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1 THE THEME

SUMMARY OF THE STRUGGLE THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

2 THE STRUCTURE

Revelation chapter 20 summarises in one final vision the whole struggle described in Revelation chapter 1 to chapter 19! It reveals in another form what happens during the whole New Testament period on earth and what happens during that same time in heaven.

[a. Revelation 20:1-3](#)

This is a vision in which an angel binds Satan (the dragon) for a long period of 1000 years in order to keep him from deceiving the nations *on earth*.

[b. Revelation 20:4-6](#)

This is a vision in which the souls of the departed saints reign for that same period of 1000 years with Christ, not on earth, but *in heaven*.

[c. Revelation 20:7-10](#)

At the end of the 1000 years period Satan is released for a short time. He gathers the godless and wicked nations (symbolically called Gog and Magog) for the final battle against the Church (symbolically called the camp of God's people, the city he loves). But fire *from heaven* devours the enemy and Satan is immediately thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (hell).

[d. Revelation 20:11-15](#)

This is a vision of the final judgement day in which all the dead are raised and then judged in the sky and the old earth and old universe flee away at the same time. The wicked people are thrown in the lake of fire and the righteous people inherit life (that is, the new heaven and the new earth, described in the next chapters).

3 THE CONTENTS

a. *There is ‘a millennium’ (a 1000 years) (20:2)!*

There *is* a millennium! But the physical or literalistic millennium of the futurist view (historical premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism) is not the millennium of Revelation chapter 20!

The true millennium of Revelation chapter 20 is a figurative millennium, a symbolic thousand years, a symbol of *the messianic age* or *the intermediate state* between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming.

The term ‘amillennialism’¹ is misleading, causing people to think that this view rejects the belief in ‘a millennium’ (a 1000 years). What it rejects is the view of popular millennialism (historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism).

The best term for the view presented in this study is ‘inaugurated millennialism’², ‘realised millennialism’³, or ‘present millennialism’. This is the view that we have already entered the millennial period (the 1000 years period), that the kingdom of God (Christ) is now a present reality, not only in heaven, but also on this present earth (Matthew 4:23; 12:28-30; 21:43; John 3:3,5) and that the kingdom of God in its present phase (Matthew 4:17,23; 1 Corinthians 15:24-27; Revelation 12:10) will be immediately followed by the kingdom of God in its perfect and eternal phase (Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 11:15) without any intermediate period of time at Christ's second coming! The whole period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming is the messianic age of prophecy. It is the present phase of the kingdom of God (cf. all the parables of Jesus about the kingdom of God). And it is figuratively called ‘a 1000 years’ (the millennium) in Revelation 20:1-7!

The Old Testament was *the old covenant of the letter*, the ministry of the law that could not give life, but condemned and only brought death. The New Testament is *the new covenant of the Spirit*, the ministry of the Spirit that gives life and brings true righteousness in God's eyes (2 Corinthians 3:6-11).

When people today read and interpret the Old Testament without the light of the New Testament revelation, they discover that the Old Testament has a veil over it so that they cannot understand it or interpret it correctly. However, with Christ's first coming and the New Testament revelation the veil covering the Old Testament revelation is taken away so that people can understand it and interpret it correctly (2 Corinthians 3:14-16)!

While the Old Testament reveals God's preparation (law, prophecy and types) and describes *the age of shadows*, the New Testament reveals God's fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17) and describes *the age of the realities* themselves. The Old Testament prophets point forward to the messianic age, but still in terms of Israel, its institutions of temple, priesthood, ceremonial and civil laws, which are only a copy or a shadow of what was to come (Hebrews 8:5; 9:8-10). The New Testament contains the realities themselves (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1) and is the messianic age or period, in which all the promises that God ever made to his people in the Old Testament and the New Testament are being fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17; John 3:3-8; 16:33; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 5:17; Galatians 3:8-9,16; Ephesians 3:2-6; 2 Peter 3:13). The Old Testament revelation and the New Testament revelation are continuous and a complete unity!

b. *Satan is bound on this present earth (20:2-3)*

The New Testament clearly teaches that Satan is presently bound (curbed, curtailed, restrained, limited), *but only to the extent* that he cannot stop the gospel being proclaimed and that he cannot rise in the final battle against Christ and his people.

¹ Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938, p 708. This book is a must for every serious Bible student!

² John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, Baker Book House Company, 1989, p 371

³ Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium, New York: Oxford University press, 1970; Anthony Hoekema, The Meaning of the Millennium, Inter Varsity press, 1977, p 155

c. Departed Christians are translated to Christ in heaven (20:5-6)

The souls or spirits of those who possess eternal life when they die experience *the first resurrection*. Their souls (spirits) are translated directly into the presence of Christ in heaven (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 1:21-23; cf. Psalm 73:24; Ecclesiastes 12:7). They will never experience *the second death*, that is, the real, terrible, complete and everlasting damnation in the lake of fire (hell).

The intermediate state in heaven between physical death and physical resurrection cannot be separated from the millennium. Christians who die in Christ are transferred or translated from the symbolic millennium (the 1000 years period) on earth to the same symbolic millennium (the 1000 years period) in heaven, where they will reign together with Christ even before his second coming (20:6).

d. Departed non-Christians are not translated to Christ in heaven

The souls or spirits of those who do not possess eternal life when they die physically, will not be translated into the presence of Christ in heaven, but will instead be cast into hell (cf. Luke 16:22-24). At Christ's second coming their bodies will also be resurrected (John 5:28-29), their sentence to eternal damnation will be pronounced in the final judgement (Matthew 25:41-46) and they will be cast into hell with their souls *and their bodies* (cf. Matthew 10:28). This is called *the second death* (20:15; 21:8).

e. There is one second coming, one final battle, one resurrection of physical bodies and one final judgement day

There is no evidence in the Bible for the futurist view that Christ's second coming occurs in two phases: the so-called future first return of Christ (also called the coming or the rapture) and the so-called future second return of Christ (also called the revelation). Futurists believe that these two phases are separated by 7 or only 3½ years! The Bible clearly teaches only one second coming of Christ (compare 'the coming' in Matthew 24:39-41 with 'the revelation' in Luke 17:30-35)!

There is no evidence in the Bible for the futurist view that there are two or even more physical resurrections from the dead. The Bible clearly teaches only one general resurrection from the dead (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

There is no evidence in the Bible for the futurist view that there are two or even more final judgements. The Bible clearly teaches only one general final judgement day for Christians and non-Christians (Matthew 25:31-32; John 5:28-29; Romans 2:6). The second coming of Christ, the general resurrection from the dead and the final judgement day all happen *after* the 1000 years of Revelation chapter 20 (20:1-7) and *on the last day* in history (20:11-15; John 6:40; 12:48; 2 Peter 3:7)!

f. The final victory over Satan (20:7-10)

Throughout the New Testament period Christians had so often fought battles against Satan that seemed without result. But at Christ's second coming Christ will crush Satan under the feet of Christians (Romans 16:20)!

In reality nothing a Christian does in dependence on Christ is fruitless! Jesus promised that he who remains in Christ and Christ in him will certainly bear much and lasting fruit (John 15:5,16; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

g. The final uncovering of the reality that lies behind the illusion

Before the final judgement day things do not seem what they really are. The unbelievers do not seem to be as bad as God knows they are and the believers do not seem to be as good as God wants them to be. God is giving the history of the world more time to reveal how evil the unbelievers really are and how righteous the believers really are. All things must become what they really are (in God's eyes)! That is why he says, "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy" (22:11)! The final perfect kingdom of God can only come when the dominion of evil has manifested itself completely in the final empire of the final antichrist. The real identity of many people is still hidden. And many events in history are still shrouded so that their real significance cannot be understood.

But on the final judgement day the books of God will be opened. The books will throw light on every thought, word and deed of every person and reveal every motive and attitude of the heart! Everyone will know where he stands: what he was when he lived on earth and what he is when he is standing before God who will judge through Christ.

With cries of despair many who have always viewed themselves as pious, good, decent, honest and blameless will suddenly see themselves as rebels that have forgotten God and have only lived for themselves. And many others who had no high opinion of themselves will hear the wonderful words: “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat” (Matthew 25:34-40). The masks of many who have never seen themselves in their true identity will be ripped off. The veil that caused many not to understand themselves or the events in their lives will be removed. The shroud that had lain on everyone and everything will be taken away. Finally everyone will be what he really is: utterly vile, a person that did what was wrong in God’s eyes *or* completely holy, a person that did what was right in God’s eyes (22:11). And everything will be what it really is: evil that causes sin *or* righteous that causes people to shine like the sun (Matthew 13:41,43). Finally on the last day things will become what they really are. Then every shred of appearance (illusion) will be dissolved in the crystal clear light of God’s face.

Believers in Christ will be accepted into the eternal kingdom only on the basis of that one great, incomparable and imperishable work of Christ on the cross (2 Corinthians 9:15) in which Christ’s righteousness was credited to their account (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Only those who had taken hold of Jesus Christ will be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:11-13). This will be the end of the history of this world. And eternal life in its unfathomable mystery will begin in which God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).⁴

4 THE BACKGROUND

a. Satan was bound at Christ’s first coming (20:2)

The Old Testament background of Satan bound (Isaiah 24:1-23).

Isaiah 24:1-12 and Isaiah 24:13-20 depicts the final judgement and final salvation in terms of the judgement and salvation of the nations on earth. Isaiah 24 21-22 is a prophecy of the first coming of Christ. It speaks of the binding of the powers in heaven (Satan and the demons) and their allies on earth (the curbing or limitation of Satan’s antichristian political, religious and moral powers). The sentence in the Hebrew text: “they will be *punished* after many days” should read “they will be *released* after many days.” Isaiah 24:23 is a prophecy of the second coming of Christ. It speaks of the renewal of the universe and the reign of God on Mount Zion and Jerusalem, a symbol of the final and perfect phase of the kingdom of God.

Satan was bound by Christ’s life on earth.

1 John 3:8. The purpose of Christ’s first coming was “to *destroy Satan’s work*”. Satan was bound during Christ’s first coming.

Matthew 12:28. Jesus says, “If I *drive out demons*⁵ by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” The establishment of the kingdom of God means that from now on Satan is being cast out of people, who were formerly under his domain.

Matthew 12:29. Jesus says, “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first *ties up (binds)* the strong man? Then he can rob his house.”⁶ The same word ‘bind’ is used in Matthew 12:29 as in Revelation 20:2! Christ began binding Satan by triumphing over Satan’s temptations in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). He further bound Satan by casting out evil spirits from demon-possessed people. He gave his workers authority to also bind Satan and they also cast out evil spirits. Jesus describes this defeat of Satan as follows, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:18-20). Jesus meant that while the disciples were casting out demons from people, Christ saw their master, Satan, fall from his position of

⁴ cf. Bavinck pp. 288-289

⁵ εκβαλλω (vīpa). The present tense stresses the ongoing activity.

⁶ η πως δυναται (vīpm) τις εισελθειν (vnaa) εις την οικιαν του ισχυρου και τα σκευη αυτου αρπασαι > αρπαζω (snatch, rob)(vnaa), εαν μη πρωτον δηση > δεω (bind)(vsaa) τον ισχυρον; και τοτε την οικιαν αυτου διαρπασει > διαρπαζω (plunder thoroughly)(vifa)

power in the world. Satan's fall was like lightning, sudden and startling, because the disciples had not expected this victory and perhaps even Satan had not anticipated his defeat. What began to happen at the first coming (incarnation) of Jesus Christ would continue until Christ's second coming, when Satan will be finally defeated in hell.

Satan was bound by Christ's death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement.

Finally, the death and resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Jesus Christ bound Satan.

John 12:31-32. Jesus says, "Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will (certainly) be *driven out*. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will (certainly) draw all men to myself."⁷

Jesus refers to his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and enthronement and this is "the judgement of the evil world", which opposed, rejected, betrayed and condemned him. 'The world' is the whole society of evil people, who are alienated from God. And the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ it is at the same time "a driving out of Satan as the prince of this world". The drawing of people from all the nations in the world is at the same time the way in which Satan is driven out of his grip on these nations. Matthew 12:28 says that this constitutes the beginning of the kingdom of God!

Colossians 1:13; 2:15. By his death on the cross, Christ *disarmed* the powers and authorities against him and triumphed over them. That is why through the preaching of the gospel people are rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

Revelation 12:5-12. The resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ in heaven (12:5) resulted in the *defeat* of Satan and his evil angels, and they were *hurled out of heaven onto the earth* (12:9).

Matthew 28:18, John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-23 and 1 Peter 3:22 confirm that Jesus Christ began to exercise his absolute sovereign power in heaven *and on earth* from his first coming.

Thus, the 'binding' of Satan, his 'falling' or his being 'hurled out' of heaven are all associated with the first coming of Christ. However, the binding, the disarming, the fall and the driving out of Satan as a result of Christ's first coming *did not remove Satan from the earthly scene*. Satan is bound for a symbolic 1000 years, that is, for *an ultimate complete period of time* (the New Testament period). He will remain bound for the period of time in which Christ carries out God's complete work of salvation of his people.

The futurist (premillennial) view that maintains that Satan is not yet bound is untenable.

The historic premillennialists and dispensational premillennialists argue that Satan will only be bound in the future at the beginning of the future millennial kingdom. They maintain this view without any biblical basis. They base their argument on the fact that there is still so much evil in this present world. They believe that the book of Revelation is a historical book that prophesies future history and that therefore the visions refer to literal future historic actions. They also argue that the Abyss is 'locked and sealed' so that no one is allowed in or out, and thus, the activity of Satan is completely removed from the earth for 1000 years. The future millennium then becomes an earthly kingdom without any evil!

However even some adherents of the futurist view admit that evil is not removed from the millennium. One futurist says: "The millennial reign is clearly, therefore, not a period in which the rule of Christ is universally and sincerely accepted. There are powers at work which compete for human affections and interests; but the general acceptance of Christian principles keeps the evil forces in abeyance; and the gracious strength of God limits the power of the arch enemy."⁸

The supporters of the futurist view maintain that evil would need to be contained by Christ's rule *with his iron rod* (cf. 2:27) for a period of 1000 years (!) and that this evil would finally erupt in the battle that would be the greatest concentration of evil in history. Only after such a long period of Satan bound and Christ directly reigning on earth is Satan and his allies finally knocked out (cf. 20:7-10)! The description of the future millennium of futurists rather seems like a grand failure on the part of Christ and the Church!

But in Revelation 20:1-7 there is no allusion to a removal of sin from the earth or a 'kingdom of peace' on earth as a result of Satan's binding. Even without Satan's evil influence, the heart of natural man is still evil (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 13:23; Mark 7:21-22; John 3:3; Romans 1:28-32; 8:6-7; Ephesians 2:1-4)!

⁷ νυν κρισις εστιν (vīpa) του κοσμου τουτου, νυν ο αρχων του κοσμου τουτου εκβληθησεται > εκβαλλω (vīfp) εζω.
The future tense emphasises the absolute certainty of the action.

καγω εαν υψωθω > υψωω (vsap) εκ της γης, παντας ελκυσω > ελκυω (vifa) προς εμαυτον

⁸ W. Boyd Carpenter in C. J. Ellicot Bible Commentary, 1908, vol. 8.625. Also Hal Lindsey, The Rapture, pp. 65,143 and others.

Satan's influence is curtailed, but is not removed or destroyed.

The Abyss is locked and sealed over Satan, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore. In the apocalyptic book of Revelation, binding Satan, throwing him into the Abyss and locking and sealing it is not intended to be understood in a *literalistic* way. This *description of the action is symbolic*, but the action is literally true: Satan is prevented from doing certain things! The immediate context teaches that Satan is prevented from continuing to deceive the nations! There is no mention that Satan is prevented from doing any other evil on earth!

The binding of Satan is *not unqualified*. 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; cf. 1 Peter 5:8-9; John 17:15), 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 trying to hinder the progress of proclaiming the gospel among the nations (1 Thessalonians 2:17-18).

Satan is prevented from blocking the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ from those Christ calls (2 Corinthians 4:5-6), but he is not prevented from blinding the eyes of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4)! Satan cannot prevent people, whom God calls in a sovereign and effective way, to turn away from Satan to Christ (Acts 26:18; cf. Colossians 1:13)!

Satan is prevented from continuing as the prince of this world (John 12:31), but he is not prevented from giving antichristian governments their position, power and great authority (13:2).

Satan is prevented from keeping all people in the world in his dominion (Matthew 12:28-29; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13), but he is not prevented from working in the lives of disobedient people (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Satan is prevented from remaining in heaven as the accuser of Christians (12:9), but he is not prevented from accusing and persecuting Christians on earth (12:12-17).

Satan is prevented from snatching Christians out of the hands of Jesus Christ (John 10:28-29), but he is not prevented from terrorising and harming people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:1-11).

Satan is prevented from harming born-again Christians (1 John 5:18), but he is not prevented from controlling the evil world, that is, the world opposed to Christ (1 John 5:19).

Christians have the responsibility to repent, to fight in spiritual warfare and to proclaim the gospel.

Satan's curtailment does not mean that Satan cannot have any evil influence in the present world anymore. It does not mean that everyone in the present world will become Christians or that this present world will evolve towards a perfect society (the view of postmillennialism). Many will *hear* the gospel as a testimony, but also many will not heed it. God's trumpets of warning judgements will strike many, but many will refuse to repent (9:20-21).

Satan's curtailment also does not mean that there is no need for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). But already now Christians are "more than conquerors". "Who can be against Christians?" (Romans 8:31-39). Throughout the whole New Testament period the Church will conquer the nations. Only in the final great tribulation will the nations for a very short while conquer the Church as an institute that proclaims the gospel. But they will never conquer the souls of Christians or be able to take their salvation away (John 10:28)!

b. The nature of the 1000 years (20:2)

See supplement 3, the symbolism of numbers.

c. Satan deceives the nations (20:3)

During the Old Testament period the nations were deceived.

God had promised to Abraham: "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). The word 'Seed' is in the singular and refers to the coming Messiah. And God had promised to Christ: "I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 2:8; 72:8-11,17).

However, spiritual darkness covered the nations (Isaiah 9:2). By and large Jews were saved, but the other nations dwelled in darkness and were under the thralldom of Satan (Daniel 10:13,20-21). This darkness must

be understood in the sense that God *allowed* the nations to go their own way (Isaiah 53:6; Acts 14:16; 2 Corinthians 4:4). It is in this sense that Satan *deceived* the nations.

From Christ's first coming onwards Christ's elect in all nations cannot be deceived.

The spiritual darkness that covered the nations during the Old Testament period would not continue forever. With the first coming of Christ, the *particularism* of the Old Testament (God's history of salvation concentrating on the believers in the nation of *Israel*) made place for the *universalism* of the New Testament (God's history of salvation was enlarged to include believers from *all the nations*). While God's promise in Genesis 15:18 stretched only to the great river Euphrates, God's prophecy in Psalm 72:8-11 began to go in fulfilment: Christ "will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth! All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him" (15:4; Isaiah 45:23; cf. Philippians 2:9-11).

Revelation 12:9 says, "Satan *continuously* leads the whole world astray"⁹. To lead astray means to deceive, to mislead. The same word is used in Matthew 24:24 where Jesus says that it is *impossible to deceive his elect*! Therefore, the 'world' which Satan leads astray is only *the evil world* in which people persist to do evil (John 7:7; 8:23; 12:31ab; 14:17,30,31; 15:18; 17:9,14-16,25; 1 John 5:19). It is the world as the realm of evil, openly hostile against God, against Christ and against Christians (John 15:18). It is both the antichristian political world and the antichristian religious world! It is only *this* world that Satan can lead astray and continues to lead astray (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4)!

The binding of Satan means that Satan 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 anti-Christian 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 gospel has been allowed to expand world-wide (Matthew 24:14), because Satan's previous hold on the nations was reduced, even though it was not removed. As a result Christ through the preaching of the gospel to all the nations draws people from all the nations to himself (John 12:32)!

Throughout the whole New Testament period (the gospel age), from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming *Satan's influence on earth is curtailed* (curbed, restrained, limited, bound) so that he is unable to prevent the proclamation of the gospel and the extension of the Church in every nation of the world. That is why Revelation 20:3 says, that Satan is bound in order to keep him from deceiving the nations during 1000 years. The binding, the disarming, the fall or the driving out of Satan as a result of Christ's first coming *did not remove Satan from the earthly scene*. Satan is bound for 1000 years, that is, for *an ultimate complete period of time*. He will remain bound for that ultimate complete period of time until Christ has carried out God's complete work of salvation for his people.

During the great tribulation the nations will be deceived again.

During the whole New Testament period Satan is bound so that he cannot prevent the gospel reaching every nation (Matthew 24:14; 28:19). Although Satan is already a beaten enemy in principle, it is clear that God has not yet removed him from the earthly scene. At the beginning of the symbolic 1000 years period the kingdom of God in its present phase was inaugurated at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-30). Throughout the symbolic 1000 year period the kingdom will expand to all nations and permeate every area of human life (Matthew 13:31-33) until the full number of God's elect have entered God's kingdom (Matthew 22:1-14; Romans 11:25-26). At the end of this symbolic 1000 year period, Satan will be released for a short while in order to deceive the nations. 'The nations' symbolise 'the unbelievers'. Then the final battle against Christ and Christians will take place, Christ's second coming will take place and Satan will be finally removed from the earthly scene and thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (20:10).

d. Explanation of the Greek word 'to live' (20:4)

The Greek verb 'to live'¹⁰ has several different meanings in the New Testament.

⁹ ο πλανων < πλαναω (νρρα) την οικουμενην ολην

¹⁰ ζαω (εζησαν)

To be physically alive in contrast to being physically dead.

“Christ ... is the Lord of both the dead and the *living*” (Romans 14:9b). “The first man Adam became a *living* soul” (that is, a living being consisting of a body and a spirit) (1 Corinthians 15:45; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:6). In spite of being wounded by the sword, the beast *lived* (13:14). “The two beast are thrown *alive* into the fiery lake” (19:20).

To be physically resuscitated or to become physical alive again after being dead.

“My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her and she will *live*” (Matthew 9:18; cf. Acts 9:41; 20:12). This is not a physical resurrection, but a physical resuscitation: her physical body that was dead became alive again. But this was only temporarily, because later in her life on earth her physical body died again (cf. Matthew 27:52).

To be physically resurrected from the dead to live for ever.

“When they heard that Jesus was *alive* ...” (Mark 16:11; cf. Luke 24:5,23; Acts 1:3; Romans 14:9a). Only once in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2:8) the word ‘to live’ has the meaning of ‘to come to life physically’ or ‘to be resurrected *physically*’ from the dead: “The First and the Last, who died and came to life again”.¹¹ He will never die again! In all other cases the word has the sense of “to come to life or to be resurrected *spiritually*” from the dead or “to live *spiritually*”.

To live in the sense of behaviour or conduct.

“He squandered his wealth in wild *living*” (Luke 15:13). “You *live* like a Gentile and not like a Jew” (Galatians 2:14). “*Live* a godly life” (2 Timothy 3:12). “*Live* self-controlled, upright and godly lives” (Titus 2:12).

To be alive eternally. God lives forever as Spirit, that is, he is never subject to death in any form.

God is always alive. “God ... who *lives* for ever and ever”¹² (4:9-10). “The seal of the *living* God”¹³ (7:2). “God ... who *lives* for ever and ever”¹⁴ (15:7). God is never subject to physical death or any other kind of death!

To be alive eternally. Christ in his divine nature lives forever, that is, in his divine nature he is not subject to death in any form.

Christ says: “I am the First and the Last and (or *that is*) the continual Living One. I became (physically) dead, and behold, I am the continual Living One to all eternity”¹⁵ (Revelation 1:17-18). Christ does not say: “I died and became alive again physically” (Revelation 2:8). In his divine nature Christ was alive even when he was dead for three days in his human nature. Here the word “to live” is not a reference to his physical resurrection from the dead, but to his spiritual divine life from eternity to eternity. Like God in Revelation 4:9-10, Christ is the continual Living One. When Jesus died physically, he gave his human spirit into the hands of the heavenly Father (Luke 23:46). But in Revelation 1:17-18 the reference is not to his human spirit, but to his divine nature! Jesus Christ is the ever-living One, who conquered death in his physical human nature and will conquer death in the physical human nature for all Christians (1 Corinthians 15:26,42-44,50-54; Philippians 3:21)!

To be resurrected from spiritual death before physical death in order to live the spiritual, supernatural life on earth (the regenerated life on earth).

Christians receive a supernatural spiritual life within this world. When they hear the gospel and believe they are born again: their dead spirits are made alive. “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has (spiritual) eternal life, ...he has crossed over from (spiritual) death to (spiritual) life. ...A time is coming and has now come when the (spiritually) dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live (spiritually)”¹⁶ (John 5:24-25). Here the word ‘to live’ is not a reference to their physical resurrection from the dead, but to their *spiritual resurrection or rebirth of their spirits* when they became believers here on earth (John 5:24-25; cf. 6:51,57-58).

¹¹ ο πρῶτος και ο εσχάτος, ος ἐγενετο (viam) νεκρός και ἐζήσεν (vīaa) < ζῶω

¹² ζῶντι (vppa) εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων

¹³ θεοῦ ζῶντος (vppa)

¹⁴ τοῦ ζῶντος (vppa) εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων

¹⁵ ἐγὼ εἰμι ο πρῶτος και ο εσχάτος και ο ζῶν (vppa), και ἐγενομην (viam) νεκρός και ἰδού ζῶν (vppa) εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων

¹⁶ ἐχει (vīpa) ζῶην < ζῶη αἰωνιον ... μεταβηκεν (vīra) εκ του θανατου εἰς την ζῶην < ζῶη ... οἱ νεκροὶ ζήσουσιν (vīfa) < ζῶω

Christians were once spiritually dead in sins, but God made them spiritually alive with Christ and raised them up spiritually with Christ¹⁷ (Ephesians 2:5-6). This is clearly a resurrection of the soul or spirit of a human being that occurs when he embraces Christ by faith.

Christians must regard themselves as spiritually dead to sin and spiritually alive to God. “Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ”¹⁸ (Romans 6:11,13; cf. Galatians 2:20a; 5:25).

Christians on earth still face physical death, but meanwhile live the spiritual regenerated life on earth. They are “judged according to men in regard to the body (they die physically, in the context many already died in this way in the persecutions), but live according to God in regard to the spirit” (with their regenerated spirits they live for, serve and worship God in the face of approaching physical death)¹⁹ (1 Peter 4:6).

Nominal Christians on earth have a reputation of being spiritually alive on earth, but in reality are spiritually dead: “You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead”²⁰ (3:1).

To be resurrected from living in the body on this present old world at physical death in order to live the spiritual, eternal life in heavenly glory (the regenerated life *in heaven*).

Christians receive a supernatural spiritual life in heavenly glory after their physical death.

In order to prove that there is a physical resurrection from the dead in the future Jesus says that the patriarchs are already at the present time living (spiritually) with God in heaven. Jesus says, “The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob is not the God of the (spiritually) dead, but of the (spiritually) living, for to him all (those believers who have physically died in the past) are (spiritually) alive”²¹ (Luke 20:37-38). For Jesus the spiritual life of the spirits or souls of believers in heaven (cf. the first resurrection) is the proof that the physical resurrection of the dead bodies (cf. the second resurrection, “the resurrection from the dead”²², Luke 20:35) will certainly take place in the future! Their spiritual resurrection (of their soul or spirit) into God’s presence is the guarantee of their physical resurrection (of their body).

Jesus is “the resurrection and the life” in a double sense: spiritually and physically. Even though Christians must die in a physical sense *on earth* (‘the first death’), they will immediately live in a spiritual sense *in heaven* with Christ (‘the first resurrection’)(John 11:25). And Christians who are alive in a spiritual sense (born-again) here *on earth*, will never die in a spiritual sense *in hell* (they will never experience ‘the second death’)(John 11:26, cf. Revelation 21:8; Matthew 10:28)!

In Revelation 20:5-6 the word ‘to live’ has the same meaning as in Luke 20:38 and John 11:25. Like all non-Christians, the bodies of Christians will die in a physical sense, but unlike non-Christians, the souls or spirits of Christians will immediately be spiritually resurrected in the sense of spiritually translated or transferred from the earth into God’s presence in heaven. There in heaven with Christ they will reign for a symbolic thousand years. That is what is meant by “the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5-6; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22; 2 Corinthians 5:1,4,8; Philippians 1:23).

The words ‘the first resurrection’ (Revelation 20:6) therefore does not imply that there exists a second physical resurrection from the dead. In the book of Revelation ‘the first resurrection’²³ is contrasted with ‘the second death’²⁴ and both expressions are *figurative expressions* that form a paradox. Both ‘the first death’ and ‘the second resurrection’ are implied and are physical realities. But both ‘the first resurrection’ and ‘the second death’ are spiritual (eternal) realities.

The paradox is that while all believers and unbelievers alike participate in ‘the first death’ (the physical death), only believers will have a share in ‘the first resurrection’ (the translation or transfer of their spirits or souls into heaven)! And the paradox is that while all believers and unbelievers alike participate in ‘the second resurrection’ (the physical resurrection of their bodies), only unbelievers will have a share in ‘the second death’ (the transfer of their spirits or souls and bodies into hell).

¹⁷ και οντας (νρρα) ημας νεκρους τοις παραπτωμασιν συνεζωοποιησεν (νιαα) < ζυζωοποιεω τω Χριστω – χαριτι εστε σεσωσμενοι (νρρ) – ... και συνηγειρεν (νιαα) και συνεκαθισεν (νιαα) εν τοις επουρανιοις εν Χριστω Ιησου

¹⁸ ουτως και υμεις λογιζεσθε (νμρμ) εαυτους [ειναι] νεκρους μεν τη αμαρτια ζωντας (νρρα) δε τω θεω εν Χριστω Ιησου

¹⁹ ινα κριθωσι > κρινω (νσαρ—3ρ) μεν κατα ανθρωπους σαρκι ζωσι (νσαρ—3ρ) δε κατα θεον πνευματι

²⁰ οτι ονομα εχεις (νιρα) οτι ζης < ζωω, και νεκρος ει (νιρα)

²¹ θεος δε ουκ εστιν (νιρα) νεκρων αλλα ζωντων (νρρα) < ζωω, παντες γαρ αυτω ζωσιν (νιρα) < ζωω

²² η αναστασις η εκ νεκρων

²³ η αναστασις η πρωτη

²⁴ ο δευτερος θανατος

‘The first death’ and ‘the second resurrection’ are *general events* in which all people that have ever lived will participate. But ‘the first resurrection’ is a *unique event* for only believers and ‘the second death’ is a *unique event* for only unbelievers! The paradox consists of the contrast between the general physical death of the bodies of all people with the unique spiritual resurrection of the spirits or souls of only the believers on the one hand; and the contrast between the general physical resurrection of the bodies of all people with the unique eternal death of the spirits or souls and bodies of only the unbelievers on the other hand!

Just as the physical resurrection of the unrighteous (unbelievers) is paradoxically identified with the doom of their spirits or souls and bodies in hell, so the physical death of the righteous (believers) is paradoxically identified with the translation or transfer of their spirits or souls into heaven!

e. The Old Testament background of the final battle (20:7-10)

Ezekiel 38:18-22; 39:4-6,17-20.

Undoubtedly, the picture of Revelation 20:7-10 has its roots in Ezekiel chapter 38-39 (Read it). ‘The Gog and Magog’ (one definite article) symbolises *the godless and wicked nations, who attack the people of God*. In Ezekiel ‘Gog’ symbolises the Old Testament antichrist, the last enemy who must be defeated before the kingdom of God would be completely established in Israel. Ezekiel describes how *in that day* God would break the power of the opposing nations in a sovereign way and cause them to become a great sacrificial meal for wild animals (19:17-18).

Daniel 11:36 – 12:1.

Daniel sees in the coming emperor Antiochus Epiphanes the embodiment of the world empire that opposes God and expects that he will once more invade the beautiful land. There will be a time of great distress involving all the nations. This will be followed by the one general resurrection of the dead and the one final judgement. In Daniel, Antiochus Epiphanes symbolises antichrist.

f. The Old Testament background of the final judgement (20:11-15)

Zechariah chapter 9 to 14.

Zechariah chapter 9 to 14 contains predictions and promises regarding the future of God’s people, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King.

Zechariah chapters 9 and 10 contain prophecies of the continuing return of Israelites who are still living in exile and of the victory of the Jewish Maccabees over the Syrian Greek Empire (Zechariah 9:11-16; 10:3b-12) and concerning Israel’s salvation through the coming King of peace (Zechariah 9:8-10).

Zechariah chapter 11 contains prophecies concerning Israel’s judgement in the light of world judgement. It contains God’s announcement of judgement of the Gentile nations (Zechariah 11:1-11), the judgement of Israel (Zechariah 11:12-14) and the judgement of the worthless shepherd who represent all the worthless leaders in the world (for example, Antiochus Epiphanes) (Zechariah 11:15-17).

The prophecy has a preliminary fulfilment. The Lord himself is the Shepherd of Israel. But because Israel fails to appreciate the Lord’s shepherding function, which has its climax when Israel undervalues the Lord’s work of salvation and rejects the Messiah (Jesus Christ), the Lord is going to lay down his shepherding function of Israel. Evil shepherds will take over and Israel will be preliminary judged by the Greek and Roman nations in the two centuries B.C. and finally by the destruction of Israel as a nation in 70 A.D.

The prophecy also has a final fulfilment. God will finally lay down his shepherding function of the whole world when he will break his staffs called ‘Favour’ and ‘Union’. The staff, ‘Favour’, represents his general goodwill to people expressed in the covenant he made with Noah. And the staff, ‘Union’, represents the harmony between people expressed in all forms of brotherhood. Then the end of the world will arrive.

g. The Old Testament background of Christ’s first coming

Zechariah chapters 12 and 13 contain prophecies concerning Israel’s salvation, which are possible only through the coming Messiah. The Messiah is hidden in Jerusalem as an immovable rock and will ultimately

bring complete victory to Jerusalem – the final battle in the history of the world will lead to the New Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2-3,8-9). However, the Messiah will be pierced on the cross. Then the Holy Spirit will be poured out and this will cause many in Israel to repent and turn from their former rejection of the Messiah (Zechariah 12:10; cf. Acts 2:1-41). On that day, “a fountain will be opened that cleanses them from sin and impurity” (cf. Acts 3:18-26), idols will be banished (cf. Acts 14:15; 19:17-20) and the professional prophets will be removed (Zechariah 13:1-6; cf. Isaiah 4:4; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Micah 7:18-19; Zechariah 3:9; Psalm 51:10; cf. Matthew 15:1-14). With the death of the coming Shepherd (Jesus Christ), the sheep will be scattered (Matthew 26:31-32,56). The weak (the little ones) will suffer most in Israel’s calamity. The majority in Israel will perish and only the minority (the remnant) will be saved (Zechariah 13:7-9; cf. Genesis 45:7; Isaiah 1:9; 4:26:13; 10:20-22; 28:5; 37:4,31-32; 46:3; Joel 2:32; Romans 9:29; 11:4-10).

The prophecy has an initial fulfilment at Christ’s first coming (cf. 1 John 1:7, “the blood of Jesus purifies from all sin”) and a final fulfilment at Christ’s second coming (cf. Revelation 21:27, “nothing impure will enter the new Jerusalem”). There is an allusion to the day of the Lord when Jerusalem, which is a symbol of believers, will be besieged by the nations, which is a symbol of unbelievers. Nevertheless, the Lord will judge the nations (Zechariah 12:1-9; cf. Revelation 20:8-9).

h. The Old Testament background of Christ’s second coming

Zechariah chapter 14 describes how *in the day of the Lord* the nations (a symbol of the non-believers) will gather to fight against Jerusalem (a symbol of the believers). This will be the last great outburst of hatred against the believers (Zechariah 12:3; 14:1-2; cf. Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 16:14; 20:7-8). The Lord will come with all his angels to fight against them (Zechariah 12:8-9; 14:3,5; cf. Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31; Revelation 20:9b). The flesh of the enemies will rot while they are still standing on their feet (Zechariah 14:12-13; cf. Ezekiel 38:4; 39:17-20; Revelation 19:17-19,21; 20:8-9)! There will be a great upheaval of this present earth (Zechariah 14:4,6,7; cf. Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 6:12-14; 11:13; 16:18-21; 20:11; 21:1). The Lord will be the King and only Lord over the whole earth (Zechariah 14:9; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 19:16; 21:22:3).

i. The Old Testament background of the New Jerusalem (chapter 21:1 to 22:5)

Zechariah chapter 14 continues to describe Jerusalem after the Messiah’s second coming. The New Jerusalem (a symbol of God’s people, the believers) will be raised up as the most important on the new earth and she will be secure forever (Zechariah 14:10-11; cf. Revelation 21:1 to 22:6). The river of living water will flow out from the New Jerusalem as the source of renewal (Zechariah 14:8; cf. Revelation 22:1; Romans 8:19-21). The wealth of the nations will be brought into the New Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:14; cf. Revelation 21:24,26). Not all the people of the nations will be destroyed: just like the remnant of Israel, so the survivors of the nations will share in this final state of salvation and glory (Zechariah 14:16-19; cf. Revelation 21:24-26). Nothing impure will enter the New Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:20-21; cf. 2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 21:27).

There is complete harmony between the message of the prophets in the Old Testament and the message of Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament!