

***SUMMARY OF THE STRUGGLE
THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD***

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PART 1. SATAN IS BOUND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS *ON EARTH* (20:1-3)

a. Explanation of the symbols

The symbolic picture in chapter 20:1-3 is concerning the binding of Satan on earth. The symbolic picture is of a mighty angel seizing the dragon, binding him with a great chain, throwing him into the Abyss, locking and sealing the Abyss for 1000 years in order to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the 1000 years were ended. After the 1000 years Satan must be set free for a short time.

20:1 “And I saw an angel coming down from heaven”. The phrase “And I saw”¹ appears seven times: three times in section 6 (19:11,17,19) and four times in section 7 (20:1,4,11; 21:1). Every time it introduces *a specific vision which points to the very end of this age*. ‘The end of this age’ is the final period in the history of the world stretching from Christ’s first coming to his second coming.² The phrase puts the visions into a certain relationship with one another, but note, without expressing a linear chronological order!

Although Christ reveals himself during the Old Testament period as ‘the Angel of the Lord’ (Zechariah 1:8-13; 3:1-7; Malachi 3:1-5), he is never called ‘an angel’. God commands angels to worship Christ (Hebrews 1:6). While God calls angels ‘servants’, he calls Christ ‘God’ and says that his kingdom will last forever (Hebrews 1:7-8). Because in the whole New Testament it is Christ who binds Satan (Matthew 12:29; John 12:31-32), the symbolic action of this angel here represents Christ binding Satan during his first coming! Christ possesses the key, that is, the authority to lock and unlock the events in history (1:18; 3:7-8). Christ gave the fallen star (the fallen angel, Satan) authority to unlock the Abyss with a view to torment the unbelievers (9:1-2; cf. 11:7). Likewise Christ gave an ordinary angel authority to lock the Abyss with a view to curb the evil influence of Satan (20:1-3).

“having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.”³ The Abyss is generally contrasted with the sky and earth and refers to the depth of the sea (Psalm 33:7; 107:26)⁴. It is commonly pictured as a place

¹ και ειδον (viaa)

² The ends of the ages (επι συντελεια των αιωνων) is sometimes conceived as one period (αιων) and other times as a series of distinct periods (αιωνων). It stretches from the close of the Old Testament period at Christ’s first coming (Hebrews 1:2; 9:26) to the close of the New Testament period at Christ’s second coming (Matthew 13:39; 24:3; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

³ εχοντα (νρρα) την κλειν της αβυσσου και αλυσιν μεγαλην επι την χειρα αυτου

⁴ Walter Bauer, William Arndt, Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1952, p.2

deep under the earth, connected to the surface of the earth by a shaft. It is the abode of the dead (Romans 10:7); the abode of demons (9:1-12; Luke 8:31); the abode of the angel or king of the demons (9:11); the dungeon where the devil is kept (20:3); and the abode of the beast, the final antichrist (11:7; 17:8). The Abyss is capable of being closed with a lid that is locked and sealed (20:1,3). And it can only be opened with 'the key' which God provides, that is, by God's permissive decree (9:1). A key is a symbol of authority and power to decide and rule (cf. 1:18; 3:7-8). Only by Christ's permissive will is Satan not hindered to carry out his evil plan in unbelievers (cf. 9:4).

While in Revelation 20:3 Satan is pictured as being shut up in the Abyss with respect to his deceiving the nations, in Revelation 9:1 Satan is pictured as having received authority and power (the key) over all those in the Abyss, to let them out in order to harm people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:4). Thus with respect to people that are sealed and with respect to the proclamation of the gospel to all nations in the world, Satan is bound! That is a great encouragement for Christians! But with respect to people who are not sealed Satan can do great harm. That is a warning for non-Christians. Of course this authority and power given to Satan is only insofar God permits him. Absolute authority and power in heaven and on earth belongs to God in Christ (Psalm 146:10; Matthew 28:18)!

The Abyss must be distinguished from Sheol (Hebrew) or Hades (Greek) in the sense of the state of the dead (Matthew 16:18; Revelation 1:18) or in the sense of the grave (the place of the bodies of those who have died) (Acts 2:27,31). However, the Abyss is identical with Sheol or Hades in the sense of the place of destruction (Abaddon)(Job 26:6) or hell (the place of the spirits of unbelievers who have died (Matthew 11:23; Luke 16:23-24). And the word Abyss must be distinguished from the word 'Tartarus' (2 Peter 2:4), which the Greeks regarded as a subterranean place lower than Hades (the abode of the dead) where divine punishment was meted out. This was also how Jewish apocalyptic literature regarded Tartarus (cf. Job 41:24 in the Greek translation of the Old Testament).

Before the final judgement day hell is called the Abyss (9:2; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3,7; Luke 8:31). After the final judgement day hell is called the lake of burning sulphur (19:18; 20:14,15; 21:8).

The Abyss and the lake of burning sulphur are not quite the same, because no one is permitted to leave the last! The lake of burning sulphur is the place of eternal punishment for all the lost. Burning sulphur is symbolic of darkness and distress (cf. 9:17-18; 14:10-11).

20:2 "He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan and bound him for a thousand years."⁵

20:3 "He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him"⁶

In the beginning of the Bible Satan was symbolically a star, a created angel that fell into sin (cf. Isaiah 14:12) somewhere between the completion of the creation of the earth (Genesis 1:31) and the fall of man in Paradise (Genesis 3:1). At that time Satan swept a third of the angels with him in his fall (12:4).

At his first coming Christ bound Satan. The word 'bind'⁷ is exactly the same as in Matthew 12:29 and proves that *Christ bound Satan at his first coming* when he also established his kingdom (his sovereign reign in the hearts and lives of Christians) on this present earth (Matthew 12:28).

Christ bound Satan through his life and ministry on earth and consequently Jesus saw "Satan once for all time fall like lightning from heaven"⁸ (Luke 10:18). The word 'fall' never means 'descend or coming down', but always 'fallen from a higher position' (8:10; 2:5) and symbolically 'destroyed' (14:8). Thus, Satan lies on the earth as one that has fallen; as one that has been smacked down from heaven onto the earth"⁹ (9:1). He was smacked down with force and disgust. His lying smacked down on the earth describes his present state!

⁵ και εκρατησεν > κρατω (viaa) τον δρακοντα, ο οφεις ο αρχαιος, ος εστιν Διαβολος και ο Σατανας, και εδησεν > δεω (viaa) αυτον χιλια ετη

⁶ και εβαλεν (viaa) αυτον εις την αβυσσον και εκλεισεν (viaa) και εσφραγισεν (viaa) επανω αυτου

⁷ εαν μη πρωτον δηση > δεω (vsaa) τον ισχυρον

⁸ πεσοντα > πιπτω (vraa). The aorist tense emphasises that the action is once for all time!

⁹ πεπωκοτα > πιπτω (vpra). The perfect tense indicates a past completed action with the continuance of the results or state!

Christ especially bound Satan through his death and resurrection (cf. 12:5) and consequently Satan “once for all time was hurled down out of heaven onto the earth”¹⁰ (the word ‘hurled’ is used three times in 12:8-9).

The fact that Satan is bound means that he is denied full control of the destiny of human history and of the nations within history. From Christ’s first coming Satan has been *prevented from giving full vent* to his antichristian thrust via his anti-Christian governments and their persecutions (the beast out of the sea), his anti-Christian religions, philosophies and sciences and their perversions (the beast out of the earth, the false prophet), his anti-Christian culture and its seductions (Babylon the Great, the great prostitute) and all the people who have the mark of the beast.

The Abyss is locked and sealed over Satan, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore. In the apocalyptic book of Revelation, binding Satan with a great chain, throwing him into the Abyss and locking and sealing the Abyss are not intended to be understood in a *literalistic* way. This *description of the action is symbolic*, but the result is literally true: Satan is prevented from doing certain things! His authority and power has been curbed, curtailed, restrained or limited. The binding (20:2; Matthew 12:29), the fall (9:1; Luke 10:18) or the driving out of Satan (John 12:31) at Christ’s first coming did not remove Satan from the earthly scene. It bound him for a symbolic thousand years, that is, for an ultimate complete period of time, until Christ has carried out God’s complete work of salvation of his people.

“to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.”¹¹

There is no mention that Satan is prevented from doing any evil on earth! The immediate context teaches that Satan is prevented from continuing to deceive the nations! Throughout the whole New Testament period from Christ’s first coming to Christ’s second coming Satan is prevented from destroying the Church as an institute proclaiming the gospel (11:3-6), but he is not prevented from continually attacking Christians (Ephesians 6:10-18). Satan is prevented from stopping Christians from proclaiming the gospel in every nation (Matthew 24:14), but he is not prevented from hindering the progress of proclaiming the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18). See the introduction to chapter 20 (background).

“After that, he must be set free for a short time.”¹² See Revelation 20:7.

b. Different views about the angel coming down from heaven (20:1)

There are two views. See the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. The angel coming down from heaven is *Christ*.¹³ In the Old Testament the Angel of the Lord is God (Genesis 22:15-17; Hebrews 6:13) or Christ (Malachi 3:1). Some commentators maintain that the voice of the archangel is actually the voice of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16; cf. John 5:25-29), that the archangel Michael represents Christ and maintain that only Christ is powerful enough to thump down Satan (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7-8). In Revelation 10:1 the mighty angel with the book in his hand must be Christ (10:1). And in Revelation 20:1 the angel actually possesses the key and is not given the key (1:5,18; 3:7). Therefore, the angel in Revelation 20:1 best applies to Christ.

Critique.

The term ‘Angel of the Lord’ is clearly distinguished from the other angels in the Bible.

Second view. (The correct explanation) It is an ordinary angel coming down from heaven, but his symbolic action represents Christ binding Satan during his first coming.¹⁴

c. Different views about Satan bound (20:2-3)

There are three views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) Satan is at present not bound, but will be bound at Christ’s second return *at the beginning of the future millennial kingdom*.¹⁵ During the whole New Testament period Satan is the ruler

¹⁰ εβληθη > βαλλω (viap). The aorist tense emphasises that the action is once for all time!

¹¹ ινα μη πλανηση > πλαναω (vsaa) επι τα εθνη αχρι τελεσθη > τελεω (vsap) τα χιλια επι

¹² μετα ταυτα δει (vira) λυθηναι > λυω (vnap) αυτον μικρον χρονον

¹³ John Gilmore. Probing Heaven, pp. 375-378

¹⁴ Greijdanus p. 292; Hendriksen p. 223

of the kingdom of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). He claims that all authority and splendour of all the kingdoms of the world has been given to him (Luke 4:5-6). The whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

While Revelation 20:1-3 does not say that Satan's angels (the evil spirits) are bound and cast into the bottomless pit, the *inference* is that they are, because they do not appear to be present on the future millennial earth.¹⁶

Second view. Satan has been bound at Christ's first coming *in an absolute sense*, so that he can do no evil at all.¹⁷

Third view. (The correct explanation) Satan has been bound *at Christ's first coming* at the beginning of the New Testament period in the sense that *he cannot deceive the nations*. His binding does not suggest that Satan can do no evil, but suggests that Satan's purpose to deceive the nations and keep them away from Christ has been curtailed (curbed, restrained, limited).¹⁸ Only this explanation is in harmony with everything the New Testament teaches about Satan!

PART 2. CHRISTIANS REIGN WITH CHRIST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS IN HEAVEN (20:4-6)

The symbolic picture is of thrones on which are seated those who had been given authority to judge. They are the souls of Christians that had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and the souls of Christians that had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. These souls of Christians 'lived' and reigned with Christ a 1000 years.

21:4 "I saw thrones on which were seated both those who had been given authority to judge¹⁹ and the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and the word of God²⁰ as well as those who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.²¹

And they lived²² (rather than the translation: 'they came to life'²³) and reigned with Christ a thousand years."²⁴

a. Explanation of the thrones (20:4)

Where are the thrones? Revelation chapter 20 does not say where these thrones are. Therefore we must look to the context (the book of Revelation) and the Bible. The word 'throne(s)' appears 47 times in the book of Revelation and besides the throne of Satan (2:13) and the throne of the beast (13:2), they all refer to the throne of God (Christ) which is always *in heaven!* (1:4-5; 3:21; 4:2,4; 5:6,7,13; 7:9,10,11,15; 12:5; 15:5 and 16:17; 20:4,11)(cf. Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:3,20-23; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:22). John sees these thrones, not on earth, but *in heaven*. Heaven is the place where God (Christ) lives, reigns and judges! And those people who are given authority to judge together with Jesus Christ are also seated on thrones *in heaven*. 'Heaven' is not a physical place. It is a spiritual reality which surpasses the physical reality and is wherever God (Christ) is now.

From where does Jesus Christ reign? In the entire book of Revelation Christ reigns over the universe from God's throne *in heaven* (Revelation chapters 5 and 12; cf. Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22).

¹⁵ Larkin, Revelation pp. 175-176; Tenney, p. 89

¹⁶ Larkin, Revelation p. 91

¹⁷ W. Milligan, The Expositor's Bible, Vol. VI, p 913

¹⁸ Greijdanus, p 294; Hendriksen pp. 226-227

¹⁹ Και ειδον (viaa) θρονους, και (both) εκαθισαν (viaa) επ αυτους, και κριμα εδοθη (viap) αυτοις

²⁰ και (and) τας ψυχας των πεπελεκισμενων > πελεκιζω (to behead with an axe)(vnp) δια την μαρτυριαν Ιησου και δια τον λογον του θεου

²¹ και (as well as) οτινες ου προσεκυνησαν (viaa) το θηριον ουδε την εικονα αυτου και ουκ ελαβεν (viaa) το χαραγμα επι το μετωπον και επι την χειρα αυτων

²² American Standard Version

²³ New International Version

²⁴ και εζησαν > ζω (viaa) και εβασιλευσαν (viaa) μετα του Χριστου χιλια ετη.

b. Explanation of the judges (20:4)

From where will Jesus Christ judge in the final judgement? At his second coming Jesus will descend *from heaven* and come on *the clouds of the sky* (1:7; Matthew 24:30). He will send his angels to gather the elect (the believers) (14:16; Matthew 13:39; 24:31) and snatch them up into the clouds to meet and welcome him *in the air* (1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10). He will sit on his throne of glory (Matthew 25:31) from where he will judge in the final judgement of everyone that ever lived (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11). Because the present earth and the starry heaven (the physical universe) will flee from his presence at his second coming (6:14; 20:11; cf. 2 Peter 3:10), his judgement throne will not stand on earth.

Who have been given authority to judge? Christ conferred the kingdom to Christians (Matthew 21:43). They will eat and drink at his table in his kingdom (Matthew 8:11). Especially the eleven disciples of Jesus will sit on thrones judging ‘the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29-30). The twelve tribes of Israel most probably refers to all Christians (Galatians 6:16; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; Romans 9:6). And Christians in their turn will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:2) and the non-Christian nations (2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4).

c. Explanation of the souls (20:4)

Where are the disembodied souls? John saw souls, not bodies. These souls are now *in heaven* (6:9-11). They were decapitated *on earth* with a double-edged axe according to Roman custom (cf. Romans 13:4). Or they had died a natural death at the end of their lives throughout which they had held on to Christ’s testimony and God’s Word. The white robes and the resting of the souls (6:11) suggest a provisional kind of blessedness in heaven (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1,8; Philippians 1:23) that looks forward to the physical resurrection of their bodies and the final judgement. Also in Revelation chapter 20 the souls wait for the physical resurrection of their bodies and the final judgement. In the book of Revelation the transfer (translation or conveyance) of their souls from the place where they died *on earth* to *heaven* where they reign with Christ is symbolically called ‘the first resurrection’. The future physical resurrection of their bodies is symbolically called ‘the second resurrection’ (20:5; cf. 20:12a,13a).

d. Explanation of the word ‘lived’ (20:4-5)

The Greek verb ‘to live’²⁵ has several different meanings in the New Testament.
See introduction to chapter 20 (background).

In Revelation 20:5-6 it means: The souls of departed Christians are spiritually resurrected in the sense of spiritually translated into the presence of God. After their physical death, their souls are translated or carried to God in heaven where they continue to live the regenerated life in heaven.

Other passages that teach that the souls of departed Christians live spiritually in heaven.

He who believes in Christ, even *though he dies* (physically, that is, share in the first death), *will live* (spiritually). He will possess everlasting life in heavenly glory, that is, share in the first resurrection. And whoever lives and believes in Christ (lives spiritually as a believer on earth) will never die (will never taste everlasting death, that is, never share in the second death)²⁶ (John 11:25-26).

“If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die (that is, share in the second death); but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you *will live*” (that is, share in the first resurrection)²⁷ (Romans 8:13b).

“He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep (that is, share in the first death), we may *live* together with him” (that is, share in the first resurrection)²⁸ (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

The souls of those who died (physically, that is share in the first death) ... “*lived (entered the real life, were translated or transferred into heaven) and reigned with Christ*”. If John had meant a physical resurrection he

²⁵ ζαω (εζησαν)

²⁶ Εγω ειμι (νιρα) η αναστασις και η ζωη. ο πιστευων (νρρα) εις εμε καν αποθανη > αποθνησκω (vsaa) (physically) ζησεται (νιφm)(spiritually in heaven) και πας ζων (νρρα) (spiritually on earth) και πιστευων (νρρα) εις εμε ου μη αποθανη (vsaa) (the second death) εις τον αιωνα

²⁷ ει γαρ κατα σαρκα ζητε (νιρα) μελλετε (νιρα+) αποθνησκειν (νιρα),
ει δε πνευματι τας πραξεις του σωματος θανατουτε (νιρα) ζησεσθε (νιφm)

²⁸ του αποθανοντος (νρρα) υπερ ημων ινα ειτε γρηγορωμεν (νσρα) ειτε καθευδωμεν (νσρα) αμα συν αυτο ζησωμεν (vsaa)

would probably have said: “They stood”²⁹ on their feet (11:11; 20:12) instead of: “They lived”. He is using the word ‘live’ in the sense of entering the spiritual life in heavenly glory after their physical death. “They lived” means they share in the first resurrection³⁰ (20:4–5). Then their life really begins! Then they are clothed with splendour (6:11). When Christians die physically, they are really blessed (14:13)!

Conclusion.

Jesus speaks of the resurrection in three meanings:

(1) *The spiritual resurrection into the Christian life on the old earth.* The soul (or spirit) of the Christian is resurrected from spiritual death on this present old earth *before* his physical death in order to live the spiritual, supernatural life on this present old earth (the regenerated life *on the old earth*)(John 5:25).

(2) *The spiritual resurrection into the presence of Christ in heaven.* The soul (or spirit) of the Christian is resurrected from living in his body on this present old earth *at* his physical death in order to live the spiritual, eternal life in heavenly glory (the regenerated life *in heaven*) (Luke 20:37-38; Revelation 20:4-6). In other words: his soul is translated, transferred or conveyed into heaven.

(3) *The physical resurrection into an immortal life on the new earth.* The body of the Christian is resurrected from physical death on this present old earth *at* Christ’s second coming in order to live the eternal life in a perfect spirit and perfect body like that of Jesus Christ on the new earth (the regenerated life *on the new earth*).

Revelation 20:4-5 speaks of Christians *who have died* physically. We may call this the ‘first death’ in contrast to ‘the second death’ in Revelation 20:5-6. They died physically either in violent persecution or as faithful and persevering followers of Christ and his Word. This vision DOES NOT suggest that the souls of these people were “physically resurrected” and then interpret this to mean: their bodies were physically resurrected and they then (in their resurrected bodies) reigned with Christ *on earth*. But this vision DOES SAY that *the souls* (not bodies) of these people “lived” and reigned with Christ *in heaven* (not on earth)

The souls of believers are not physically resurrected, but are regenerated (“made alive” in Ephesians 2:5; cf. John 5:25) on earth. These souls live eternally, they cannot die and therefore cannot be resurrected, but they can be translated (transferred or conveyed) from earth to heaven (6:9; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 8:55; 16:22). Thus the souls of Christians enter the fullness of life in heavenly glory at the physical death of their bodies. Revelation 20:4-5 does not speak of a physical resurrection, but of the spiritual resurrection in the sense of *the souls of Christians being translated (conveyed, carried) into heaven* (cf. John 11:25; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:1,8) where they will reign together with Christ until they are brought with Christ at Christ’s second coming when their bodies will also be resurrected (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17).

[e. Explanation of those who participate in the reign \(20:4,6\)](#)

Who sit on thrones and reign with Christ?

First. The souls of those who had been given authority to judge participate in the reign. The apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, which most probably refers to all Christians (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29-30). And other Christians will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:2) and the non-Christian nations (2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4).

Second. The souls of Christians who have been martyred participate in the reign. These Christians have been persecuted and even martyred on earth because of the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God. ‘The testimony of Jesus’ above all means the truth about God and himself about which Jesus Christ himself testified. The word of God’ means the truth of the Bible. Thus, these Christians have been persecuted and even martyred because of who Jesus Christ is; because of what Jesus Christ has accomplished by his death and resurrection; because of what Jesus Christ taught (the Bible) and because of the call of Jesus Christ to repent and to reform one’s life (cf. 6:9). The testimony of Jesus may include their witnessing about Jesus

²⁹ εστησαν > ιστημι (viaa) επι τους ποδας (11:11); εστωτας > ιστημι (vpra) ενωπιον του θρονου (20:12)

³⁰ τας ψυχας ... εζησαν (viaa) και εβασιλευσαν (viaa) μετα Χριστου χιλια ετη.

οι λοιποι των νεκρων ουκ εζησαν (viaa) αχρι τελεσθη (vsap) τα χιλια ετη. αυτη η αναστασις η πρωτη

Christ and his Word. Christians are persecuted and even martyred simply because they belong to Jesus Christ and associate themselves with Jesus Christ and his cause. They sit on the thrones and reign with Christ.

Third. The souls of those who had not worshipped the beast participate in the reign. The words “and those who had not worshipped the beast ...”³¹ does not only characterise the previously mentioned martyrs, but also others who had not lost their lives because of being Christians, but had died after living and serving the Lord faithfully. Thus, not only the apostles and martyrs, but also the ordinary Christians who did not worship the beast and did not receive the mark of the beast sit on these thrones and reign with Christ. These are Christians who died as a Christian, holding on to their Christian faith. At his second coming Christ will bring these souls with him and only at that time resurrect their bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; cf. John 5:28-29).

Non-Christians also die, but out of all people who die on earth, only Christians “lived and reigned” with Christ a 1000 years. Only they share in the first resurrection – their souls are translated into heaven. Only they will never share in the second death – they will never be thrown into hell (2:11)! The rest of the dead (all the godless, the wicked and the unbelievers) “did not live” until the 1000 years were ended. Only they do not share in the first resurrection. Only they will certainly share in the second death.

f. Explanation of the nature of their reign (20:4,6)

In Revelation 20:1-7 there is no mention of *an earthly kingdom of peace*. There is no mention about the nature of the reign of the saints with Christ. Therefore we must look to the context and the Bible. According to the book of Revelation itself, the activities of the saints in heaven include the following. The ransomed souls *sit* with Christ on his throne (3:21) or *stand* with him on Mount Zion (14:1). They *pray* that God execute his just judgements on the wicked in the world (6:9-11). They *serve* him day and night (7:15). They *sing* before his throne in heaven (14:3; 15:3). They *praise* Christ for his true and just judgements (15:2-3). They are given authority to *judge*, that is, to share in the final judgement of the Jews and the nations (2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4)(Matthew 19:28; Luke 22: 28-30; 1 Corinthians 6:2). Thus, they participate in the *reign* of Christ. How, is not specified (20:6)!

During this symbolic period of 1000 years two things happen: First, the still living Christians *on earth* spread the gospel everywhere from nation to nation (Matthew 24:14; Philippians 1:22), because Satan’s power has been curtailed. And secondly, the departed Christians (souls) *in heaven* reign with Christ (Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:22-24). The 1000 years, therefore, does not refer to a period of paradise for everyone on earth at the end of world history, but to a period of paradise for the departed Christians in heaven at the present time (2 Corinthians 5:1,8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)!

g. Explanation of the thousand years (20:4-6)

The number 1000 is a symbolic number and only occurs six times in one single passage in the Bible. One rule of interpretation is that a difficult or obscure passage in the Bible must be interpreted in the light of all other very clear teachings in the Bible. New Testament eschatology must not be build around Revelation 20, but rather Revelation 20 must be interpreted in the light of all the other clear teachings in the New Testament.

See also supplement 2, the symbolism of numbers.

The 1000 years is not a literal number. The futurist (premillennial, dispensational) view regards much of the book of Revelation as a *historic book* and consequently interprets many symbols and numbers *literally*. However, the book of Revelation is *an apocalypse* making use of symbols and numbers that must be interpreted *figuratively or symbolically* (1:1)! The figures and symbols point to literal realities that surpass the literal realities of the figures and symbols.

The 1000 years is an ultimate complete period decreed by God. The 1000 years (10x10x10) is symbolic of *an ultimate complete period of time*, which God has decreed for the unfolding of his eternal plan of salvation. It is a long time and yet a divinely limited time.

³¹ και οἰτινες (denotes another group of people)

The symbolic 1000 years period clearly *begins* with the binding of Satan. The rest of the Bible clearly teaches that Satan was bound at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-30; Luke 10:17-20; John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15; 1:13; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:5-11)! Thus, the 1000 years period *begins* at Christ's first coming! *During* the symbolic 1000 years period Satan remains bound on earth so that the still living Christians can spread the gospel to all the nations. And during that same 1000 year period the departed saints reign with Christ in heaven. The symbolic 1000 years period clearly *ends* at Christ's second coming! At Christ's second coming the following will take place: the great tribulation will end with the final battle, when Satan and all his antichristian allies will be irrevocably beaten and removed forever (20:7-10); the general resurrection of the dead, the final judgement of everybody and the renewal of all things (20:11-15).

The 1000 years does not follow the great tribulation, but ends with the great tribulation (20:7-10; cf. Matthew 24:21-25). The expression "and those who had not worshipped the beast ...etc. (20:4)" is no proof for the futurist view that the 1000 years must *follow* the final days of the future tribulation period, as if the beast (antichrist) only operates in the future tribulation period.

Throughout the whole New Testament period there are *many antichrists* (beasts)(1 John 2:18; 4:1,3; 2 John 7)! Throughout the whole New Testament period *believers have tribulation* (John 7:7; 15:18-21; 16:33; Matthew 5:10-11; 24:4-14; James 1:2-4; cf. 6:3-11; 18:20; 19:2)! And throughout the whole New Testament period believers will come out of the tribulation (7:14)! Thus, the 1000 years does not follow 'the great tribulation' mentioned in Matthew 24:21-25, but ends with this great tribulation. In the section Revelation chapters 20 to 22, 'the great tribulation' of Matthew 24:21-25 is described in Revelation 20:7-10!

Conclusion: *the 1000 years is another symbolic number signifying the messianic age, the gospel age or the whole New Testament period, that is the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming!*

The book of Revelation does not teach a future millennium at the end of world history, but rather *an inaugurated, realised or present millennium* in which we are living now!

21:5 "The rest of the dead *did not live* (rather than the translation: 'they did not come to life') until the thousand years were ended."³² The meaning is not that the unbelievers and wicked people would only be physically resurrected after the 1000 years. The conjunction 'until' denotes the end of a particular period of time³³. Until the end of the 1000 years they will not share in eternal life and they will not be spiritually translated (transferred, conveyed, carried) into heaven. When they die physically they are already lost and condemned (John 3:18,36). They are not translated to heaven, but to hell (Luke 16:22-31)! At the general resurrection of the body they will be thrown soul and body in the lake of fire (20:11-15; Matthew 25:46; 10:28).

"This is the first resurrection."³⁴ In the Gospel of John *the first resurrection begins* here on earth when a person hears the voice of Christ and receives eternal life (he is born again, that is, his soul or spirit is spiritually regenerated or resurrected here on earth) (John 5:24-26). And *the first resurrection culminates* when his body dies physically and his soul (spirit) is spiritually translated into the presence of Christ in heaven (John 11:25)!

In the Book of Revelation *the first resurrection also culminates* in heaven when his body dies physically, but his soul (spirit) is spiritually translated (conveyed) into the presence of Christ in heaven (20:5-6).

While John 5:24-26 emphasises the beginning phase of the first resurrection *on earth*, Revelation 20:5-6 emphasises the latter phase of the first resurrection *in heaven*.

It is called 'the first' resurrection, because it is the most important and all controlling event for those who share in it. It means that they share in eternal life, blessedness and joy. In this life nothing is more important than rebirth (John 5:24-26). And in death nothing is more important than going to be with Jesus Christ! However, unbelievers have no part in the first resurrection (20:4-6): they are not born-again and they are not translated into heaven when they die physically. Unbelievers will perish and suffer eternal punishment (John 3:16; Matthew 25:46).

³² οι λοιποι των νεκρων ουκ εζησαν (viaa) αχρι τελεσθη > τελεω (vsap) τα χιλια ετη.

³³ Until (αχρι) means "right until the time when" (Acts 7:18 – they increased in number until the time when another king rose up over Egypt).

Cf. Revelation 2:25 and 17:17.

³⁴ αυτη η αναστασις η πρωτη

21:6 “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection.”³⁵ Those who participate in the first resurrection are blessed because they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14), they have been redeemed from the earth (14:3) and because they finally died in the Lord (14:13).

“The second death has no power over them.”³⁶ In the Gospel of John *the second death begins* here on earth when a person remains spiritually dead (John 3:18,36). In the Book of Revelation *the second death reaches its final destination* when the spirit or soul and body of the unbeliever is thrown into hell (20:14; 21:8; cf. Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:43-48).

However, the second death has no power over those who have a part in the first resurrection. Believers in Jesus Christ will never be hurt by the second death (2:11)! They will never perish (John 3:16-18,36; 5:24; 10:28)! This is very encouraging for Christians!

“but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”³⁷

At his first coming Christ fulfilled the Old Testament Law and thus also the law about special priests (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 7:11-28). Since that time every believer is a priest on earth (1:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9-10) and after his physical death he continues to be a priest in heaven (cf. 22:4).

h. Different views about the 1000 years (20:1-7)

There are six views. See supplement 5 and 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. The historic millennial view.³⁸ The 1000 year period begins with Constantine, Charlemagne, etc. in the past history.

Second view. The historic premillennial view.³⁹ The 1000 years period is a *literal* and physical future kingdom of peace *after Christ's second coming*. Historic premillennialists believe in *one second coming* of Christ before the millennium. There will be no two returns of Christ, no rapture.

Third view. The postmillennial view.⁴⁰ The 1000 years period is a *symbol* for the golden age of indefinite length at the end of the present gospel age *before Christ's second coming*. The gospel age gradually merges into the millennial age as more and more people are converted and the world is being Christianized. It would be a period in which this present world would enjoy almost complete righteousness; evil in its many forms would be reduced to negligible proportions; Christian principles would be the rule; and the majority of people in all the nations would be converted. It ends at Christ's second coming.

Fourth view. The dispensational premillennial view.⁴¹ The 1000 years period is a literal and physical future kingdom of peace *after Christ's so-called future second return*. The millennial kingdom would nevertheless end in failure.

Fifth view. Symbolic future millennialism.⁴² The 1000 years period is a symbol of eternity.

Sixth view. (The correct explanation.) Inaugurated or realized millennialism.⁴³ The 1000 years is a *symbol* signifying the present messianic age (the gospel age or the whole New Testament period including the intermediate state between death and resurrection) *before Christ's second coming*. This period has already begun and stretches *from Christ's first coming* (12:5) *to Christ's second coming* (14:14-20)! The millennium (symbolic 1000 years period) has already begun at Christ's first coming (12:10) and will end with Christ's second coming (11:15)! We are presently living in this symbolic 1000 year period! That is why it is called *inaugurated, realized or present millennialism*.

³⁵ μακαριος και αγιος ο εχων (vppa) μερος εν τη αναστασει τη πρωτη.

³⁶ επι τούτων ο δευτερος θανατος ουκ εχει (vīpa) εξουσιαν

³⁷ αλλ εσονται (vifm) ιερεις του θεου και του Χριστου, και βασιλευσουσιν (vifa) μετ αυτου [τα] χιλια ετη

³⁸ Cf. Hengstenberg, Keil, etc.

³⁹ George E. Ladd, see supplement 6

⁴⁰ Loraine Boettner, see supplement 6

⁴¹ Larkin, see supplement 6.

⁴² H. Hoekstra, Bijdrage tot de Kennis en de Beoordeeling van het Chiliasme, p 120; A Kuyper, Sr. Van de Voleinding, Vol. IV, p 343

⁴³ Greijdanus, Hendriksen, Berkhof, Groenewald, Gilmore, etc

Matthew 12:28-30, Luke 17:20-21 and most of the parables prove that the kingdom is already present from Christ's first coming and that the kingdom is growing until it reaches its future completeness and perfection, not before, but at Christ's second coming! Although the kingdom is growing in quantity (more and more people enter the kingdom all the time) and in quality (these people are more and more conformed to Christ's likeness), the kingdom in its final perfect phase will only come when Christ has destroyed all dominion, authority and power, when he has put all his enemies under his feet and when he has destroyed death (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26)! The kingdom in its final perfect phase will come suddenly, unexpectedly and only by divine intervention at Christ's second coming! Then the kingdom will be the eternal kingdom in which God and Jesus Christ will reign on the throne forever and ever (11:15; 22:3; 2 Peter 1:11).

[i. Explanation of the first resurrection and the second death \(20:5-6\)](#)

It is meaningful to compare Revelation 20:5-6 with John 5:24-29. Both passages speak directly or indirectly about two kinds of death and two kinds of resurrection.

John 5:24-26 speaks especially of something that happens throughout the whole New Testament period. Jesus Christ speaks of the spiritual death of all people in the sense that no natural man is born again. And he speaks of *the spiritual resurrection of only believers* in the sense that one receives eternal life by hearing Christ's Word and by believing in the God who sent Jesus Christ.

John 5:28-29 speaks especially of something that happens at Christ's second coming. Jesus Christ speaks of the physical death of all people in the sense that all human beings die physically. And he speaks of *the physical resurrection of only believers unto eternal life* in the sense that they live eternally with body and soul together with Christ in heaven and on the new earth. And he speaks of *the physical resurrection of only unbelievers unto eternal condemnation* in the sense that they are eternally separated from God.

Revelation 20:5 speaks of something that happens throughout the whole New Testament period. John assumes the physical death (the first death) of all people in the sense that all human beings die physically. And he speaks of *the spiritual resurrection (the first resurrection) of only believers* in the sense that their souls are translated (conveyed) into Christ's presence in heaven immediately at their physical death. The souls of unbelievers, however, are not translated into Christ's presence.

Revelation 20:6 speaks of something that happens at Christ's second coming. John assumes the physical resurrection (the second resurrection) of all human beings in the sense that their dead bodies are resurrected. And he speaks of *the spiritual (and physical) death (the second death) of only unbelievers* in the sense that their souls and bodies are thrown into hell at the final judgement.

The expressions 'the first resurrection' and 'the second death' are figures of speech, called an oxymoron⁴⁴. An oxymoron is a pointed combination of seemingly contradictory expressions forming a paradox. For example, 'born again' (John 3:3), 'a living sacrifice' (Romans 12:1), 'law of liberty' (James 1:25), 'living stones' (1 Peter 2:5), 'first resurrection' and 'second death' (20:5-6).

In Revelation 20:5-6 there is *a paradox of consequence*. The paradox of consequence in the first resurrection is that the (physical) *death of believers is a resurrection* (the spiritual resurrection or translation of their souls into heaven). The paradox in consequence in the second death is that the (physical) *resurrection of unbelievers is a death* (the spiritual and eternal death of their souls and bodies into hell). Those who share in the first resurrection are the saved (born again). Those who share in the second death are the lost (not born again).

In Revelation 20:5-6 there is also *a paradox of sequence*. The paradox in sequence is that the second death implies the existence of the first death. Just as the first death is the initial physical death due to initial spiritual death of *all human beings* (cf. Romans 6:23), so second death is the final spiritual and physical death of *only unbelievers*!

The paradox in sequence is also that the first resurrection implies the existence of the second resurrection. Just as the first resurrection is the initial spiritual translation into heaven due to the initial spiritual

⁴⁴ Greek: oxus = sharp, moros = foolish.

regeneration of *only believers*, so the second resurrection is the final physical resurrection of *all human beings*!

The paradox is that while all believers and unbelievers share in the first death (the physical death), only believers share in the first resurrection (the translation of their souls into heaven). The paradox is that while all believers and unbelievers share in the second resurrection (the general physical resurrection), only unbelievers share in the second death (the damnation in hell). *The first death and the second resurrection are singular historical events for every person, but the first resurrection and the second death last for all eternity for believers and unbelievers respectively.*

The difference between John 5:24-29 and Revelation 20:4-6 is that the spiritual resurrection in the Gospel of John is primary the spiritual regeneration of Christians *on earth*, while in the book of Revelation it is primary the spiritual translation (transference, conveyance, entrance) of Christians *into heaven* into the presence of Christ.

j. Different views about the first resurrection and the second death (20:5-6)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The first resurrection is the *physical* resurrection of Christians and the second death is the *physical* plunge into hell of non-Christians.⁴⁵ The first resurrection is the final stage for Christians. The second resurrection implied is the *physical* resurrection of the non-Christians 1000 years later.⁴⁶

Second view. (The correct explanation) The first resurrection is *the translation (conveyance)* of the souls of Christians who have died into Christ's presence as a consequence of their initial spiritual regeneration during their lives. They enter the intermediate stage between physical death and physical resurrection. And the second death is *the descent* of the bodies and souls of non-Christians into hell as a consequence of their remaining spiritually dead and unrepentant.

PART 3. THE RELEASE OF SATAN AND THE FINAL BATTLE (20:7-10)

a. Explanation of the symbols

The symbolic picture is that of the release of Satan "for a short time" (20:3). He again goes out to deceive the nations in the whole world. Satan and his army surround the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire from heaven devoured them and the Satan was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, to be tormented forever.

20:7 "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison"⁴⁷

The long period consisting of the messianic or gospel age is followed by a very short period called the great tribulation. The release of Satan marks the beginning of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21-25; cf. 3:10; 11:7-10; 13:7-10,14-18; 14:5-13; 16:12-16; 17:10c-14; 19:17-21; 20:7-10). For the sake of God's elect this period will be very short (20:3; Matthew 24:21-22; cf. the symbolic 3½ days in Revelation 11:9).

The people on earth had continued to spurn God's trumpet judgements and bowl judgements. They had refused to accept the gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10) and they had refused to repent (cf. 9:20-21; 16:8-11). As punishment, God finally "gives them over" to Satan and his evil forces (cf. Romans 1:24,26,28). Due to the godlessness and wickedness of the non-Christian nations and nominal Christian congregations in the four corners of the earth God sets Satan free. Thus Satan and all his allies have an opportunity to reveal their hatred against God and God's people openly in the final battle in history. We may not understand why God will release Satan, but we do know that God works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11; cf. Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 45:7; Romans 9:17,22) and for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

⁴⁵ Larkin, Revelation pp 176-180

⁴⁶ John F. Walvoord, "The Rapture Question", 1979, p 208

⁴⁷ Και όταν τελεσθη (vsap) τα χιλια ετη, λυθησεται (vifp) ο Ζαταννας εκ της φυλακτης αυτου

20:8 “and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand of the seashore.”⁴⁸

20:9 “They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves.”⁴⁹ Satan and his allies, the final antichrist (the beast) and the false prophet, will gather the hostile nations for the final battle against Christ and Christians. The three last sections of the book of Revelation refer to this final battle just before Christ’s second coming (16:14,16; 19:19; 20:8; cf. 11:7; 13:7). As in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39 these nations are symbolically called Gog and Magog. There is no allusion that the nations that surrounded God’s people refer to the peripheral nations like China and Russia. Satan’s soldiers come from every nation on earth, are uncountable in number and surround God’s people.

God’s people, wherever they live on earth, are called *the camp of God*, a symbol reminding God’s New Testament people that also they are still aliens and strangers (cf. Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11) trekking through the desert of this world as Israel did before they entered the Promised Land. They are called *the city of God*, a symbol reminding them that they are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26), the city which God loves! *The camp* during the desert journey of Israel and *the later city* Jerusalem cannot be literally meant, because they never existed at the same time! The camp and the city are symbols of the Militant Church on earth, especially in the end-time.

In Revelation 11:7-10 the enemies of God will make war against the two witnesses, overcome them and kill them. They will be allowed to destroy the Militant Church as an institute that proclaims the gospel all over the world. They cannot and do not kill all Christians, because there will still be Christians at Christ’s second coming (Matthew 24:40-41; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10).

“But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”⁵⁰ The battle is not described at all, but the outcome is recorded! At his first coming Christ had curtailed Satan’s power, but he has not yet removed Satan from the earthly scene (Matthew 12:28-30; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13). But at his second coming Christ will destroy Satan and his allies with *one single knockout blow*! There will be no prolonged battle. With one great earthquake (6:12; 11:13; 16:18; cf. Ezekiel 38:19-20), with one slash of his sickle (14:16; cf. sword in Ezekiel 38:21), with a plague of huge hailstones (16:21; cf. Ezekiel 38:22) and with one blast of fire from heaven (20:9; cf. Ezekiel 38:22) Christ (cf. the sovereign LORD in Ezekiel 38:17) will devour this symbolic Gog and the many nations with him (cf. Ezekiel 38:22)! He will overthrow them with the breath of his mouth and destroy them with the splendour of his (second) coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8)! The Bible clearly teaches that all the wicked will be destroyed at Christ’s second coming (Matthew 13:39-43; 24:39; 25:31-33,41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10; 2:8; 2 Peter 3:7,9-10; Revelation 19:17-21). Then Psalm 2:9 will be fulfilled. Christ’s rule with the iron sceptre is not a continuous royal reign over a so-called 1000 year long kingdom, but *a climatic smashing* of all opposition at his one and only second coming.

20:10 “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”⁵¹

Satan will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. This last sentence does not imply that Satan is only thrown into hell a long time (1000 years) after the beast and the false prophet. It only means that the fact that the beast (the antichrist) and the false prophet would also be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur had already been mentioned in the previous section (19:20). But then suddenly and unexpectedly Christ’s second coming will take place (cf. Matthew 24:27-31). Christ’s second coming will be visible all over the world (1:7; cf. Matthew 24:27,30) and audible to everyone in the world (Matthew 24:31; John 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

b. Different views about the final battle (20:7-10)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

⁴⁸ και εξελευσεται (vifm) πλανησαι (vnaa) τα εθνη τα εν ταις τεσσαρσιν γωνιαις της γης, τον Γωγ και Μαγωγ, συναγαγειν (vnaa) αυτους εις τον πολειμον, ων ο αριθμος αυτων ως η αμμος της θαλασσης

⁴⁹ και ανεβησαν (viaa) επι το πλατος της γης και εκυκλευσαν (viaa) την παρεμβολην των αγιων και την πολιν την ηγαπημενην (vnrp)

⁵⁰ και κατεβη (viaa) πυρ εκ του ουρανου και κατεφαγεν (viaa) αυτους

⁵¹ και ο διαβολος ο πλανων (vnpa) αυτους εβληθη (viap) εις την λιμνην του πυρος και θειου, οπου και το θηριον και ο ψευδοπροφητης, και βασανισθησονται > βασανιζω (to torture, to torment)(vifp) ημερας και νυκτος εις τους αιωνας των αιωνων

First view. (The futurist view) The final battle in Revelation 20:7-10 will take place *a 1000 literal years after* Christ's future second return. This last war of the Gog and Magog nations shows the failure of man during the seventh dispensation (the millennium).⁵² "The release of Satan and the war with Gog and Magog reveal that even the rule of absolute righteousness is not sufficient to change men's hearts."⁵³ Christ needs a 1000 literal years to beat up on Satan's supporters. Then at the end of the millennium, POW – Christ wallops all the wicked and Satan in one final blow.⁵⁴

Second view. (The correct explanation) The final battle in Revelation 20:7-10 will take place *at the end of the symbolic* New Testament period (the symbolic 1000 years) just *before* the one and only second coming of Christ. This final battle is a parallel description of the final battle in Revelation 16:14,16 and 19:17-21. It is one single knockout blow!

PART 4. THE FINAL JUDGEMENT DAY (20:11-15)

a. Explanation of the symbols

The symbolic picture is of a great white throne. The present earth and sky fled from the presence of the One sitting on the throne. All people who have ever lived and died are given up by death and Hades and stand before the throne. The books are opened and everyone was judged according to what he had done as was recorded in the books. The names in the book of life determine who has eternal life and who will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur. The final judgement day arrives only *after* the symbolic period of 1000 years, the final battle and the general resurrection of the dead. At Christ's second coming three important events will take place: the general resurrection of the dead, the final judgement of everyone and everything, and the renewal of the earth.

20:11 "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it."⁵⁵ After Jesus Christ was resurrected and ascended to heaven he sat at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19) far above all authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:3,20-23; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:22). John sees this throne, not on earth, but *in heaven or in the sky*, that is, the place where God lives, reigns and judges! The One seated on the throne is Jesus Christ, because he is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and because God had entrusted all judgement to him (John 5:22; cf. Matthew 25:31-33; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

"Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them."⁵⁶ The Old Testament prophets recorded the creation of the present heaven and earth and prophesied the end of this present universe and earth. On the day of the Lord, also called the last day, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken (Matthew 24:29). The elements will be dissolved in fire and everything will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10-13). The heavens would vanish like smoke and the earth would wear out like a garment (Isaiah 51:6; cf. Psalm 102:25-27; Matthew 24:35).

The word 'heaven' has four meanings dependent on its context.

First. Literally the sky (atmosphere) over the earth (Genesis 1:6-8; Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:18; Revelation 16:21).

Second. Literally the universe or the starry heaven (Genesis 1:1; Matthew 24:29,35; Acts 2:19-20; Revelation 6:13; 8:10; 20:11).

Third. Figuratively the abode of God (Matthew 3:16-17; 5:16; 6:9; 14:19; 16:1; Acts 11:5,10; Romans 1:18; Revelation 11:13; 16:11).

Fourth. Figuratively God himself (Matthew 21:25; 13:31; Luke 15:18,21).

The present earth and heaven (universe with all its stars) would flee away (cf. 6:12-14; 11:13; 16:18-21; 20:11; 21:1). They would flee from the visible presence of the One sitting on the throne so that there would be no place for them. This does not mean that they would be destroyed or even annihilated. It means that

⁵² Larkin, Revelation, p.192

⁵³ Tenney, p 90

⁵⁴ John Gilmore, pp. 367-368

⁵⁵ Και ειδον (viaa) θρονον μεγαν λευκον και τον καθημενον (νρηm) επ αυτον

⁵⁶ ου απο του προσωπου εφυγεν (viaa) η γη και ο ουρανος, και τοπος ουχ ευρεθη (viap) αυτοις

they would have served their purpose in this present world history. They would have become superfluous, redundant and would have to make room for Jesus Christ. Because there would no longer be any place for the old earth and old universe, there would also no longer be any place for people to flee to or to hide away from Jesus Christ. Everyone would then stand completely exposed before Jesus Christ (6:12-17; cf. Matthew 25:31-33).

The Old Testament prophets also prophesied the creation of the new heavens and new earth. See Revelation 21:1. The one and only second coming of Christ marks the end of this present age, the end of this present world history and the beginning of the final eternal state in the new heaven on the new earth. Christ's second coming does NOT usher in a millennium on the old earth. It is the beginning of nothing less than *God's eternal kingdom* on the new earth within the renewed universe!

20:12 “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.”⁵⁷

There will be *only one general resurrection* of the dead. The Bible only speaks of the resurrection *in the singular*, never in the plural (Matthew 22:31; John 6:39-40; 11:24; Acts 24:21; Hebrew 6:2). Nowhere in the Bible do we read of two future physical resurrections. Nowhere in the Bible do we read of a resurrection of the bodies of believers 1000 years before another resurrection of the bodies of unbelievers. There is no indication that the physical resurrection depicted in Revelation 20:11-15 must be limited to the unbelieving dead.

All people that have ever lived, both believers and unbelievers, will be resurrected at the one and only second coming of Christ. “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). In John 5:28-29, Jesus says, “Do not be amazed at this, for *a time* (singular: not two times separated by more than 1000 years) is coming when *all who are in their graves* will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” And in Acts 24:15, the apostle Paul says, “I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be *a resurrection* (singular) of both the righteous and the wicked.”

It is these dead, great and small, that John sees in his vision (20:12). The souls of those who had died as believers will come with Christ from heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:14) and unite with their resurrected bodies. The bodies of still living believers will be transformed to be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:42-44,50-53; Philippians 3:21). And all these believers with their renewed souls and bodies will be caught up together to meet Jesus Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), to welcome him and to marvel at him (2 Thessalonians 1:10). Later that same last day, the angels will drive the unbelievers with their bodies and souls before Christ's throne of heavenly glory for the final judgement (Matthew 24:40b, 41b; 25:31-33). This day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly for everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). The believers will receive their eternal reward (Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15), but unbelievers will receive their eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41-46; 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

“And another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”⁵⁸ The books are a symbol of the fact that God knows everything that every person has ever thought, said or done, both good and evil (Hebrews 4:13). At Christ's second coming each person will be rewarded according to what he has done (Matthew 16:27; Luke 12:47-48; Romans 2:5-11; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:14).

The book of life is a symbolic record of *all the elect in history*. They have been elected before the creation of the earth (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). They are being called effectively, justified and sanctified in time. And finally glorified at Christ's second coming (Romans 8:29-30; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1-3). The people whose names are written in the book of life will never worship the beast (13:8; cf. 17:8)! It is impossible to deceive believers (Matthew 24:24)! No genuine believer will ever be lost (John 17:12)! They have the assurance that their names are recorded in the book of life (Luke 10:20) and will never be erased from it (3:5)! They will be gathered from every place on earth by angels at Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:31). They will not be thrown into the lake of fire (20:15; cf. John 5:24; 10:28), but will certainly enter the New Jerusalem on the new earth (21:27; cf. Matthew 25:34).

⁵⁷ και ειδον νεκρους, τους μεγαλους και τους μικρους, εστωτας (vpra) ενωπιον του θρονου, και βιβλια ηνοιχθησαν (viap)

⁵⁸ και αλλο βιβλιον ηνοιχθη (viap), ο εστιν (vira) της ζωης. και εκριθησαν (viaa) οι νεκροι εκ των γεγραμμενων (vprp) εν τοις βιβλαιοις κατα τα εργα αυτων

20:13 “The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”⁵⁹ At the one and only physical resurrection not one single person that ever lived will remain dead or in the place of death. Every single person will be resurrected at the same time at Christ’s second coming (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

Every single person will be judged according to what he has done, whether good or evil (Romans 2:5-11). Unbelievers will be judged according to their knowledge (Romans 1:19-20; 2:12-16) and punished in proportion to that knowledge (Luke 12:47-48). Believers will not be condemned (John 5:24; Romans 8:1-2), but will be judged according to how they have lived their lives and how they have contributed to God’s ministry (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Christians and non-Christians are in fact already judged when they die, because at their physical death they are already assigned to heaven or to hell (Luke 16:19-24). But on the final judgement day it will be *revealed publicly to everyone that God’s judgements have been absolutely just and fair and very merciful* (16:5-7).

20:14 “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.”⁶⁰ Death represents *the separation of body and soul*. Hades represents *the state of separation or the places where the dead bodies are laying, that is, the graves*, wherever it may be on earth or in the sea. Those who died at sea represent those who died without a specific burial place or whose bodies could not be found. Both death and Hades are the punishment for the fall of man into sin (Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 5:12). Both death and Hades distort God’s beautiful creation. Before Christ’s second coming they have great power through war, famine, sicknesses and violent disasters (6:8).

But Christ holds the key to Death and Hades (1:18). Death will be the last enemy to be destroyed in history (1 Corinthians 15:26). At Christ’s second coming every single person who ever died in history will be physically resurrected. And death and Hades will be conquered forever, will cease to function and will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur (20:14; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57)! This is a great encouragement for Christians! In the original paradise death was a possibility (Genesis 2:15-17), but on the new earth death will no longer be a possibility (21:4).

20:15 “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”⁶¹

All people who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ will never be thrown into the lake of fire. Believers in Christ from all the nations in the world will inherit God’s covenant promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:8-9,14). There will be an uncountable number of names written in the book of life (7:9), like the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16), like the stars in the heavens (Genesis 15:5) or like the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17)!

The book of Revelation is a book of encouragement and a book of warning. Revelation 20:15 is a great encouragement for those whose names are written in the book of life! At the same time it is a warning concerning the irrevocable final judgement day and at the same time a final call to everyone who reads or hears what is written in the book of Revelation to repent and believe.

b. Different views about the physical resurrection (20:12-14)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The futurist view believes in three different stages for the physical resurrection separated by more than 1000 years from one another (See supplement 6, Revelation 20:5-6). The physical resurrection in Revelation 20:12-14 is the third stage in which only the unbelievers and the wicked will be physically resurrected. This physical resurrection will be limited to all the unbelievers after the millennial kingdom.

Second view. (The correct explanation) The physical resurrection is the one general physical resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Christ’s one and only second coming.

⁵⁹ και εδωκεν (viaa) η θαλασσα τους νεκρους τους εν αυτη, και ο θανατος και ο αδης εδωκαν (viaa) τους νεκρους τους εν αυτοις, και εκριθησαν (viap) εκαστος κατα τα εργα αυτων

⁶⁰ και ο θανατος και ο αδης εβληθησαν (viap) εις την λιμνην του πυρος. ουτος ο θανατος ο δευτερος εστιν (vira), η λιμνη του πυρος

⁶¹ και ει τις ουχ ευρεθη (viap) εν τη βιβλω της ζωης γεγραμμενος (vrrp) εβληθη (viap) εις την λιμνην του πυρος

c. Different views about the final judgement (20:11-12,15)

There are two views. See supplement 6 and the explanation of the symbols above.

First view. (The futurist view) The futurist view believes in four different stages for the final judgement, separated by more than 1000 years from one another (See supplement 6, Revelation 20:11-12,15).

The final judgement in Revelation 20:11-12,15 is *limited to the wicked* only and takes place before the great white throne *at the end of the future millennium*.

Second view. (The correct explanation) The final judgement includes everyone that ever lived, *both the believers and the wicked at the one and only second coming of Christ*. It will take place in the sky (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), because the old universe and old earth will be simultaneously judged (20:11; cf. Romans 8:19-21). The Bible teaches that all the wicked people will be destroyed in the sense of punished together at Christ's one and only second coming (Matthew 13:39-43; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) and not 1000 years after his second coming. Revelation 20:7-10 is parallel to Revelation 19:17-21.