Those who did not take the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead (13:16-18)

- Both Amillennialism and post-Millennialism have a problem with *zaō* because to admit the obvious context and definition of the word here, they would have to acknowledge that the millennium is a future period on earth. To get around this problem, they relate *zaō* in v4 to the regeneration of believers. However, *zaō* cannot refer to the new birth since it refers to them "living" after they were beheaded. They were born again *before* their martyrdom, not *after* it. Also, the term "resurrection" is never used to describe spiritual regeneration.

— The other problem they have is that there is another resurrection at the end of the 1000 years, the (second) resurrection, of unbelievers (v5), where *zaō* is also used. Amillennialists and post-millennialists both understand that resurrection as literal.

— This is how Calvin, Luther, and the Reformed theologians of today interpret this passage, because they have to make the Bible adhere to their preconceived theology. This is how you know you're dealing with false doctrine: when you have to hold to concepts inconsistently.

— There are five reasons *zaō* refers to a bodily resurrection of Tribulation Saints, both those who were martyred and those who died from other causes:

1. The immediate context requires it. In v5 the same verb occurs, and almost everyone concedes that there it means physical resurrection. If v4 is spiritual, then v5 must also be spiritual. On the other hand if v4 is physical, then v5 must also be physical. If not, language can be twisted to mean anything.
 2. The context of the book demands it. In Rev 2:8 *zaō* is used of the physical resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in 13:14 it is used of the beast who was physically wounded and was resuscitated.
 3. Whenever *zaō* is used in the context of physical death in the NT, it always speaks of bodily resurrection (Cf. John 11:25; Acts 1:3; 9:41). *Zaō* is also a frequent way to refer to bodily resurrection elsewhere in Revelation (1:18; 2:8; 13:14; 20:5).
 4. The use of the term "resurrection" (*anastasis*, 20:5) also demands it. This word occurs 42x in the NT, 39x outside this chapter. In 38 of those occurrences it clearly means physical resurrection (Luke 2:34 is the lone exception). The word *anastasis* is never used in the Bible for the continuing existence of the physically dead. It always refers to the elimination of the condition of physical death through bodily resurrection. This strongly suggests that physical resurrection is the meaning intended here.
 5. This is the interpretation of the earliest interpreters of the Revelation. Later interpreters adopted what is called a spiritualizing method of interpretation, that is, the allegorical method.
- "...reigned with Christ" - must be careful to note that the "reigned" (*ebasileusan*) here is limited to the resurrected Tribulation Saints
 - The broader teaching throughout Scripture on this subject (Cf. Dan 7:9,27; Matt 19:28; 1 Cor 6:2; 2 Tim 2:12) might force some to expand the scope of this "reigning" to beyond the martyrs to include all believers. Yet the occupants of the thrones have no need of resurrection from the dead as the martyrs do because they were resurrected at the Rapture of the Church. The martyrs are the last subject of discussion before both *zaō* ("came to life") and *ebasileusan* ("reigned"), thus are the natural subject for both verbs.
 - This, however, does not contradict the correct anticipation that all the faithful will join Christ in His reign, it simply means that not all groups are in view at this point. This reign will occur between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the unrighteous.
 - We should never lose sight of the future that God has for believers (1:6; 5:10)
 - We need to view everything we're going through today, whether good or bad, as "training time for reigning time"

- The more time you think about your future in God, the more it shapes your behavior in the present. If I'm going to rule and reign alongside Jesus one day, maybe I should start acting like a person worthy of this today.
 - The promise of the angel Gabriel to Mary will at last be fulfilled (Luke 1:32-33); the age-long request of the Church (Matt 6:10) will finally be granted. The promise of Jesus to His own will be honored (Matt 5:5).
 - All deceased Tribulation Saints will be resurrected to serve as priests and rulers with Christ for 1,000 years. In exchange for suffering at the hands of the world's ungodly rulers for a brief time, Tribulation Saints will later govern the world for 1,000 years. After ruling during the messianic kingdom, their service will continue into the Eternal State (22:3,5).
 - Over whom will they rule/reign? Verse 4 does not answer this question, but possibly they will rule over Gentiles (and Jews?) who will live through the Tribulation
 - No unbelievers will be alive to enter the kingdom for they will have either been killed in the Battle of Armageddon or they will have faced Christ at the judgment of the nations (Matt 25:31-46), at which time they will be denied entrance into the kingdom.
 - Saved Jews and Gentiles will enter the millennium in natural bodies, will marry and have children, and will carry on normal lives
 - "lived...reigned" - in the aorist (past) tense; contrast with v6 where in the interpretation, the future is used ("they *shall be* priests...and *shall* reign")
- [OT reference: Dan 7:9,22,27; 12:2]

The reign of Christ's assessors or assistants will introduce a change in the world's history. The nations of the earth will be under the administration of immortal rulers whose commands they will be required to obey. There will be a rule "with a rod of iron" (Ps 2:9). There will be a sudden collapse of all the usual haunts of sin, a rooting out of all the nurseries of iniquity, the clearing away of the marshes of crime. The phrases "with Christ" (v4) and "with Him" (v6) suggest that for the first time this earth will have a perfect government.

OT Prophets Describe the Kingdom

The main contribution of Revelation to the millennial kingdom is to give us its length (1000 years). If you want to understand more about the kingdom and the conditions on the earth, you have to consult the OT prophets:

1. Established by God (Dan 2:44)
2. Eternal (Dan 7:27)
3. Christ's direct rule (Zech 9:9-10)

4. Earthly (Zech 14:9)
5. Land promises realized (Gen 15:18-21)
6. Israel's preeminence (Is 49:22-23)
7. Millennial temple (Ezek 40-46)
8. Millennial David reigning as Prince (Jer 30:9)
9. Righteousness (Is 9:6-7)
10. Curse curtailed (Is 65:20,22)
11. Peace (Is 2:4)
12. Prosperity (Amos 9:13-14; Is 65:22)
13. Topographical changes (Ezek 47:1-12)
14. Immediate answers to prayer (Is 65:24)

5 The **rest of the dead** did not **come to life** until the thousand years were completed.
This is the first resurrection.

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.
 This is the first resurrection.

5 The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years were over.
 This is the first resurrection.

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

- "...rest of the dead" - those not included in the four classes that populate the Millennium (see note on v4): unbelievers (v12). These are the wicked who are physically dead.

— They reside in *Hades*, the place of torment, awaiting judgment after the second resurrection. These are the "captives" of 1 Cor 15:23.

— John makes a recognizable distinction: those resurrected at the beginning of the millennium were not all the dead. All dead unbelievers will be resurrected *after* the thousand years.

— These, no doubt, will include the wicked dead and probably those who die during the millennium (which will be exclusively unbelievers)

- "...come to life" - *zaō*, same Greek verb used in v4; *all* interpreters see this instance (v5) as referring to a resurrection (see note on v4)

— If Amillennialism and Post-millennialism take *zaō* literally in v5, why don't they also take it literally in v4, when it's the same verb? If *zaō* is literal at the end of the thousand years, why isn't it literal at the beginning of the thousand years?

- This is how you can identify false doctrine...when you have to switch meanings of words within the same sentence in order to get your system to work, you have . "Came to life" cannot mean regeneration in v4 and mean a resurrection from the dead in v5.
- A consistent literal approach to interpretation would take both resurrections literally, not one to mean regeneration and one to mean resurrection
- "...This is the first resurrection" - the resurrection in v4 of OT saints and Tribulation Martyrs completes the first resurrection (believers only). See 1 Cor 15:20-23 for a more detailed description of the "first resurrection" including the earlier phases (Christ's resurrection, the Rapture, etc.).
- "first" - the first relative to the second (next) resurrection, which is for unbelievers; doesn't mean it's the first resurrection ever because that would discount Christ's resurrection, as well as the Rapture
- "resurrection" - *anastasis* (not *palingenesia*); amillennialists/post-millennialists believe *anastasis* means regeneration (people getting saved), not a resurrection
- A resurrection is the single point of commonality with other Rapture passages that post-Tribulationism latches on to, and they ignore all of the points of difference
- If you study *anastasis* in the Greek NT, it NEVER means regeneration anywhere it is used. It ALWAYS refers to a resurrection.
- If John wanted to communicate regeneration, he would've used *palingenesia* (literally means "beginning again"). This word is used for regeneration.
- This is the resurrection described in v4; there are two resurrections (see notes: **First Resurrection** and **Second Resurrection** below)
- First ("earlier") Resurrection: the resurrection of the righteous; began with the resurrection of Christ; includes the Rapture, the resurrection of the Two Witnesses, and the resurrection of OT and Tribulation Saints/Martyrs after the Second Coming
- Other terms used of this first resurrection are the "resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), the "resurrection from among the dead" (Luke 20:34-36), the "resurrection of life" (John 5:29), and the "resurrection to everlasting life" (Dan 12:2).
- The resurrections are not "events"...they are "categories"
- When Daniel describes two resurrections (Dan 12:2), he is unaware that there are 1000 years in between the first and second resurrections
- This is how the Holy Spirit has disclosed Bible prophecy in His Word; Daniel could see the two resurrections, but he couldn't see the time period (1000 years) in between the two resurrections
- The Holy Spirit does this type of thing over and over again throughout Scripture:
 - Is 9:6-7: v6a describes the Messiah's birth; v6b-7 describes His kingship over the earth during the millennial kingdom

- Is 61:1-2: v1-2a describes Jesus' first coming; v2b describes His second coming (v1-2a is quoted in Luke 4:16-21)

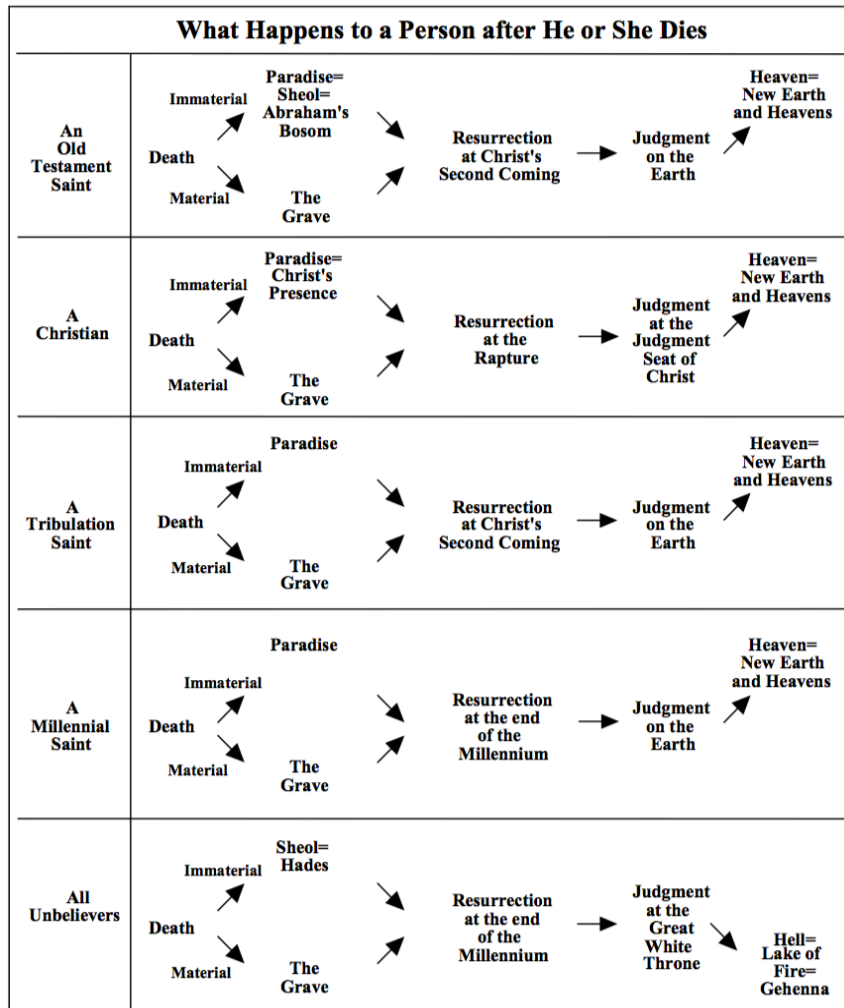
— Other passages that illustrate a significant time gaps include: Dan 2:40-41; 7:7; 9:26-27; 11:35-36

— "first" - here, doesn't mean first ever in history, but rather first in an order when compared to what follows (the second resurrection)

— If this resurrection was the first ever in history, then Jesus never rose from the dead and the Rapture of the Church didn't happen

[OT reference: Is 26:14]

The resurrection of the wicked should cause us no alarm. It is of the nature of humanity to live eternally. The resurrection of Christ, according to 1 Cor 15, is the first fruits. The guarantee of all rising is found in the historical resurrection of Jesus. Paul's discussion of this is in 1 Cor 15:20-28, where the idea of orders of resurrection is found. Each will rise in his own *tagma* (order). Rev 20 merely shows us the outworking of the earlier expectation that Paul had.



6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

6 How blessed and holy are those who participate in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them. They will be priests of God and the Messiah, and will rule with him for a thousand years.

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

- "Blessed" - *makarios*, same word used by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount; this is the fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation (see note: **Seven Beatitudes in Revelation** below)

— This is an "interpretive beatitude"; it's not part of the vision, it interprets the vision
— John gives three blessings for those who take part in the first resurrection:

1. Escape the second death
2. Serve as priests of God and of Christ
3. Reign with Christ for one thousand years

- "...holy" - speaks of the privileged position of those who will participate in the first resurrection, focusing on the priestly position of God's people in the messianic age

— During the messianic kingdom, both the royal and priestly character of God's immortal ones will be evident

- "...first resurrection" - again, *anastasis* (not *palingenesia*); same verb used in v5

— The thrones are literal; the martyrs are literal; Jesus is literal; the resurrection is literal; the thousand years are literal

- "...second death" - the groups of resurrected saints included in the first resurrection will not experience the "second death" (Cf. v14; 21:8)

— The second death is the spiritual death beyond physical death referred to in 2:11; 20:14; 21:8. It is the permanent, eternal separation of the soul from God.

- 1st death = Physical Death = separation of the soul from the body
- 2nd death = Spiritual Death = separation of the soul from God for eternity (second death) (2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8; Jude 12)

- "...has no power" - exemption from the authority of the second death means deliverance from an eternity in the Lake of Fire, separated from God. A considerable privilege that is part of the blessedness of those raised in the first resurrection.

- "...priests of God and of Christ" - this function was referred to earlier in 1:6; 5:10; it will not be the impartation of knowledge, but rather refers to our privilege and unlimited access to, and fellowship with, God

— Those believers who enter the kingdom in their mortal bodies will continue living life under kingdom auspices. They will have children (many of them!) and those children will grow up with their inherent sinful nature, and will need to hear the gospel and be saved.

— Linking God and Christ together, along with Them being worshipped together (5:13), clearly indicates that Christ is regarded as the equal of the Father in Revelation

- "...reign with Him" - whatever ministry the resurrected saints will have to the world (mortals) during this time is not revealed in this passage, other than we will join with Christ in ruling the earth under His delegated authority

— The past tense is used in v4 ("lived," "reigned" - see note there), but here when John is explaining/interpreting what he saw in v4, he uses the future tense

— In other words, in his interpretation John stated that the privileges he saw in the vision of v4 are yet future. This nails down premillennialism air tight.

— When you understand this, it's impossible to see how the thousand years could begin at the death and resurrection of Christ, as amillennialism proposes

- "...a thousand years" - indicates that the priesthood and reign are special and temporary due to the limited duration of this kingdom on the earth (1000 years)

— This does not mean that both (priesthood and reigning) will not continue into the eternal phase of the kingdom (Eternal State), according to 22:3,5

— It is telling that 1000 years is mentioned in both the vision and the interpretation. If the 1000 years were to be interpreted in a spiritualized or allegorical way, John would have said so here.

[OT reference: Ex 19:6; Is 26:19]

Seven Beatitudes of Revelation

1. Blessing upon the reader & heeder of Revelation (1:3)
2. Blessing upon the Tribulation martyrs (14:13)
3. Blessing upon the spiritually prepared (16:15)
4. Blessing upon the Marriage Supper invitees (19:9)
- 5. Blessing upon the participants of the first resurrection (20:6)**
6. Blessing upon the heeder of Revelation (22:7)
7. Blessing upon the citizens of New Jerusalem (22:14)

First Resurrection

- Began with Jesus' resurrection, as the first fruits (1 Cor 15:23-24)
 - Certain OT saints after His resurrection (Matt 27:52-53)
 - First fruits required a plurality (from the Torah); in order to be the first fruits, there had to be more than one resurrection at that time
- [Church Age] —
- Rapture of the Church, before the Tribulation (1 Thess 4:13-18)
- [The Tribulation] —
- Two Witnesses (Rev 11:11)
- [The Second Coming] —
- Martyred Tribulation Saints (Rev 20:4)
 - Tribulation Saints who died for other reasons (not martyred) (Rev 20:4)
 - OT saints (Dan 12:1-3)

- The first resurrection is for those over whom the 2nd death has no power
- 1st resurrection ends at the beginning of the Millennium...v6 is the last event of the 1st resurrection
- John 5:29 - Jesus distinguished between "a resurrection of life" and "a resurrection of judgment"
- Luke 14:14 calls the first resurrection "the resurrection of the righteous"
- Heb 11:35 calls it "a better resurrection"

So if the Rapture occurred at least 7 years before the resurrection of Rev 20:4-6, why does John call this the "first resurrection"?

1 Cor 15:20,23-25:

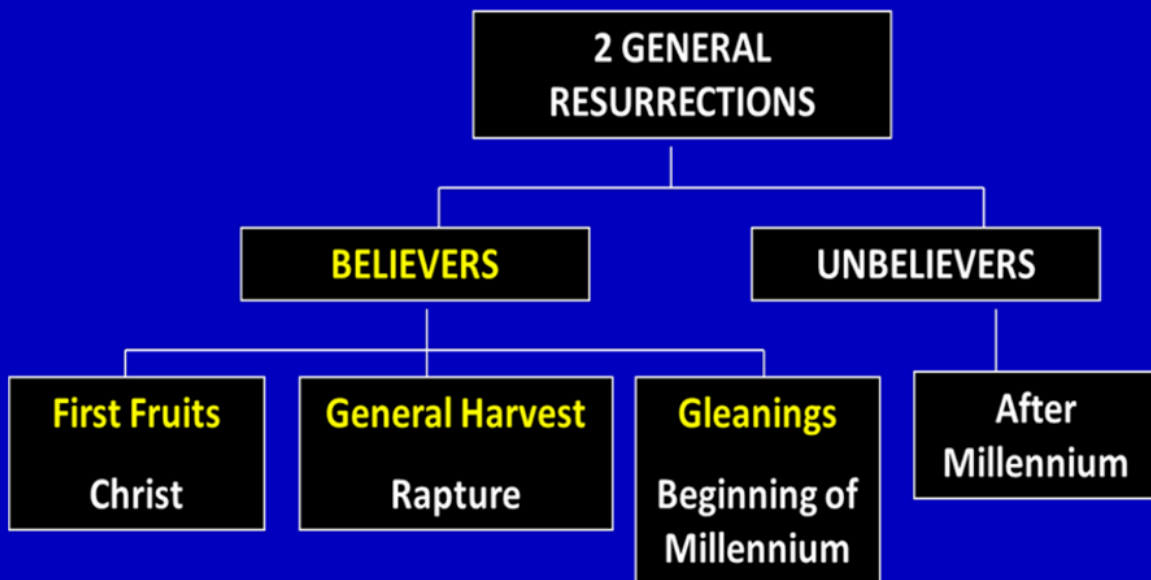
20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who are asleep.

23 But each in his own order: Christ the **first fruits**, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

24 then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

God's Resurrection Program



- First Fruits: the first fruits of the harvest gave everyone hope (guarantee) that the rest of the harvest could soon come
- General Harvest: the primary harvest
- Gleanings: the remaining crops not harvested during general harvest. God always instructed Israel to not harvest everything at this time, but leave some crops behind for the poor.

Christ's resurrection from the dead, just as first fruits, guarantees everyone's future resurrection, either to heaven or hell. This is the Easter message, not that His resurrection proved that He was God (although it did that too). Christ's resurrection guarantees our future resurrection from the dead. It gives us hope that the body we're in, in a state of humility and decay, will one day be replaced with a resurrection, sinless body. We will all live forever somewhere.

Jesus was the first fruits of the first resurrection. The irony is that the Antichrist (the counterfeit "Son") will be allowed to act out the counterfeit role to completion by becoming the first fruits of the second resurrection. However, the result of his resurrection will be *Gehenna* instead of heaven.

Its significance is to be sought in what it results in. Those blessed to be a part of the first resurrection will actually rise at different times, as is the case of Jesus and those who rise at the time of His return. But the consequence of not being susceptible to harm from the second death is what defines the first resurrection. Since there are very few who would disclaim that the second use of the term *ezēsan* in 20:5 does not refer to bodily rising, then a strong suggestion that this is also the case in 20:4 can be made. Both times John speaks of bodily rising.

Second Resurrection

Occurs at the end of the Millennium; includes only non-believers (20:11-14)

It helps to understand that the 1st and 2nd resurrections are two "types" or "phases" of resurrection, not the only two resurrection events. As long as believers are being raised up, the 1st resurrection is in view. If it's non-believers being resurrected, it's the 2nd resurrection.

Rationale for the Rapture

If Jesus was the first fruits of the first resurrection, and if at least some OT saints were resurrected at that time as well (Matt 27:52-53), and if Tribulation Saints who are resurrected at the end of the Great Tribulation 2,000 years later are still part of the first resurrection (20:4-5), why wouldn't the Church also be part of the first resurrection?

After all the Rapture of the Church takes place between the Lord's resurrection and the resurrection of the Tribulation Martyrs, both of whom are part of the first resurrection. Also, in Dan 12:2 the angel spoke about some of Daniel's people (Jews) being resurrected to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan 12:1 tells us this will begin after the end of the Great Tribulation. From our NT understanding, we know that those who are resurrected to everlasting life are part of the first resurrection and those who are resurrected to shame and everlasting contempt are part of the second resurrection, which takes place at the end of the Millennium. And yet the OT believers who came out of their tombs with Jesus are also part of the first resurrection. If it's proper for the resurrection of OT believers to span 2,000 years, why is it not proper for the Church?

It's obvious that not everyone in the first resurrection is raised up at the same time. If He wanted to, the Lord could have resurrected some believers every year for the last 2,000 years and they'd all be part of the first resurrection, because the first resurrection is for those over whom the 2nd death has no power (20:6), not those who come out of their graves at a certain time.

The Final Judgment of Satan

The point of these verses is that God will use Satan in the closing events of world history to demonstrate once and for all the depravity and moral corruption of the human race. In a futile, final attempt to overthrow the purposes of God, Satan will lead all unbelievers who are alive at that time to defy Jesus. Those whose hearts have become hostile to the Lord Jesus will rally with the arch-deceiver, but their end will be swift defeat. What a confirmation of the necessity of eternal punishment; even the 1,000 years Satan is bound in the *abusso* is not enough to destroy the allegiance to Satan held by unbelievers.

(iii) Sinners: The Great Revolt (20:7-10)

(a) The Adversary (20:7)

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be freed from his prison.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

- After the kingdom age (1000 years), Satan is only released because God allows it.

Satan is fully under the power and sovereignty of God.

- "When the thousand years are completed" - continues the chronological progression of these verses, which started in 19:1

— "completed" - *teleō*, brought to fullness or completion

- "...Satan will be released" - before the millennium, when the angel was throwing Satan into the abyss, John wrote that after the 1000 years, Satan "must" (*dei*) be released for a short period of time (v3)

— Notice the future tense of the verb, making this predictive prophecy

— "Must" means "it is necessary" or "a divine imperative"; it is often used with divine destiny or unavoidable fate; a "sad necessity"

— John was not told who would release Satan, or how long the release would take place. Perhaps it will be the same angel who will imprison him at the beginning of the millennium.

- "...his prison" - the *aboussso*, where he was bound and incarcerated during the 1000-year kingdom period (v1-3)

- There are 2 reasons for the "sad necessity" of Satan's brief release:

1. To demonstrate that neither his plans nor his nature have changed after his 1,000 year imprisonment
 - A long prison term sometimes reforms the conduct of criminals. Though their hearts remained unchanged, once released they refrain from the behavior that got them imprisoned.
 - Satan's 1,000 year imprisonment will not reform him; he will still be evil, and upon his release, he will immediately begin to deceive
2. To demonstrate the depravity of humanity. For the last time in world history, as has been the case throughout, people have demonstrated that they will perpetually embrace evil unless sustained by sovereign grace.
 - Just as Satan was allowed to enter the first paradise (Garden of Eden), he will be allowed to enter the last paradise
 - This final phase of the world's history will once again demonstrate that people perpetually embrace evil unless sustained by sovereign grace

One of the reasons for the continuation of history is that God is demonstrating man's utter ruin in sin and his responsibility for the evil state of the world. The apostle Paul wrote that the day will come when "every mouth" will be stopped (Rom 3:19). Yet up until this very moment people's mouths have not been stopped because they either suppress their sense of sin or else excuse themselves. In Eden the man blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent (Gen 3:12-13). Later great violence broke out on the earth. So God sent the Flood and then instituted human government and capital punishment. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed" (Gen 9:6).

But mankind did not improve. If they were asked, perhaps their excuse would be, "Well, we need to be inspired with promises and hope." And so the Lord gave great promises

to Abraham (Gen 12; 15; 17). Still people did not improve. Perhaps their excuse then, had they been asked, was, "Yes, we have government, but we don't know how to apply it. We don't know what You want us to do. We have promises, but we need guidelines." And so God gave the Law of Moses with the Ten Commandments. Again people failed the test. If quizzed, they probably would have said, "Well, the Law is too abstract. If only we could see a flesh and blood example of what You want." So God sent the Lord Jesus Christ into the world. But when He exposed their terrible moral failure, they killed Him. Possibly people would then have said, "Well, we need power to follow your Word." And so the Lord gave the Holy Spirit to indwell His followers. Yet the world is in terrible shape, and a church marked by power in many ways is also marked by failure and unbelief in others.

People still have excuses. The evil behavior of both criminals and non-criminals is blamed on poverty, drugs, bad chromosomes, insecurity, narcissism, self-pity, sexual repression, anxiety, morbidity, insensitivity, paranoia, and so forth. More recently some people are blaming evil behavior on Satan. They say that people ensnared in cults and abusive situations are totally innocent; they are not responsible. And so at last, during the millennial kingdom, God will place the human race in a world without Satan. It will be a world in which Jesus Christ will reside on the earth in His physical, visible, glorious body. It will be a perfect environment, with disease curtailed. But the problem of humanity will not be the environment, or chromosomes, or even the devil. Nothing will have changed.

(b) The Apostasy (20:8)

8 and will come out to **deceive the nations** which are at the **four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.**

8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

8 He will go out to deceive Gog and Magog, the nations at the four corners of the earth, and gather them for war. They are as numerous as the sands of the seashore.

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.

- "...deceive the nations" - after being unbound and set free from the abyss, Satan will immediately revert to his old ways by deceiving the nations again into thinking that they will be better off submitting to his authority rather than Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, he will be wildly successful in his quest.

— Satan's character never changes, even after 1000 years in solitary confinement; he immediately goes back to deceiving the whole world (12:9; Cf. John 8:44)

— This deception, maybe the biggest in human history, comes after 1000 years of Jesus' rule upon the entire earth, perfect conditions, no poverty, immediate answer to prayer, etc. yet Satan is still able to deceive unbelievers

— Sin will be present for those in their mortal bodies during the millennial kingdom (Is 65:20; Ezek 45:22; Zech 14:16-18)

— It is significant that even the civilization of the millennial kingdom will end in failure and in rebellion against God

— Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, and many will yield external obedience to the King, but their hearts will be filled with rebellion. They will despise Christ whom they will see with their own eyes. Unconverted people will crave the pleasures and pastimes of a sinful world.

— Ps 66:3 prophetically anticipates the hearts of unbelievers during this period: "Say to God, "How awesome are Your works! Because of the greatness of Your power Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You." [NASB]

- "...four corners of the earth" - phenomenological language, common throughout Scripture (Cf. 7:1; Ps 113:3) is language narrated from the perspective of man

— This is an expression for coverage of the whole earth as it is in 7:1 (Cf. Is 11:2)

- "...Gog and Magog" - many interpreters see Gog & Magog here and connect it immediately with Ezek 38-39, however enough significant differences between Ezek 38-39 and Rev 20:7-9 in both the battle itself, as well as the events before and after the battle, to show that these are two separate events

— The Gog & Magog invasion of Israel is indeed an end times invasion, but likely occurs during the Tribulation (beginning with the 2nd Seal judgment [6:3-4]), and ending at the Second Coming

— So if this isn't a reference to the same war described in Ezek 38-39, what is it? The most likely explanation is that the defeat of the armies in the Ezek 38-39 Gog/Magog war will become a legend among the nations, something like Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Then at the end of the millennial kingdom, this "Gog/Magog" legend is applied to a new historical situation, with Satan leading the new "Gog/Magog." Satan will meet his "Waterloo"—his "Gog/Magog."

— Another possibility is that Gog/Magog are emblems for the enemies of the Messiah during the end times. The fact that John equates Gog & Magog with "the four corners of the earth" means you can't limit Gog & Magog to a specific geographic region. It's likely that John uses these two proper names to refer to the nations that in the latter days will be deceived and come to attack Jerusalem.

— See note: **Gog & Magog** below on differences between Ezek 38-39 and this passage, along with a possible way to reconcile the two

- "...to gather them together for the war" - history will repeat itself as this is repeated verbatim from 16:14 regarding preparations for Armageddon

— The deception and force mustering effort are supremely successful judging by the number that will gather for the rebellion...

- "...the number of them is like the sand of the seashore" - there will probably be more people alive on the earth during this period than any other period of human history due to the perfect environment: no disease or lack of anything, etc.

— These unbelievers who will be deceived and rebel are the mortal descendants of those who survived the Tribulation, who continue to be born with a sin nature

— As generations continue to be born during the 1000 years, even though they live in a perfect environment, they will begin to turn away and reject Christ, preferring instead to serve themselves and not accept Christ's sacrifice (Cf. Zech 14:16-18)

— The same "as the sand of the seashore" hyperbole is used many other times in Scripture:

- the number of descendants promised to Abraham (Gen 22:17)
- the grain stored by Joseph in preparation for the famine (Gen 41:49)
- the Canaanites conquered by Joshua (Joshua 11:4)
- the Midianites defeated by Gideon (Judges 7:12)
- the Philistines assembled to fight against Israel (1 Sam 13:5)
- the counsel given to Absalom by Hushai regarding his army (2 Sam 17:11)
- the wisdom given to Solomon (1 Kings 4:29)

[OT reference: Ezek 38:2; 39:1,6]

Gog & Magog: Differences Between Ezek 38-39 & Rev 20:7-9

Gog & Magog: Millennial Fulfillment?

<u>Ezek 38-39</u>	Rev 20:7-9
Northern invasion	All nation invade
Nations identified	Nations unidentified
Invasion leads to Millennium (Ezek 40-48)	Invasion comes at end of Millennium
Invasion leads to Millennium (Ezek 40-48)	Invasion leads to Eternal State (Rev 21-22)
7 months necessary to dispose of the dead (39:12)	Dead disposed of instantaneously (20:9)
Satan not bound prior to invasion	Satan bound prior to invasion (Rev 20:2)
Pentecost, <i>Things To Come</i> , 349-50	

Why does God allow (require) this terrible rebellion at the very end of history? What we need to understand is that history in God is pedagogical (meant for teaching). God allows eras of history to transpire in order to teach humanity lessons that we couldn't learn otherwise. In Judges, there are seven cycles of rebellion, oppression, then God raises up a deliverer, Israel is released from bondage, she becomes prosperous, then the entire cycle repeats itself again. God allowed this cycle to repeat itself 7x over the course of about 300 years. It's not until you get to the end of the book that we're told why God allowed it (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25): there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. God is telling Israel that they need a king to rule over them. God could just say that, or He could let them experience their failures without a king. Once they came out of this repeat cycle, over 300 years, Israel was ready for a king.

What about the current age of grace? Eph 3:10 tells us that God is lavishing His grace on us for the sake of the angels but the plan of salvation is not open to the angels. They understand the holiness of God, the creative power of God, and the judgment of God, but they don't know much about the grace of God. It's difficult to understand grace when the plan of salvation is not open to you. God teaches the concept of grace to the

angels by lavishing it upon the most undeserving people. And as the angels are watching this, their minds are blown. God is using this era of grace to fill gaps in the theology of the angels.

It's the same thing here at the end of the millennial kingdom. God has allowed Satan to survive (only binding and incarcerating him rather than throwing him into the Lake of Fire like the Antichrist and False Prophet) in order ***to teach humanity one final lesson before the close of history. The lesson is: where does evil come from? The world and media will always blame some external circumstance...hunger, poverty, racial injustice, education, structural bias, systemic racism, lack of affordable healthcare, etc. But what God says is that evil comes from our hearts (Cf. Gen 8:21; Jer 17:9; James 4:1-3). All of the external things are fixed during the millennial kingdom, yet evil is still present in the hearts of people.***

This rebellion at the end of the millennial kingdom isn't *caused* by Satan, he just gives people an opportunity (outlet) to express what is going on in their hearts. We see people during the kingdom period who refuse to go to Jerusalem to worship Jesus Christ (Zech 14:16-18). This shows that hatred for God is already present in some of the mortal citizens of the kingdom. It isn't on full display because Jesus is ruling with a rod of iron...but you can be sure that this rebellion is in the hearts of many. Ps 66:3 prophetically anticipates the hearts of unbelievers during this period: "Say to God, 'How awesome are Your works! Because of the greatness of Your power *Your enemies will give feigned obedience to You.*'" [NASB] Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, and many will yield external obedience to the King, but their hearts will be filled with rebellion. They will despise Christ whom they will see with their own eyes and crave the pleasures and pastimes of a sinful world.

God demonstrates by this one final event that even under the best conditions, mankind's problem is the heart. God demonstrates that Satan's depravity cannot be cured. God demonstrates that He is fully justified in exacting eternal punishment (Mark 7:20-23).

There is something that man needs today more than anything else, and unfortunately most people (even most Christians) are blind to it. We need our heart fixed. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be "born again" in order to enter the kingdom. We need what 2 Peter 1:4 calls a "new nature." God needs to do a miracle on the inside of us through a spiritual rebirth and the receiving of the new nature, then I need to learn how to live consistently with the yearnings of the new nature and to reckon as dead the deeds of the old nature. We are so sick that we don't even realize that we're sick. Any counsel or spiritual instruction that you receive that doesn't deal with our evil heart is just trying to get your flesh to try harder. Problem is, our flesh is incapable of this internal transformation.

Lessons From the Last Battle With Evil

1. God demonstrates that even under the best conditions, mankind's problem is the heart
2. God demonstrates that Satan's depravity cannot be cured
3. God demonstrates that He is fully justified in exacting eternal punishment

(c) The Attack (20:9a)

(d) The Annihilation (20:9b-10)

(1) Satan's henchmen are consumed by fire from heaven (20:9b)

9 And they came up on the **broad plain of the earth** and surrounded the **camp of the saints** and the **beloved city**, and **fire came down from heaven** and devoured them.

9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

9 They marched over the broad expanse of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. Fire came from God out of heaven and burned them up,

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

- "...broad plain of the earth" - literally, on the breadth of the land, that is, Israel (Cf. Is 8:8; Hab 1:6); the land of Israel will be fully occupied with these attacking forces

- "...camp of the saints" - often referred to a military barracks (Acts 21:34,37; 22:24; 23:10,16,32) or to an army in line for battle (Heb 11:34)

— But since the saints have no part in repelling the attackers and have no occasion to be organized as a military unit, the meaning probably aligns more closely with usage of the noun in the LXX to speak of the camp of the Israelites (Cf., Ex 16:13; 29:14; Deut 23:14; Heb 13:11,13)

— It refers simply to a place of dwelling for the saints, which may be a reference to Bozrah/Petra, where the Jews fled after the abomination of desolation

- "...beloved city" - Jerusalem (Ps 78:68; 87:2), Christ's capital during the millennium (Jer 3:17; Cf. Is 24:23; Ezek 43:7; Micah 4:7; Zech 14:9-11)

— It is rightly called "beloved" because for 1,000 years it will have been the seat of Christ's kingdom and the spiritual center of the earth (Is 2:2-3; 60:14,18; 62:3,7; Jer 31:6; Zech 14:16-17), and Israel will be a leader among the nations (Deut 28:13)

— The forces of Satan advance to the very heart of the Messianic empire (Jerusalem) before they are destroyed

— Jerusalem was at one point likened to Sodom and Egypt (11:8), through the grace of God to Israel (Jer 31:2; Zech 12:10) it will become "beloved" during Christ's millennial

reign

- "...fire came down from heaven" - the power of God is so great that there will not be even the appearance of a battle

— Fire from heaven is a well-known instrument of divine punishment (Cf. Gen 19:24; Lev 10:2; 2 Kings 1:10,12; Ezek 38:22; 39:6; Luke 9:24)

— Instead of a battle, Satan and his cohorts are immediately judged, because this is the kingdom age: Christ is the ruler of this world. This is a fitting climax to this last battle against Satan and his armies.

— When Adam sinned in the Garden, he in essence declared a "cosmic civil war" in the universe

— God did not create man to be free. He created him to be dependent on Him. Almighty God will not surrender His supremacy in this universe to Satan or to rebellious nations.

— His holiness demands that He destroys a rebellion of His creatures. Rather than a great prolonged battle, the wicked millions will be destroyed immediately.

[OT reference: Deut 23:14; 2 Kings 1:9-12; Ezek 38:22; 39:6]

(2) Satan himself is consumed by the fire of hell (20:10)

10 And the devil **who deceived** them **was thrown** into the **lake of fire** and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet **are also**; and **they will be tormented day and night forever and ever**.

10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

10 and the Devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. They will be tortured day and night forever and ever.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

- Satan's final defeat; God finally makes good on His promise in Gen 3:15, the ultimate "bruising of the head" (Cf. John 12:31)

- "...who deceived" - his most distinctive characteristic (see note: **Is Satan Bound Today?** at v2)

- "...was thrown" - an unknown agent will cast Satan into the Lake of Fire after the fire from heaven destroys his armies

- "...lake of fire" - prepared especially for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41); the devil is going "home" forever; this will be his final (6th) abode

- "...are also" - present tense; the Antichrist and False Prophet are still in the Lake of Fire after 1000 years
- The continuing presence of the beast and false prophet in the Lake of Fire after a thousand years shows that this torment does not entail annihilation of the wicked. Their existence is eternal as they experience an eternity of torment.
- "...they will be tormented" - *basanisthēsontai*, John resumes his use of the prophetic future tense as in v7-8
- A punishment that is not felt is not a punishment. The reality of unbearable pain inflicted on Satan and all those in the Lake of Fire is unquestionable.
- However the Bible might speak of that future punishment—whether as the Lake of Fire, outer darkness (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30), weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), a never-dying worm and unquenchable fire (Mark 9:48), or fire and brimstone—it presents a picture of mental agony and corporeal suffering combined in proportion to the guilt of those who have sinned (Luke 12:47-48).
- It is an odd use of language to speak of an insensate (unfeeling) state, an inanimate object receiving punishment. To say that I punished my car for not starting by plucking out the spark plug wires is ridiculous.
- "...day and night" - shows the unbroken continuity of their torment...it never ends or slightly lets up for all of eternity
- "...forever and ever" - *eis aion aion*, it means forever, eternally, perpetuity of time; describes the unending timeframe of their torment
- This verse refutes the entire idea of annihilationism
- *aion* is a word used to describe God Himself (Rom 16:26), so if *aion* means eternal when describing God Himself, it also has to mean eternal when it speaks of eternal punishment (Cf. "everlasting," Dan 12:2; Ps 90:2; Matt 25:46; Rom 16:26; Rev 14:11)
- This verse covers a few important theological matters:
 1. Satan is not God, nor is he a rival to God. In the end, he is simply a creature.
 2. It is not the function of the Devil to originate sin, but to reveal it and develop its latent possibilities.
 3. Hell is a reality
 4. Annihilation is not taught in Scripture...the Beast and False Prophet are still in Gehenna 1000 years later (see note: **Annihilationism** in v15); this is a doctrine taught by Jehovah Witnesses.

Rom 16:20a: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Satan's Progressive Defeat

1. Initial eviction from heaven (Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17)
2. Eden (Gen 3:15)
3. Pre-diluvian world (*Nephilim*, 1 Peter 3:19-20)
4. The Cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8)
5. Midpoint of the Tribulation (Rev 12:9)
6. Beginning of the millennium (Rev 20:2-3)
- 7. End of the millennium (Rev 20:10)**

Satan is not defeated all at once, but rather he suffers a progressive defeat over the course of history, ever since the Fall and God's prophecy in Gen 3:15.

From the Kingdom to Eternity

After the conclusion of 1000 years, the Millennial Kingdom will be followed by the Eternal State. Thus, it becomes necessary to trace God's kingdom program beyond Christ's 1000-year earthly reign. There are seven events listed in Scripture that will take place after the Millennial Kingdom but before the Eternal State in heaven:

1. The release of Satan from the abyss
2. The revolt on earth with judgments upon Satan and his armies
3. The passing of the old heaven and old earth
4. The Great White Throne Judgment
5. Creation of a New Heaven and New Earth
6. The descent of the New Jerusalem from God out of heaven
7. The surrender of the mediatorial aspect of Christ's reign and adjustment to the Eternal State

(b) Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)

Rev 20:11-15 is the central passage of Scripture on the doctrine of the last judgment of the wicked. These verses clearly state that after death people will face God in judgment, and if their names are not found in the register of the redeemed ("the book of life"), they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Death is the one certain fact in everyone's life. Many things are probable, much is questionable, but nothing is certain, except ultimate death, sooner or later. Death is the most "democratic institution" on earth. It comes to all men [and women], regardless of color, education, wealth, or rank. It allows no discrimination, tolerates no exceptions. The mortality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person.

"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." (Heb 9:27). With that verdict there can be no dissent. When the writer of the Book of Hebrews referred to a post-mortem judgment, he was not introducing some novel idea. Earlier in his letter he listed "eternal judgment" as one of the elementary teachings of the Scriptures (Heb 6:1-2).

The idea that there will be a future judgment is found in both the OT (Ps 96:13; Eccl 12:14; Dan 12:2) and the NT (Acts 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1; Heb 9:27). It is significant that the most solemn and searching preacher of judgment was Jesus Christ Himself. In 12 of 36 of His parables He spoke of people being judged, condemned, and punished for their sins. In discussing the rich man and Lazarus, He drew back the curtain on the existence of people in the afterlife to show the rich man in torment, suffering an anguish that has no relief and no end (Luke 16:19-31).

As startling as it may seem, of the 12 uses of the term "hell" (γέεννα) in the NT, in every case except one (James 3:6), the Person who used it is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6).

(i) The Judge (20:11)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

11 Then I saw a large, white throne and the one who was sitting on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and no place was found for them.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

- "Then I saw" - introduces a new vision (Cf. 19:11,17,19; 20:1,4,12; 21:1,2)

— "Then" - continues the chronological progression; introduces new information

— Initially, the only thing John saw was the throne. He saw nothing of the glories of heaven or earth, or of the millennial kingdom. The single focus of the universe will be God's throne.

- "...great white throne" - John had seen other thrones in his visions, but this one differs from both the throne in heaven (4:2) and the millennial throne on earth (v4,6; Cf. 3:21)

— "great" - *megan*, denotes its size; conveys the grandeur of its authority, much more so than the thrones described in v4 because this is the throne of God Himself

— "white" - *leukon*, shows that the verdicts that proceed from it are pure, holy, and righteous (Cf. Ps 97:2; Dan 7:9)

— "throne" - suggests that sovereign decisions will be meted out

— This is the last in a number of future judgments (Cf. v4-5; Matt 25:31-46; 2 Cor 5:10)

- A number of differences are noted between the Great White Throne and God's Throne in Rev 4:

1. The throne in 4:2 had a rainbow around it, a sign of covenant promises; the throne in 20:11 offers no promises. It offers only justice and retribution.
2. Out of the first proceeded lightning, thunder, and voices threatening judgment on the earth; this one will be cold and austere with no further warnings.
3. The throne in Rev 4 is surrounded by other thrones that symbolize the varied duties of the glorified saints; this one will be established with one purpose in mind and with no associates.
4. Before the first throne there are seven lamps, symbolizing the gracious works of the Holy Spirit; here the purpose will be purely retributive.
5. Connected with the first throne there is singing and joyful exultation; here there will be only the administration of retributive justice.

- "...Him who sat upon it" - it is God the Father who sits on the throne throughout Revelation (Cf. 4:2-3,9; 5:1,7,13; 6:16; 7:10,15; 19:4; 21:5)

— God the Father is also on the throne in Dan 7:9-10, which also describes this scene. However, it is sure that the Son that sits there beside Him (3:21; 22:1,3,12; Cf. John 5:26-27; Heb 1:3) and works with Him (John 5:19-21; 10:30; Cf. Matt 25:31ff; Acts 10:42; 17:31).

— This passage does not reference the Son at all, but John elsewhere indicates His involvement in judgment (22:12)

— At this judgment, no one could look at Jesus sitting on the throne, with the wounds that gained our salvation on his hands, feet and side, that He didn't do everything in His power to save all mankind

- "...earth and heaven fled" - this is the last picture connected with the present order, and describes the complete passing away of the current creation in favor of an entirely new creation in Rev 21:1, without any sea

— The Great White Throne, then, is located somewhere in limitless space, and outside of human history

— There is nowhere to hide for those in attendance at this judgment (Cf. Jer 23:24)

— "fled" - *ephygen*, pictures a sudden and violent termination of the physical universe, providing another perspective on the event described in 2 Peter 3:7,10

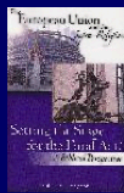
— After this event, the throne stands isolated, majestic and terrifying. None of the irrelevancies of this life remain to distract the eye from the spectacle of the Judge and His throne. Everything else will have passed away.

— Those who argue for only a renovation of the earth rather than a completely new creation cite Matt 19:28; Acts 3:21; Rom 8:19-22; 2 Peter 3:10

- "...no place was found for them" - the unavailability for any "place" for the heaven and earth following their departure indicates that they fled from present existence in order to give way for a new heaven and new earth

[OT reference: Dan 2:35]

At God's throne all material possessions and human honors will be absent. All homes, furnishings, clothing, hobbies, books, antiques, collectibles and cars will be burned up. In that isolated moment people will be able to reflect on the things that really matter.



Dr. Robert R. Congdon

Robert R. Congdon, *How Calvinism Serves Satan's Purposes*
(Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 29.

“Most new Calvinists do not believe that Christ will return and reign on this earth for one thousand years, nor do they understand that those of the church age will return to rule with Him following a review time before His judgment seat or bema seat when our roles and responsibilities will be determined. Most Calvinists believe the Great White Throne judgment is for everyone of all ages and it will determine whether one is truly saved or not.”

Sheep & Goat vs Great White Throne Judgment	
Matt 25:31-46	Rev 20:11-15
Post Second Advent	Post Millennium
Living Nations	Dead
Believers & Unbelievers	Unbelievers Only
Angels, Sheep, Goats, Brethren	Unbelievers Only
David's Throne	Great White Throne
Earthly	Non-earthly
After Poverty, Imprisonment, Sickness	After Utopia
Entrance into Kingdom & Hades	Entrance into Lake of Fire Only
Basis: Treatment of Brethren	Basis: Book of Life and Books
Not After Resurrection	After Resurrection
Subjects: Tribulation Survivors	Subjects: Unbelievers of All Ages
After Regathering of the Elect	After the Second Resurrection
Pentecost, <i>Things To Come</i> , 425-26	

John 5:22,27:

22 For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,
 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is *the* Son of Man.

(ii) The Judged (20:12-13)

(a) The Subjects of the Judgment (20:12a)

(b) The Books of the Judgment (20:12b-c)

(1) The Books (20:12b)

(2) The Book of Life (20:12c)

(c) The Basis of the Judgment (20:12d-13)

12 And I saw **thedead, the great and the small**, standing before the throne, and **books** were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and **the dead** were **judged** from the things which were written in **the books, according to their deeds**.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

12 I saw the dead, both unimportant and important, standing in front of the throne, and books were open. Another book was opened—the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to their actions, as recorded in the books.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

- Before God can usher in His New Heavens and New Earth, He must finally deal with sin once and for all; He will do this at the Great White Throne

- "...the dead" [2x] - unbelievers for all of human history, from Adam and Eve to the end of the millennial kingdom, are resurrected at this time

— No living mortals participate in this judgment, meaning that every unbeliever at this point in history will have experienced physical death (Cf. 19:21). This includes those who joined with the devil and perished in the final rebellion after the millennium, as well as all those who did not participate in the first resurrection (v5).

— Every single human being who has died without placing their trust in Christ for salvation is resurrected and summoned to the Great White Throne to be judged

— These are the same identified as "the rest of the dead" (v5); these are the unsaved of all of history, who stand trial after having been resurrected. They will come from all classes of humanity.

— This is the "second resurrection"—including *only* the unbelieving dead

— These verses clearly imply a bodily resurrection. No where does Scripture say what kind of body these resurrected ones will have, but it is evidently a body suited to suffer in the torments of the Lake of Fire for eternity.

— John 5:28-29 harmonizes with the two resurrections of Rev 20: "a resurrection of life" for those who are righteous, and a "resurrection of judgment" for those who are wicked. Revelation reveals that the two resurrections will be separated by 1,000 years.

- "...the great and the small" - the important and the unimportant, the powerful and the weak, the educated and the uneducated, the rich and the poor, the young and the old
- Judgment is the great equalizer: the beautiful people will be there, and the not so beautiful; the rich will be standing right alongside the poor to be judged
- "...books...the books" - plural; scholars have postulated for centuries on what is written in these "books." It may be a record of sins, both sins of omission and commission (Cf. Deut 32:34; Ps 56:8; Is 65:6; Dan 7:10; Mal 3:16; Matt 12:37).
- A written record of the acts of every individual form the basis of judgment for unbelievers who do not have the transferred (imputed) righteousness of Christ (Cf. Dan 7:10). The judgment is not arbitrary.
- Rom 2:14-16 tells us that the basis for judgment of Jews will be the Mosaic Law. The basis for judgment of Gentiles will be their conscience.
- Scripture makes consistent reference to a register of human actions (Cf. Deut 32:34; Ps 56:8; Is 65:6; Dan 7:10; Mal 3:16; Matt 12:37)
- Since unbelievers don't have the transferred righteousness of Christ, the only thing left to evaluate them are their own deeds. The nature of these human deeds may be good and bad deeds, or only bad deeds. Dan 7:10 and Mal 3:16 seem to include both good and evil deeds in this record, but Is 65:6 appears to limit them to the evil deeds only.
- The books John sees opened record each thought, word, and action of unbelievers; their true motivations and the secrets in their heart (Rom 2:6-16)
- Interestingly, He even takes into account what people would have done had their circumstances been different (Cf. 1 Sam 23:10-13; Matt 11:21-24)
- No one can be declared righteous by what they have done (Rom 3:19-20); apart from Christ, even the best actions are "filthy rags" (Is 64:6). This means that when people try to justify themselves by what they have done, good deeds only add to their condemnation.
- The judgment of God is not arbitrary or capricious; God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom 2:6). While Christians aren't saved by works, unbelievers are judged, condemned, and punished for their works.
- The point of the verse is not salvation by works. No one is saved by works. Rather, it is "damnation by works." People are responsible for what they have done.
- God's Word: "the Word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).
- "...*the book of life*" - a register of those who have been saved through faith in Jesus Christ (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27; Is 4:3; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3). Everyone listed in the book is a sinner.

- The only purpose for the Book of Life being present at the Great White Throne is to show that the names of these dead are not written there
- In his Gospel, John uses the word "life" (ζωή, same Greek word used here) to denote believers (Cf. John 3:16,36; 14:6, et al)
- Unbeliever's names are not written in the book of life (13:8; 17:8); unbelievers are always portrayed in Revelation as not having their names written in the book of life
- In contrast, believer's names are always portrayed as written in the book of life (Luke 10:17,20; Rev 3:5)
- The difference between a saved person and a lost person is not the number or types of evil deeds...the difference is that a saved person has recognized their own sinfulness and has come to Christ for forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life.
- Not one name in the Book of Life deserves to be written there. Each name is there by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Only God's gift of faith in Jesus produces the God-pleasing obedience that fulfills His will.
- The books of deeds bear witness that the deeds in a person's life are sinful. Then the Book of Life is opened and if the person's name is not found, this will prove that they are not saved. Then the books of deeds are consulted again, which contain supporting evidence that this person is lost. Their punishment will be based on the deeds done in this life.
- The judgment based on their works implies that there is a difference in degrees of punishment, just as there will be differences in rewards for believers (Cf. Matt 11:20-24)
- "...judged" - God, the omniscient Judge, will preside with perfect knowledge of the character and history of every person who stands before Him
- "...according to their deeds" - we never want to be judged by our works
- This suggests that there are levels of torment in the Lake of Fire
- This is also suggested in Matt 10:15 when Jesus said that it will be "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment" than for those who have heard and rejected the Savior.
- "deeds" - do not save, they simply mitigate sentences
- A judge, but no jury; a prosecution, but no defense; a sentence, but no appeal.
- Note: "dead" occurs 7x in v12-14
- If you know the right Person, you can avoid the whole thing and have God's Son to stand in your place
- What, exactly, will the unbelievers be held accountable for at this judgment?
- 1. Violating OT Law (Gal 3:10)
 - How frequently, and with what severity, unbelievers violated OT Law

- The 10 commandments will not be the thing that vindicates unbelievers on the day of judgment, it will be what accuses them...
 - If you don't want Jesus, you get Moses (John 5:45)
2. Violating Conscience (Rom 2:14-15)
 - God put His Law into the conscience of all human beings (Gen 3:22)
 3. Ignoring the Witness of Creation (Rom 1:18-20; Cf. Ps 19:1-4; Acts 17:24-27)
 4. Speaking Ungodly Words (Matt 12:36-37; Cf. Jude 14-15)
 5. Resisting the Spirit's Conviction (John 16:7-11)
- This verse is the fulfillment of Phil 2:10...it is here that the remaining people who have not bowed their knee to Christ through belief and trust in His sacrifice for them, will bow their knee to Him here, involuntarily.
- [OT reference: Ex 32:32-33; Ps 62:12; 69:28; Dan 7:10]

The teaching of Scripture that there will be a judgment is based on two facts:

1. There is a God who created us. He is a loving God (Luke 11:42); yet He is also infinitely holy (John 17:11).
2. Man is a responsible creature, accountable to God (Gen 2:16-17). People have a conscience and the commandments of God, and He will hold them responsible for these things.

It is sobering to realize that God has a record of the lives of all the billions of human beings who have ever lived, including every thought, every mean act, every dirty transaction, every dishonest moment, every foul word, every treacherous betrayal, every harsh feeling or remark.

What about millennial believers in mortal bodies?

The question of the resurrection of millennial believers who were born during the kingdom period, accepted Christ and thus never experienced physical death, is not covered in this passage. Presumably these saints will have divine protection during Satan's final rebellion and will survive the transition from the old earth and heaven to the new ones. The assumption must be that God will give them new bodies that suit them for conditions of immortality in the Eternal State.

13 And the **sea gave up the dead** who were in it, and **Death and Hades gave up the dead** who were in them; and they were judged, **each one of them according to their deeds**.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their

deeds.

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to their actions.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

- This verse expands the detail of the resurrection and judgment described in v12...

- In logical sequence, this verse fit into the middle of v12: after the opening of the Book of Life, [insert v13], the dead were judged by what was written in the books.

- This resurrection results in death (v6), whereas the previous one (v4) resulted in life

- "...sea" - God will resurrect all unbelievers and unite them with their spirits, even those bodies decomposed in "the sea"; no unbeliever in the history of mankind will escape the last judgment

- This allusion may be due to the fact that in John's day, death by drowning and burial at sea was regarded as especially terrible

- "...gave up" [2x] - *edōkan*, bodily resurrection; the dead will rise to stand before God for judgment and receive their sentence

- "...the dead" [2x] - those whose souls have been separated from their physical bodies; only includes the unsaved dead (the last of the saved dead were resurrected in v4)

- This is the resurrection of the dead; the souls waiting in Hades are reunited with their physical bodies and they stand before the Great White Throne to undergo judgment

- It will be pointed out to these resurrected unbelievers that their name is not in the "book" so they will be judged by "the books"

- The "book" determines heaven or hell; everyone at this judgment will not have their name in the "book" so they will be spend eternity in hell. The "books" are consulted to determine the degree of punishment in the Lake of Fire.

- There are some sins that are worse than others; in the OT, the punishment of some sin was death, whereas others the punishment was less. Jesus also talked about degrees of sin (John 19:11; Cf. Matt 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48).

- "...Death and Hades" - in 6:7-8, Death and Hades were agents of judgment; here, it is the unseen world where all who die without faith in Christ reside

- "Death" - was seen as a power stalking the land

- "Hades" - personified as a monster opening its jaws to receive the dead

- It is the holding place for unbelievers who have died, for all time; their spirits await this resurrection (Cf. 2 Cor 5:8). It's a place of conscious torment for unbelievers (Luke 16:23).

- It includes both Paradise (Luke 23:43) and Gehenna (Luke 12:5), Abraham's bosom and the state of torment and anguish (Luke 16:22-28). The present state of Hades does

not include Abraham's bosom because the resurrection of the righteous has already taken place.

- "...each one"- hekastos, demonstrates that accountability is on a person-by-person basis

- "...according to their deeds" - the second reference to judgment on the basis of works; it stresses personal responsibility (v12; 2:23; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 14:12; 1 Peter 1:17)

- God will judge all people on the basis of their works (v12; Cf. Ps 62:12; Matt 25:41-46; Heb 4:12-13). This is also true of Christians at the Bema Seat (Rom 14:10; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor 5:10).

(iii) The Judgment (20:14-15)

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

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

14 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. (This is the second death—the lake of fire.)

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

- Judgment will be executed immediately...

- The main test on the day of judgment will be whether one's name is in the book of life. The names of all those who have embraced Christ as their Savior are listed in that book. The names of the people who will be raised at the second resurrection are not in that book, however, so they will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the "second death."

- The death of Death...

- Death is humanity's last enemy (1 Cor 15:54-55). From this point on, there will be no more death (Cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28). The last vestiges of human rebellion against God will be destroyed.

- "...This is the second death, the lake of fire" - the Lake of Fire and the second death are one and the same

- The beast and false prophet escaped the first death and went straight to the second death (19:20)

- Just as the rich man in Hades experienced unbearable torment in flames (Luke 16:23-24), those in the Lake of Fire will have to endure the same punishment, for eternity

- Just as there is a second and higher life, there is also a second and deeper death.

After that second life, there is no more death; after that second death, there is no more life.

There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this [the doctrine of hell], if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of our Lord's own words. [C.S. Lewis]

The fact which is here inescapable is a dilemma. Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously. Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence. The dilemma is inescapable. Either despair which is Hell, or faith in Him who giveth us the victory. [James Denney]

A Paradigm of Death

Death has three stages:

1. Spiritual Death - everyone is born into this world spiritually dead ("dead in their trespasses and sins," Eph 2:1)
 - The remedy for this problem is the new birth (John 3:7)
2. Physical Death - all people, saved and unsaved, die physically
 - The remedy for this is the resurrection of the body at the first resurrection
3. Second Death - conscious existence in the Lake of Fire
 - There is no remedy

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

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

15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

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

- A short, succinct statement tells of the fate of all who are outside of Christ...

- The full wrath of God is seen at two great moments in human history—at the Great White Throne judgment and at the cross of Christ, where it has already been poured out for those who trust Christ as their Savior

— Everyone will face the full wrath of God. The question is, at which point will you choose to face it? If you choose to come to Christ, then His substitutionary death will protect you from the last judgment. If you choose to wait, your presence at the Great White Throne Judgment will be too late.

- This is the final confirmation of the eternal fate of the wicked

— If this verse is taken seriously, it evaporates all theories of universalism or restoration of the wicked

- Hell and eternal punishment of the wicked are doctrines that are becoming increasingly unpopular today. However, Jesus Christ spoke very plainly when He affirmed it (v14-15; 20:10; 19:20; 14:10-11; Matt 18:8; 23:15,33; 25:41,46; Mark 9:46)

- Hell is a witness to the righteous character of God and a witness to man's responsibility

— God does not send people to hell: they send themselves by rejecting the Savior (John 3:16-21; Matt 25:41)

— If we saw sin as God sees it, we would understand why a place such as hell exists

— Hell was never created for people (Matt 25:41); when God created the idea of eternal retribution, He never had people in mind. This is why He bled on the cross in our place, to keep us out of this horrific place.

— But if people reject the sacrifice that He has made to keep people out of hell, they choose to share in the same fate as Satan himself

[OT reference: Ex 32:32-33; Dan 12:1]

Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Or are you planning on defending yourself at the final judgment? *It's not what you know, but Who you know!*