

“Pay Day Some Day” (Revelation 20:1-15)

This past week my brother-in-law and I moved some unbelievably heavy furniture. We moved kitchen cabinets, a bathroom vanity, a *Corian* countertop and sink, and an immense oak entertainment center. Now I've helped move some very heavy things but this job was different because the furniture was all tucked away in a cluttered garage. So we transported these heavy pieces as we straddled and hurdled various pallets of lumber and heavy machinery. It was if we were moving through an obstacle course, to say the least. We were working in 90-degree heat, so we were hot, bothered, and weary. Why did we do this? Lori's (my wife) parents are preparing an apartment for her grandparents. We needed to move these heavy pieces so that they could move in. It was a labor of love that we wanted to persevere through.

It dawned on me that my experience parallels our passage in Revelation 20. This chapter is filled with heavy-duty biblical furniture. There are many awkward obstacles that must be hurdled. The process can be mentally painful and exhausting. Yet, the overall purpose and motivation is clear: We are called to persevere in a life of pleasing and serving God.

After the devastation of Armageddon (19:11-21), several matters must be resolved in our prophetic understanding. What is going to happen to planet earth now that the political, religious, and economic systems have been destroyed? What will happen to Satan? What will happen to the righteous dead and those that survived the tribulation period? What will happen to unbelievers? These questions become key issues in Revelation 20. In these 15 verses, we will see four future events come to pass. First, ...

1. Satan's power is limited (20:1-3). John writes, “**Then¹ I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss² and a great chain³ in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon,⁴ the serpent of old,⁵ who is the devil⁶ and Satan,⁷ and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw⁸ 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.**”⁹ The word “**then**” (20:1) moves the chronological account forward. In 19:20, God judged the Beast and the False Prophet. Now He deals with Satan himself. He does so by assigning an unnamed angel to “man handle” (or “angel handle”) Satan. In history's most sensational arrest, the cosmic criminal is put in chains and “**bound**” for a “**thousand years**” (20:2).¹⁰ This serves to remind us that Satan is not Jesus' equivalent. Rather, he is the counterpart of the archangel Michael. The principle is this: God has full sovereignty over Satan. Therefore, we have nothing or no one to fear. This will not only be true when the events of Revelation 20 unfold, it is also true today.

In 20:2-3, four definitive actions take place: (1) The angel lays hold of the Dragon, (2) he binds him, (3) he throws him into the Abyss, and (4) he shuts the Abyss and seals it over him (cf. Isa 24:21-22). These are future events. These events did not take place at the cross.¹¹ Scripture describes this present time in which we live as an evil age and Satan is called “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4). Today Satan is free and walks about as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8), but because of Christ's victory on the cross, Satan and his forces are even now a defeated lot. Consequently, during Christ's reign on earth, Satan (and this includes his demon hosts) will be bound and put out of action until the very end of the thousand-year reign of our Lord (cf. John 12:31; Col. 2:15).

The reason for this heavy-handed response to Satan is given in 20:3: “**so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed.**” It is crucial to note that Satan's great ploy is deception.¹² We could call it his “bread and butter.” He deceived Eve in the beginning¹³ and will go down in flames still working his deception game (cf. 20:7-10).

For my sister-in-law's last birthday, we wanted to buy her something special. My wife, Lori, decided to get online and purchase a bottle of perfume. She came to a web site that advertised bottles of perfume at reduced prices. The glossy and slick pictures were larger than life. Lori was taken in so she ordered a bottle of perfume that was slightly above our normal price range. She was very excited about her purchase. She couldn't wait for the memorable gift to arrive. A few days later the UPS driver came to the door and dropped off the package Lori had been anxiously waiting for. Lori quickly tore into the large box and threw out all the popcorn and packing materials. At the bottom of the box she found the bottle of perfume. But it was not the large extravagant bottle that she saw online. It was this [show the congregation a .16 oz. bottle of perfume]. Can you feel our pain? Can you imagine presenting your sister-in-law with this gift? Lori was so embarrassed. She felt that she had been deceived [suckered!]. She wanted to return the perfume but the shipping and handling was \$7.00 so we ended up buying another gift to include with this bottle of perfume.

Have you ever ordered something online and been burned like this? Or maybe you've ordered a product out of a mail-order catalogue only to be sorely disappointed? We are all prone to deception. How does Satan deceive you? Does he whisper in your ear that your sin is okay with God? Does he tell you that it's not really important for you to read the Word, just as long as the Spirit leads you? How does Satan deceive your family? Does he tell you that divorce is the way out of your marriage woes? Do you hear him say that one day you'll have plenty of time to invest in your children? How does Satan deceive our church? Do you hear him whisper that everything is just fine the way it is? We don't need to change. We don't really need to reach the next generation. That responsibility should be left to other churches.

In the last phrase of 20:3 John writes, "**After these things (i.e., the one thousand years) he must be released for a short time.**" It is significant to note that Satan "**must be released.**" The word "**must**" (*dei*) points to a logical as well as a moral necessity. Why is Satan not permanently bound or cast directly into the lake of fire? Why is it necessary for him to once again be released? This is an important question, but since 20:7-9 are devoted to his release; we will save the answer for then. But let's not miss the fact that his release is "**for a short time**" only.

[Satan's power is limited. We will now see that...]

2. God's reign is fulfilled (20:4-6). Beginning in 20:4, John now sees another vision: "**Then I saw thrones,¹⁴ 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.**"¹⁵ Verse 4 is a very controversial verse because John sees a group ("**they**") sitting on thrones but he does not bother to tell us who they are. Fortunately, we can put the pieces of this puzzle together. John informs us in 20:4 that the martyred tribulation saints will be resurrected¹⁶ and will reign with Christ. These saints are the only group expressly mentioned in this context.

Christ especially cherishes those who become martyrs for His sake. Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones." God loves all believers but there is special blessing and honor that comes to those that lay down their lives for Christ. When you contemplate these tribulation martyrs, how do you stack up? Are you willing to be beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and because of the Word of God? Are you willing to stand in the face of a ruthless one-world government, religion, and economic system? Are you willing to pray for Christians who are facing martyrdom?

So are the tribulation martyrs the only ones that reign? I think not. One of the primary themes in Revelation is the perseverance of God's people. Therefore, in this context, I believe that the tribulation martyrs¹⁷ are representative of all faithful believers that will rule and reign with Christ.¹⁸ This was predicted back in Daniel 7:9-10, 22. Then in Matthew 19:28, Jesus told His disciples that they will sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Luke 22:30). In 2 Timothy 2:12, Paul tells faithful believers that they will reign with Christ (cf. Rom 8:17). These truths are also confirmed in Revelation. In 2:26-28, he who overcomes and keep Christ's deeds until the end will be given authority to rule over the nations. Again in 3:21, the overcomer will sit down with Christ on His throne. In 4:4, the 24 elders will be seated upon 24 thrones (cf. 11:16). Again in 5:10, believers will be "a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Reigning with Christ is linked with reward.

Yesterday, we had a family workday. After being gone for a week, our yard was a bit overgrown. So Lori and I told our three children that they would each work, to the best of their ability, in the yard. We also informed them that there was the potential for reward. Usually our three-year old, Jena, is our best gardener (she takes after her mom). But yesterday, this was not the case. Our oldest son, Joshua, served faithfully for two hours while his younger brother and sister played. When our work was complete, we rewarded Joshua with \$4 and his very own adult-sized homemade Italian crème soda. I love to reward my kids. I pay them \$1 every time I use them in a sermon. I pay them for memorizing Scripture and reading books. I do this because I want to honor them and make them love these things. A reward like money can change my kids' attitude from: "I have to do this" to "I want to do this." This doesn't always work out perfectly, but it works the majority of times. The reason being, God has wired us for reward. He has instilled this drive within us. He wants us to find significance, fulfillment, and pleasure but HE wants to be our chief reward.

You may be asking: How will I earn rewards? I can't see myself reigning and ruling with Christ. To carry the above illustration further, Lori (our family grounds-keeper) gave me the garden job of hoeing. Now from my perspective, there is nothing real fun about hoeing for several hours in 90-degree heat. It's tedious and mundane. Nevertheless, this can be a picture of our lives. God rewards His people for persistent faithfulness in the midst of the daily grind. Mothers, as you serve Christ changing dirty diapers, cooking meals, and caring for young children, it may seem like a lot of hoeing but great is your reward. Singles, as you honor God with your purity and maximize your life for Him, great is your reward. Maybe you're unfulfilled at work but you're faithfully serving your employer and being a person of integrity. Great is your reward.

John further explains the chronology of events in 20:5. He writes, "**The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.**" "**The rest of the dead**" refers to the wicked who are physically dead that God will raise at the end of the millennium¹⁹ (20:12). This second resurrection will be to judgment (see John 5:28-29). This will be developed further in 20:11-15. John then mentions the "**first**²⁰ **resurrection**"²¹ (20:5b). This refers to the first of the two resurrections John spoke of in the context (20:4-6, 12).²² This includes the resurrection of the tribulation martyrs at the second coming of Christ (20:4) and other believers resurrected at the same time (i.e., Old Testament saints; Dan 12:2; John 5:28; cf. 1 Cor 15:23).²³

In 20:6, John declares, "**Blessed**²⁴ **and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection;**²⁵ **over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign**²⁶ **with Him for a thousand years.**"²⁷ There is great blessing and joy in our salvation. The "**second death**" has no power over us. The "**second death**" is separation from God in the lake of fire (cf. 19:20; 21:8).²⁸ Instead of experiencing this fate, we will reign as priests for a thousand years.

We must note that in 20:2-7, “**thousand years**” is used six times in connection with a number of chronologically interrelated events.²⁹ John appears to be setting up a definite timetable of events relative to the 1,000 years. As someone wisely suggested about interpreting the Bible, “When the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense.”³⁰ There are four good reasons why Jesus Christ’s reign will be a physical, earthly reign, rather than a spiritual, heavenly one.³¹ First, Christ will be on earth after He returns (19:11-16). Second, at the end of His reign, the saints, who reign with Him, will still be on the earth (20:9). Third, God promised the saints an earthly reign (5:10). Fourth, the Old Testament messianic prophecies anticipated an earthly kingdom (e.g., 2 Sam 7:10-16; Ps 2:8; Isa 65:17-66:24; Dan 7:27). The thousand-year reign of Christ will be a time when the suffering servant, Jesus Christ, and His faithful followers will celebrate His victory.

What has been the most satisfying moment in your life? When you signed a contract that secured your financial future? When you sold a house that everyone said you could never sell? When you received your diploma after having worked your way through school? When your child was born? When your care made a sick person happy? There will be no more disease, no more fear, no more dishonesty, no more crime, no more war, no more racism, and no more poverty and starvation. This will be a time like no other. It will be the best years of your life!

The Marines use the Latin expression, “*Semper fidelis*” (always faithful). That is what God is. He will always remain true to what He promises. He will fulfill His promise to reign. Count on it.

[In the same way that God’s reign is fulfilled...]

3. Satan’s judgment is required (20:7-10). John explains, “**When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth,³² Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.³³ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints³⁴ and the beloved city,³⁵ and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 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.**”³⁶ At the end of the millennium,³⁷ God will release Satan from the Abyss (20:7). Satan will then attempt his final revolt. He is able to gather nations from all over the world. The huge size of this army isn’t hard to explain when you think about all the babies that will be born over a thousand-year period. And the fact that people will live a lot longer means that the population in the millennium will be enormous.³⁸

The phrase “**Gog and Magog**” (20:8) evidently refers to the world’s rulers and nations in rebellion against God. People will come from all over the world to rebel against Christ (Ezek 38:3-6). It seems quite clear that the total invasion by Gog described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is not in view here, though part of it is.³⁹ In view of its description in Ezekiel, Gog’s invasion of the Promised Land finds fulfillment in two events. These names are used to describe the nations though they are used without any explanation; they are simply introduced as a description of the nations from the four corners of the earth. So why use this term here? Because, from its use in the Ezekiel passage, these names stand symbolically for a rebellious and war-like people and for the nations in rebellion against God and His people (Ps 2) who will be crushed. As Walvoord suggests, it may be used like we use “waterloo” to express a disastrous battle, but one not directly related to the historic situation. The ties are: (1) the nature of the people, rebellious, and (2) their defeat, complete disaster! This battle ends up being the shortest war in human history. The Lord incinerates all of the armies.

Why does God release Satan from the Abyss? No explicit answer is given. However, three reasons are implied in the text: (1) to demonstrate the wickedness of Satan, (2) to demonstrate the depravity of humanity (cf. Jer 17:9), and (3) to demonstrate the justice of hell.

Stop and think about these truths. Even after being bound for a thousand years, Satan still comes out fighting and deceiving. With one last bit of strength, he leads a final revolt against the Lord. He's mad! There is no end to his wickedness. Clearly, Satan deserves it and the justice of God demands it (20:10).

But humanity is every bit as rebellious and wicked. We blame many things on the Devil but people in the millennium will not be able to do that because he will be bound. There is thus no way that anyone can say, "The Devil made me do it." People then will live in a perfect environment and still they will commit sin.⁴⁰ There will be perfect government, perfect health, perfect climate, and even formerly wild animals like lions will be tame. There will be perfect justice. Yet, a perfect environment will not keep man from sinning because a perfect environment cannot produce a perfect heart. A perfect environment will not solve humanity's problems; only personal trust in the person and work of Christ will change a person's heart. Nothing else can permanently change man.

You don't have to go to the millennium to find this out. This is a human trait today. The better life becomes for some people, the better the possibility that they will conclude they don't need God; but that any effective and lasting change must come from within, through God's grace plan of salvation.

Lastly, one of the purposes of this passage is to justify the necessity of eternal punishment. This section proves that even the equivalent of 14 lifetimes (based on the current life expectancy of about 70 years divided into a thousand years) is not enough to overturn man's allegiance to Satan. Therefore, the eternal lake of fire is a necessity.⁴¹

[The Bible teaches that Satan's judgment is required. It also predicts a time when...]

4. Man's judgment is completed (20:11-15). In 20:11, John sees "a great white throne." First, it is called "great."⁴² It is great for three primary reasons: (1) Here each unbeliever's eternal destiny is determined and declared with ample proof and reason. (2) It is great because it is the final judgment putting an end to all judgment for all time. (3) It is great because all the unbelievers of all time, from Cain to the final revolt at the end of the millennium, will be here assembled to face the bar of God's perfect justice. The only exceptions will be the Beast and False Prophet and perhaps those of the judgment of the Jews and Gentiles, at the end of the tribulation, who have already been consigned to the lake of fire. Second, it is called "white" because it will be the supreme, undimmed display of the perfect righteousness, justice, and purity of God (cf. Ps 97:2; Dan 7:9). Throughout history God has taught man that he must have God's kind of righteousness, that God is of purer eyes than to approve evil, or to accept or look upon wickedness (Hab 1:13), that all have sinned and come short of God's glory (Rom 3:23), and that the penalty of sin is eternal death, separation from God (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:2). Now these facts will become evident to each individual and proven without question. Third, it is called a "throne"⁴³ because here the Lord Jesus Christ will sit in absolute majesty and sovereign authority to consign these eternally to the lake of fire.

The one sitting on this throne is Jesus Christ (cf. John 5:22-23, 26-27). John saw earth and heaven flee from Christ's presence (cf. Ps 114:3, 7).⁴⁴ This seems to indicate that we have come to the end of God's dealings with this earth, as we know it (cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 10-12). The flight of the present earth and heaven from Christ's presence strengthens the description of Him as the ultimate Judge.

In 20:12, John continues his vision with these words, **“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing⁴⁵ 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.”**⁴⁶ The dead before this throne are evidently the unsaved of all ages⁴⁷ that now stand resurrected (20:5; Dan 12:2).⁴⁸ They come from all classes and groups of humanity. The identity of the books is not specifically revealed. We can only speculate from a comparison of other Scriptures and from the nature of these verses. The first book opened will probably be the Scriptures, which contains the revelation of God’s holy character, the moral law, the declaration of the sinfulness of man and God’s plan of salvation by faith in the Savior. This book also reveals that even when men do not have the written Word, they have (1) the law of God written in their hearts (Rom 2:14-16) and (2) the revelation of God consciousness in creation (Rom 1:19-20). Because of this they are without excuse (Rom 1:20; 2:12). All men are responsible for the revelation they have and stand at this judgment because of their own negative volition to God’s grace (Rom 1:18; 2:4, 14; John 7:17). So then, Scripture will be used to demonstrate the clearness of the plan of God and that man is without excuse (cf. also John 12:48-50; and 1 John 3:23).

The **“Book of Life”**⁴⁹ contains the names of God’s elect. God will condemn those raised to face this judgment because of their works including failure to believe in Jesus Christ (John 6:29). Since He will evaluate their deeds, there seems to be a difference in degrees of punishment as there will be differences in rewards for believers (cf. Matt 11:20-24).

The second book will be the Book of Works (deeds). Verses 12 and 13 state that the unbelieving dead will be “judged according to their deeds” (works).⁵⁰ The principle here is that Jesus Christ died for their sins, for their evil deeds, to forgive them, and to provide them with a righteousness from God so that they might have a perfect standing before Him. But when men reject the knowledge of God and His plan of salvation, they determine to stand on their own merit or in their own righteousness. So the Book of Works will contain a record of all their deeds, good and bad, to demonstrate Romans 3:23, that they fall short of God’s righteousness and have therefore no basis upon which to stand accepted (justified) before God. This judgment proves them sinners and in need of Christ’s righteousness by faith.

The issue at the great white throne judgment is the degree of punishment. All unbelievers will suffer forever; however, the suffering will be in direct proportion to how one lived and how much light he or she rejected (cf. Matt 10:14-15; 11:21-24; 12:36; Rev 20:13). Exceedingly wicked men like Hitler, Idi Amin, and Pol Pot will experience the utmost in suffering. So too will men like Judas, who rejected the greatest degree of light.

The great white throne will be nothing like our modern court cases. There will be a Judge but no jury, a Prosecutor but no defense attorney, and a sentence but no appeal. None of these things will exist in this courtroom because Christ will judge the unbelieving world with absolute justice. Nothing will be missed or overlooked as unsaved people from throughout history appear before Christ in the final judgment of the ages.

In 20:13-14, John writes, **“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. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”** **“Death and Hades”** represent the fact of dying and the condition entered on after death. When non-believers die before the great white throne judgment, they go to hades.⁵¹ **“Hades”** is not the final judgment. The holding cell for a death-row inmate is not the final step. Execution is that prisoner’s final judgment.

These are temporary hells, a holding place until the final judgment. At the final judgment, God will raise non-believers out of these temporary hells to be judged at the great white throne. Then He will cast them into the permanent lake of fire. The idea of “giving up the dead” has to do with restoring physical bodies to their spirits. Their physical bodies long died but their spirits were in hades. Although the sea swallowed up a person hundreds of years ago, God will restore that body to judgment in hell. From this point on, there will be no more death (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28). God will cast death and hades into the lake of fire. This is hell, the place of eternal punishment.⁵²

In 20:15, John concludes this chapter with some very sobering words: **“And if⁵³ anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown⁵⁴ into the lake of fire.”** The names of the wicked will be absent from the Book of Life. This will confirm their eternal fate (cf. 14:11). Eternal punishment is a doctrine that is becoming increasingly unpopular in our day. Notice that Jesus Christ, the Judge, spoke very plainly when He affirmed it.⁵⁵ If we once saw sin as God sees it, we would understand why a place such as hell exists.

No other verse in the entire Bible should cause us to flee God’s wrath and run into His grace and forgiveness as does 20:15. Yet, the vast majority of Americans are in denial. Barna Research recently conducted a nationwide poll about belief in life after death, heaven and hell, and who might end up where. Three-quarters of us believe in heaven, nearly that many believe in hell (71%) — and only one half of 1% say that they’re heading for the hot place after the closing bell.⁵⁶

C.S. Lewis was an atheist who tried to prove that God didn’t exist. In the process of doing so, he became one of Christianity’s boldest defenders. In clarifying his view that hell is a choice, Lewis said, “Sin is a person’s saying to God throughout life, ‘Go away and leave me alone.’ Hell is God finally saying to that individual, ‘You may have your wish.’”

There is a book written by a cardiologist at the University of Tennessee that corroborates this biblical truth. In the course of their emergency room work, Dr. Maurice Rawlings and his colleagues interviewed more than 300 people who claimed near-death experiences. What made Rawlings’ study distinct is that the interviews were not conducted months or years later but immediately after the experiences had allegedly occurred—while the patients were still too shaken up in the immediacy of the moment to gloss over or to re-imagine what they had experienced.

Nearly 50 percent of them reported encountering images of fire, of tormented and tormenting creatures, and other sights hailing from a place very different from heaven. In follow-up interviews much later many of these same people had changed their stories, apparently unwilling to admit to their families, maybe even to themselves, that they had caught a glimpse of something like what the Bible calls hell. Dr. Rawlings concludes, “Just listening to these patients has changed my life. There is a life after death, and if I don’t know where I’m going, it is not safe to die.”⁵⁷

Copyright © 2004 Keith R. Krell. All rights reserved. All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, and 1995 by The Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission.

Permissions: Feel free to reproduce and distribute any articles written by Keith Krell, in part or in whole, in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. It is our desire to spread this information, not protect or restrict it. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Keith Krell, Timeless Word Ministries, 2508 State Ave NE Olympia, WA 98506, 360-352-9044, www.timelessword.com

Notes

¹ The first word, “then” (*kai*) supports the idea of chronological sequence. It implies a continuation from what John just revealed (cf. Rev 19:11, 17, 19; 20:4, 11, 12; 21:1, 2, 22).

² In Jesus’ day the demons begged not to be sent back to the Abyss (Luke 8:31). Also, it was a place of gloomy confinement (2 Pet 2:4). From it came the locust plague (Rev 9:1-3) and the Beast that killed the two prophets of God (11:8).

³ The binding of Satan is real, though the chain must be figurative since it is impossible to bind spirit beings with physical chains (cf. Rev 9:14).

⁴ The Dragon is his most frequent name in Revelation (12:3, 4, 7, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13).

⁵ This is a reference to Gen 3:1-15, where Satan takes on the form of a serpent (cf. Rev 12:9).

⁶ See Rev 2:10; 12:9, 12; 20:10. The word “devil” (*diabolos*) means “slanderer, accuser.”

⁷ See Rev 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9. The word “Satan” (*satanas*) means “adversary.” The above four names contrast with the four names of Christ in Rev 19 (Faithful and True, the Word of God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords). See Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation: HNTC* (Nashville: Holman, 1998), 370.

⁸ Gk. *ebalen*. This is from the same verb translated “he was thrown down” (*eblethe*) in Rev 12:9.

⁹ Some understand Rev 20:1-3 to describe Satan being “bound” during the church age. However, this is highly unlikely. As Mounce comments, “The elaborate measures taken to insure his custody are most easily understood as implying the complete cessation of his influence on earth (rather than a curbing of his activities).” See Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation: NICNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 353.

¹⁰ Previously, God cast Satan out of heaven (Rev 12:9), now He casts him out of the earth. This is the end of Satan’s “short time” in which God allowed him to spread havoc on the earth (12:12).

¹¹ Some hold that Mark 3:27 suggests that Satan was bound through the work of Christ on the cross. Yet, the NT demonstrates that Satan is alive and well. He is certainly experiencing little restraint.

¹² Satan frequently deceives the nations (cf. Rev 12:9; 13:14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3, 8, 10).

¹³ See Gen 3:1-13; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14.

¹⁴ The word “thrones” (*thronous*) is used in the plural only one other time in the NT (cf. Rev 4:4).

¹⁵ Many other passages in Scripture indicate that a reign of peace and righteousness on earth will follow the second coming (Ps 2; 24; 72; 96; Isa 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).

¹⁶ Cf. Rev 20:5; 1:18, 2:8; 13:14; John 11:25; Acts 1:3; 9:41.

¹⁷ Cf. Rev 6:9; 12:17; 18:24; 19:2.

¹⁸ Johnson writes, “I feel somewhat more comfortable with the view expressed earlier (see comments at 6:9)—viz., that the martyrs represent the whole church that is faithful to Jesus whether or not they have actually been killed. They constitute a group that can in truth be described as those who ‘did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death’ (12:11). As such, the term is a synonym for overcomers (chs. 2-3). Thus John could count himself in this group, though he may never have suffered death by the axe of the beast. In 2:11 those who during persecution are faithful to Christ even to the point of death are promised escape from the second death, which in 20:6 is promised to those who share in the first resurrection, i.e., the beheaded (v. 4). In fact, a number also of the other promises to overcomers in the letters to the seven churches find their fulfillment in chapter 20 (compare 2:11 with 20:6; 2:26-27 with 20:4; 3:5 with 20:12, 15; 3:21 with 20:4).” Alan F. Johnson: *Revelation: EBC*, Electronic Ed. Cf. Osborne, *Revelation*, 704-05.

¹⁹ “Millennium” comes from the Latin word for a thousand years.

²⁰ “First” (*protos*) refers to rank or degree, first, foremost, most important of persons. See BDAG, Electronic Ed.

²¹ The word John employs for “resurrection” is *anastasis*. In 42 uses in the NT, with only one clear exception (Luke 2:34), *anastasis* always refers to bodily resurrection. Other names for 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).

²² The times when God will raise the righteous are as follows. First, He raised Jesus Christ who is the Firstfruits of those who sleep (1 Cor 15:23). Second, He raised some saints near Jerusalem shortly after Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 27:52-53), though this was probably a temporary resuscitation like that of Lazarus. Third, He will raise Christians at the rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18). Fourth, He will raise the two witnesses during the great tribulation (11:3, 11). Fifth, He will raise the tribulation martyrs at the beginning of the millennium (vv. 4-5). Sixth, He will raise the OTsaints, probably at the same time (Isa 26:19-21; Ezek 37:12-14; Dan 12:2-4). Seventh, He will apparently raise the saints

who die during the millennium (cf. 20:12-13). The idea that the resurrection of believers takes place in stages also finds support in 1 Corinthians 15:23.

²³ Amillennialists usually take the first resurrection as a reference to spiritual regeneration. They believe the second resurrection describes a general resurrection of all the dead at the end of time. This view is inconsistent in that it takes “resurrection” figuratively in one case but literally in the other.

²⁴ This is the fifth of seven beatitudes (“blessings”) found in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

²⁵ If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain *psuchas ezesan* at the first, and the rest of the *nekron ezesan* only at the end of a specified period after that first, if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second...but if the second is literal, then so is the first. See Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, rev. Everett F. Harrison, 4 vols. (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 4:732.

²⁶ Note that many of the promises to the overcomers in the letters to the seven churches find their fulfillment in the millennium (cf. 2:11 with 20:6; 2:26-27 with 20:4; 3:5 with 20:12, 15; and 3:21 with 20:4). This seems to indicate that the rewards Christians receive from the Lord at the judgment seat will also involve serving under Him in the millennium (cf. Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27) and beyond (Rev 22:3, 5). See Thomas L. Constable, *Dr. Constable’s Notes on Revelation* (<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/revelation.pdf>, 2003), 187.

²⁷ Nothing is mentioned here or elsewhere about the resurrection of millennium saints; that is those who go into the millennium with mortal bodies or who are born during this time. Some have taught that: because there is no mention of this resurrection, because of the lifting of the curse (Isa 11:6-9; 35:1-2, 9), and because of the healing and lack of sickness in the millennium (Isa 35: 5-6; 29:17-19; 33:24; Ezek 34:16), there will be no death in the millennial age. But Isaiah 65:20 appears to teach otherwise. This verse indicates: (1) The normal life span will be over 100 years, but death will evidently occur. (2) Evidently there will be no shortened life span because of sickness or old age, but (3) there will be a shortened life span through divine discipline for sin and rebellion (cf. Isa 11:4; 65:20b). (4) Otherwise people will live out a long life span and then death will take them. Except for those who die by divine discipline, it will undoubtedly be very peaceful and without fear—perhaps even with immediate resurrection. (5) It also appears that when men do die, they will die, not from old age, but as a youth, young of body and mind (Isa 65:20b). See Hampton Keathley III, *Studies in Revelation* (www.bible.org: Biblical Studies Foundation, 1997), 357.

²⁸ Keathley writes, “Man is born (physical birth) spiritually dead. He needs a second birth (spiritual birth) by faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:1-8; John 3:3-6, 16). If only *one birth*, then because man is spiritually dead, he must face *two deaths* (physical death and the second death—eternal separation from God). If man has *two births*, (physical and spiritual), then because he has been made spiritually alive in Jesus Christ, he may face physical death (if he dies before the rapture), but he can never face the second death by virtue of the first resurrection. The second death can have no power over believers because the Lord Jesus has ‘rendered powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil’ (Heb 2:14).” Keathley III, *Studies in Revelation*, 357.

²⁹ As McClain notes, “In each recurrence the expression [a thousand years] is connected with a distinctive idea: First, Satan is bound for a thousand years (vs. 2). Second, the nations will not be deceived for a thousand years (vs. 3). Third, the martyred saints reign with Christ for a thousand years (vs. 4). Fourth, the rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years are finished (vs. 5). Fifth, all who have part in the first resurrection will be priests of God and reign with Christ a thousand years (vs. 6). Sixth, Satan will be loosed after the thousand years (vs. 7).” Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Chicago: Moody, 1959), 492.

³⁰ Robert Jeffress, *As Time Runs Out* (Nashville: Broadman, 1999), 110-111.

³¹ Among premillennialists there are two main groups. “Historic premillennialists” believe that God will fulfill His promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3, 7) through the *spiritual* seed of Abraham, namely, believers whom the OT writers called Israel and the NT writers called the church. “Dispensational premillennialists” believe that God will fulfill His promises to Abraham through the *physical* seed of Abraham, namely, the Jewish people whom the writers of both testaments referred to as Israel. See Constable, *Dr. Constable’s Notes on Revelation*, 189.

³² Cf. Rev 7:1. This phrase is drawn from the OT (cf. Isa 11:12; Ezek 7:2).

³³ This image is common in the OT for an innumerable group of people (e.g., 2 Sam 17:11; Job 29:18; Ps 78:27; Isa 10:22), often for a huge army (e.g., Josh 11:4; 1 Sam 13:5).

³⁴ “The camp of the saints” suggests that all believers are present throughout the millennium.

³⁵ Jerusalem will be the capital city that Jesus rules from (see Isa 24:23; Jer 3:17; Ezek 43:7; Mic 4:7; Zech 14:9-11).

³⁶ The phrase “for ever and ever” is very strong and literally means “unto the ages of the ages.” The Beast and the False Prophet are still there after a thousand years; they are not annihilated. Mark 9:43-48 shows that it does not end.

Matthew 13:41-42; 8:12; 22:13; and 25:30 speak of weeping, etc. This shows there is not annihilation, but continual torment. Matthew 25:46 states the punishment is everlasting punishment and looks at what the person suffers. In Matthew 10:28, the reference to the destruction of the soul does not refer to its annihilation, but to the loss of its meaning and purpose of existence.

³⁷ There are three prevalent millennial views. "Premillennialism" is the belief that Jesus Christ will yet rule over this earth with His capital in Jerusalem. At this time, He will fulfill His earthly promises to Israel. "Amillennialism" is the belief that there is no future millennium. All the kingdom promises to Israel are either conditional, or they are being fulfilled to the church in this present age. "Postmillennialism" is the belief that the church will usher in the kingdom on earth. A fourth and relatively rare view is called "Promillennialism." This view is a hybrid of Premillennialism and Amillennialism holds that the martyrs are the lone recipients of the millennium discussed in 20:4-6. The best defense that I have seen for this view is found in Easley, *Revelation*, 381-82. I subscribe to Premillennialism.

³⁸ Apparently, those that die at 100 will be considered young (Isa 65:20).

³⁹ Though expositors disagree in their understanding of Gog and Magog, this is not the same as Ezekiel 38 and 39. This is evident from several things: (1) The invasion in Ezekiel comes from the north, but this one comes from all directions; (2) Ezekiel's battle seems to occur about the middle of the tribulation when the people of Israel are trusting in the treaty with the Beast, but this battle occurs over a thousand years later, after Christ comes to earth; (3) In Ezekiel, Gog and Magog are the names given the ruler from the north and his land, a territory now occupied by Russia, but according to Ezekiel these will be decisively wiped out in the tribulation.

⁴⁰ Adam and Eve had a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2-3).

⁴¹ Osborne, *Revelation*, 698.

⁴² Gk. *me-gas* connotes: (1) the size of something, the extent, (2) the intensity or degree of something, and (3) rank, dignity, or standing. In essence, all of these ideas have application here.

⁴³ In Rev 4:2, John beheld a throne set in heaven from which the tribulation judgments proceeded. The word "throne" (*thronos*) is used 47 times in the book, but this throne, the great white one, is to be distinguished from all others because it is the most significant of all. Interestingly, the word "throne" only appears 16 times in the rest of the NT.

⁴⁴ The present heaven and earth will one day disappear (Matt 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33; 2 Pet 3:10-13).

⁴⁵ "Standing" before God indicates that they are to be sentenced.

⁴⁶ Some believe there is only one general judgment of all persons, believers and unbelievers. However, such a view does not fit the facts. The resurrection of believers occurs before the millennium while the resurrection of unbelievers occurs after the thousand years (Rev 20:4-6). The only judgment that takes place after the thousand years is the judgment of unbelievers.

⁴⁷ This excludes the Beast and the False Prophet (Rev 19:20), and perhaps those unbelievers judged at the judgment of the Gentiles and Jews (Matt 25:41) because they are seen to be sent directly to the eternal lake of fire.

⁴⁸ There is no revelation about what will happen to mortal believers who are alive at the end of the millennium. Perhaps Satan and his followers will kill them all before God judges the rebels. Another possibility is that they will live through this rebellion and God will give them immortal bodies with which they will be able to enter the new earth. Neither is there information about the divine judgment of these believers. There will probably be a judgment of them since God judges everyone else who has ever lived at one time or another. Probably He will judge them at the end of the millennium. A resurrection of those of them that died during the millennium is also probable (cf. Isa 65:17-20).

⁴⁹ See Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27; Isa 4:3; Ps 69:28; Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3.

⁵⁰ "Deeds" (*erga*) refers to anything that is done, a deed, action, or work. It is used of good deeds (Matt 26:10; Mark 14:6; Rom 2:7), of evil deeds (Col 1:21; 2 John 11), of dead works (Heb 6:1; 9:14), of unfruitful deeds (Eph 5:11), of ungodly deeds (Jude 15), of deeds of darkness (Rom 13:12; Eph 5:11), and of works of the Law (Rom 2:15).

⁵¹ Or in the OT, *Sheol*.

⁵² Evidently the wicked too will receive resurrection bodies that are different from their former mortal bodies. They will be indestructible. Those who are born once will die twice; those who are born twice will die once.

⁵³ From the English rendering it might be inferred that John is doubtful whether anyone will be thrown into the lake of fire. The Greek construction, however, is not so indefinite. John uses a first-class condition, which assumes the reality of the first clause and shows the consequences in the second clause. Thus we might paraphrase the verse: "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, and I assume there were such, he was thrown into the lake of fire." See Johnson: *Revelation*, Electronic Ed.

⁵⁴ Admittedly, the Bible seems to indicate that God "throws" people into hell (Luke 12:5).

⁵⁵ See also Rev 20:10; 19:20; 14:10; Matt 18:8; 23:15, 33; 25:46; Mark 9:46.

⁵⁶ All told, 81% of Americans firmly believe in some type of life after death, with 9% considering it a possibility and only 10% believing that death brings utter finality, the survey found. And while 43% of respondents said that Christianity is their passport to glory, 15% say that they will get to heaven because they “have tried to obey the 10 Commandments.” Another 15% expect to gain admittance because “they are basically a good person.” Among the others, 6% believe that God is letting everyone in, no matter what.

⁵⁷ Preaching Today Citation: Daniel Meyer, “The Light at the End of the Tunnel,” *Preaching Today* No. 238.