

Revelation 20



Enemy Locked into Abyss

First Resurrection, Reigning with Messiah

Millennial Kingdom, 1000 year reign

Second Resurrection

Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

- 20th chapter details 1000 year reign of Jesus we call the "**Millennium**" (*mille=1,000; annum=year*).
- Can be seen as continuation of chapter 19, as Jesus comes and takes His throne and establishes His kingdom on earth.
- Most understanding of this period comes from this chapter, as well as Zechariah 14, and many parts of Isaiah and Daniel.

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REGARDING INTERPRETATION: *The Millennium is viewed from 2 basic and different approaches:*

- 1. Literal** interpretation (Millennialism, belief that 1000 years is literal and happens at end of the Tribulation just as Revelation and other scriptures state)
- 2. Symbolic** interpretation (Amillennialism, belief that millennium is NOT literal, but symbolic, as is much of scripture according to this view) which says we are in the "millennium" now.

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- Will not dwell on differences between these two, but will state here that we ***whole-heartedly reject the concept of Amillennialism***, and believe in the literal reality of a 1,000 year reign of Yeshua on earth.
- We have taken a literal approach to the rest of this book, in fact to the entire Bible itself, and there is no reason not to literally interpret this time period. A symbolic approach to all scripture is dangerous.

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- Unless we interpret scripture literally, confusion and problems occur as each person attempts to provide his/her own symbolic interpretation. God's Word is intended to be taken literally. God does what He says, and He says what He does. **Period.**
- The symbolic Amillennialist position violates scripture and makes God a liar. To believe in Amillennialism you *must believe that God has broken His covenants with Israel.* God cannot do that. That violates His nature.



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- This chapter 20 of Revelation uses the "1000 years" phrase 6 times in this chapter alone.
- He is making a point that this is a literal period of time.
- We have seen this repetition in other places to underscore a literal time period.

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COMMENTARY: *The thrones are literal; the martyrs are literal; Jesus is literal; the Word of God is literal; the Beast is literal; the image is literal; the mark of the Beast is literal; their foreheads and their hands are literal; and the thousand years are literal. It is all literal. A thousand years means a thousand years. If God meant that it was eternal, I think He would have said so. If He meant it was five hundred years, He would have said so. Cannot God say what He means? Of course He can, and when He says a thousand years, He means a thousand years. (McGee).*

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- **Amillennialism** originated 3rd and 4th centuries AD with Augustine and Origen. Ultimately **spawned anti-semitism**, and is belief of Catholic Church and many mainline Protestant churches.
- Uses allegory and symbolism to interpret God's Word, and does not take the Word of God literally, especially prophecy.
- “Pre-millennial” view was position of early church, *(that Jesus would return to destroy all evil at the beginning of the millennium, hence “pre”)*, became unpopular after Christianity was made the state religion of Rome.

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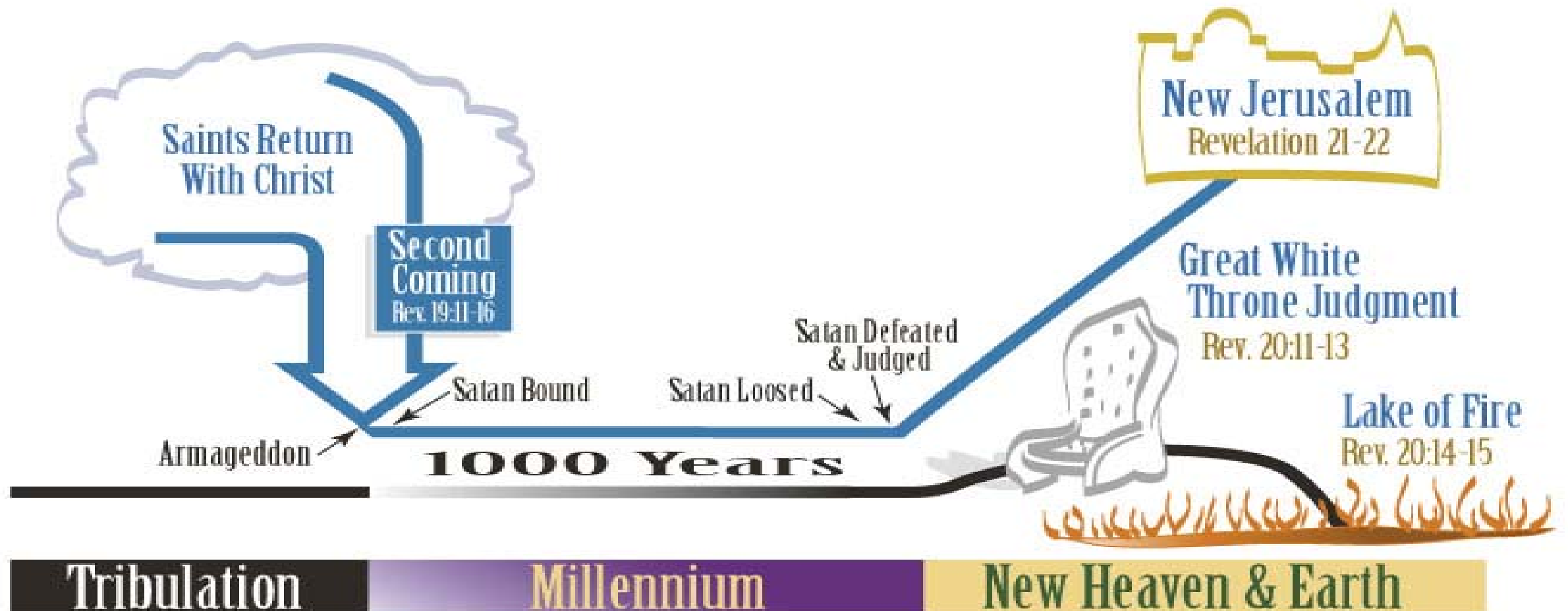
- Roman leadership thought of itself as god-like. The prevalent pre-millennial view was altered to appease Rome. The “amillennial” view believes Jesus will not rule physically, as scripture says, but spiritually. This became dominant view of Roman Catholic Church, also held today by many protestant churches.
- The literal interpretation, however, belief that Jesus will physically reign from earth for 1,000 literal years, was favored by such scholars as Irenaeus and Sir Isaac Newton, but mostly remains a minority belief.

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- Today, regardless of denomination, there are literal Bible believers who stand firm on the literal interpretation of these passages, and all scripture.
- This is the only completely safe and steadfastly sure position regarding the Word of God.

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THE MILLENNIUM



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THE MILLENNIUM



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Purpose of the Millennium is:

- To fulfill all OT covenants (*such as Israel occupying ALL the landed given her by God, etc.*)
- To confirm the need of man for God,
- To provide another opportunity for obedience (another “grace” period!) to God (*still freewill, choice, although rule is enforced*),
- To fulfill all OT and NT prophecies about reign of Messiah Jesus.

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- There is a 75-day gap between Armageddon and Millennium. From Daniel 12:11-12: *“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.”*
- Lots of speculation and controversy about this mysterious time period. We aren't told about it, *but that doesn't keep us from speculating!*

1260 days = 3½
yrs

1290 days = +30
(1 month)

1335 days = +45

What/why the
extra 75 days??

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We don't know exactly why, but we do know that many things will happen in this time. These are just a few of them:

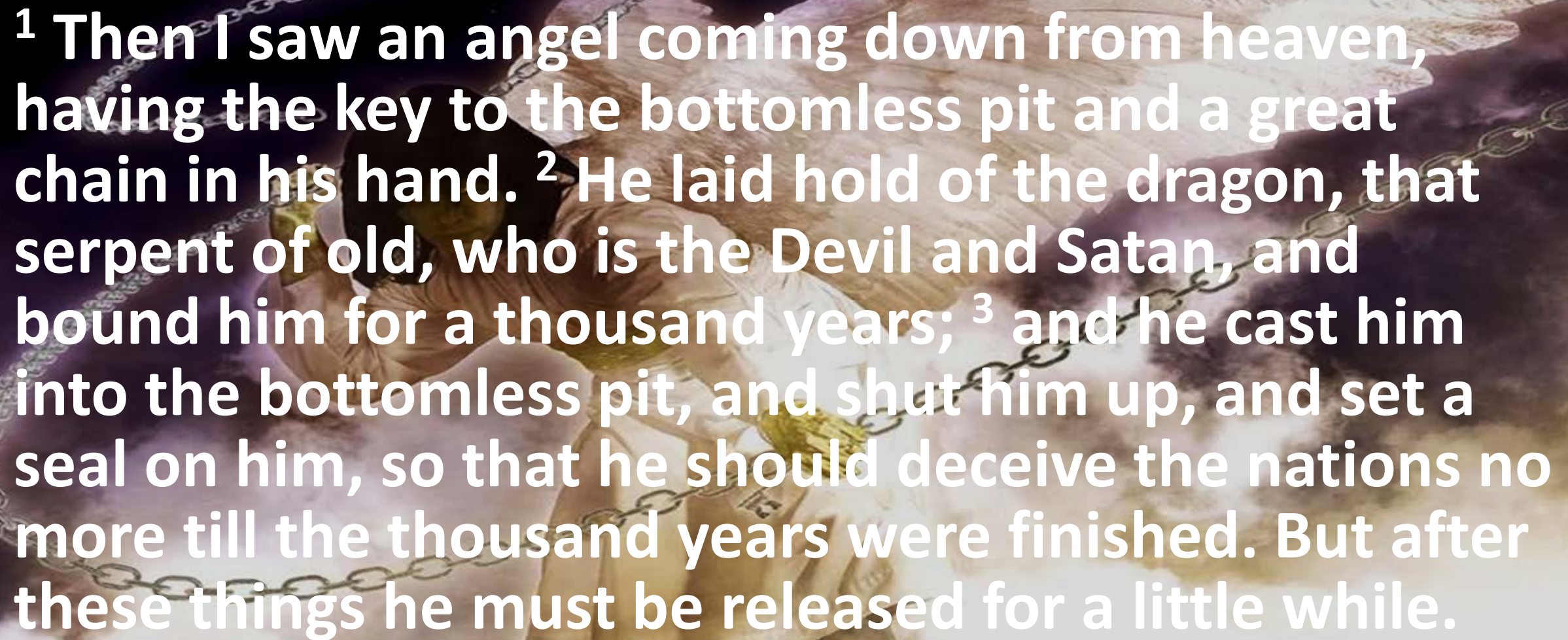
- 1) the **cleanup after Armageddon**, including antichrist and false prophet thrown in lake of fire;
- 2) removal of the abomination of desolation;
- 3) **satan bound**;
- 4) remaining Gentiles/nations judged; and
- 5) resurrection of other saints.

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A lot happens in this chapter, so we'll take it a "chunk" at a time!
(By event)

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¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

An angel with large white wings, wearing a black helmet and white robes, stands over a large, bound dragon. The dragon is wrapped in chains and appears to be the Devil and Satan. The scene is set in a dark, smoky, and dramatic environment, likely representing the bottomless pit mentioned in the text.

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1st Event: Satan is Bound and Cast into the Abyss

- ***"Bottomless pit"*** - the Abyss, holding place of fallen angels (see Jude 6). This pit is mentioned seven times in Revelation (9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3)
- This angel is acting on God's authority.
- ***"dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan..."*** very clear ID here! No mistaking who this is. He is bound (*which means he is not active or able to deceive*) for the 1,000 years.

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- *"...and set a seal on him...."* no one opens this prison without God's authority!
- *"...so that he should deceive the nations no more..."* This the **purpose of satan's binding**. During these 1000 years, he will not be around to deceive. Truth will prevail. *(But so will man's black heart!)*

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- Isaiah 24 says **he will not be alone**, but all the demons will be bound with him:
“It shall come to pass in that day That the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished.”
(Isaiah 24:21-22)

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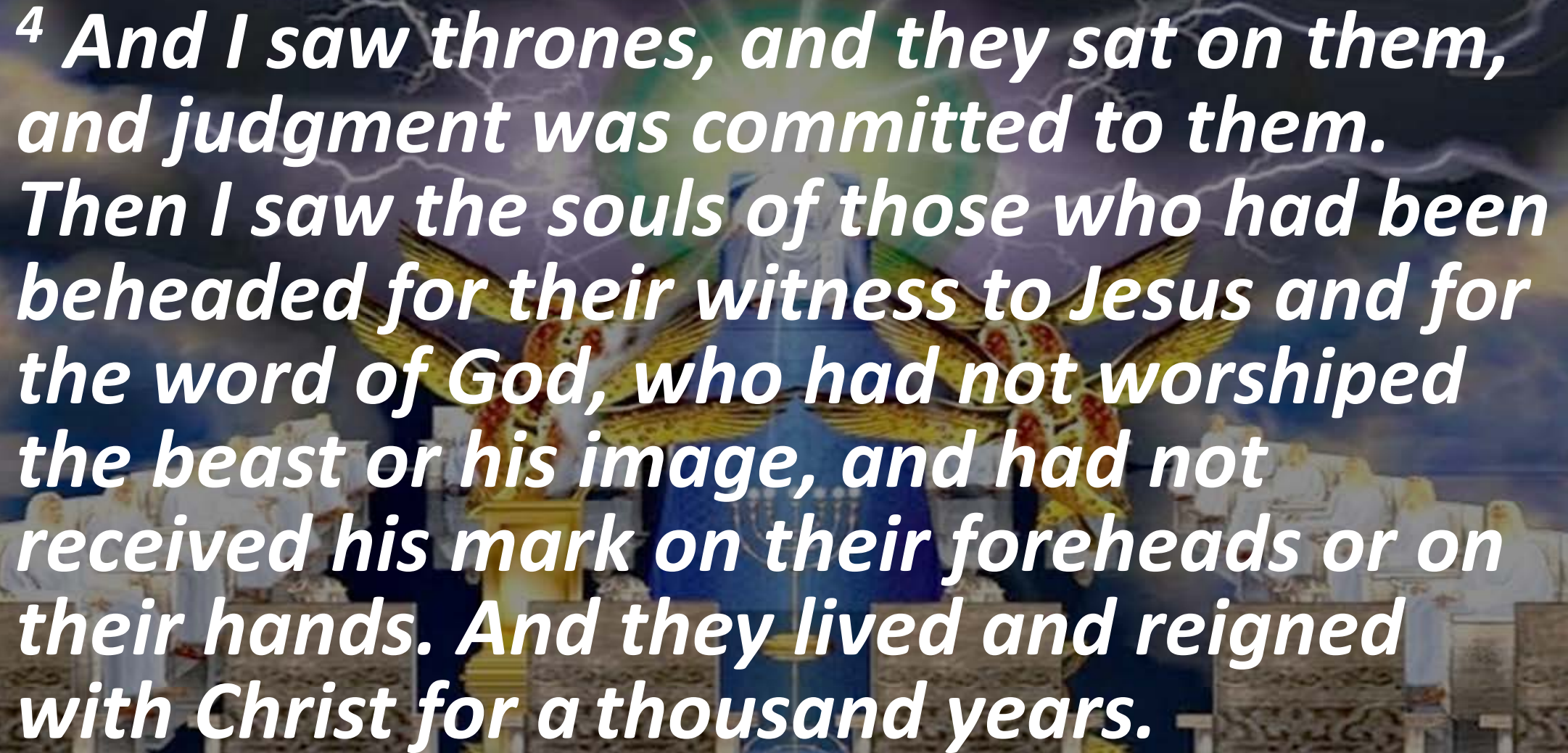
- ***“...the thousand years...”*** Time frame **specified six times here**. God is underscoring the literal understanding of 1,000 years.
- The “allegorization of 1,000 years uses these verses as justification: **Psalm 90:4** *“For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.”* And **2 Peter 3:8** *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”*
- The repeated use of this clear reference, however, should most likely be interpreted literally.

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- *"But after these things he must be released for a little while..."* many have asked the very legitimate question, WHY? We don't know for sure, but **one reason is to show man's black heart even without influence of the enemy.** We do not always understand why God does what He does, the way He does. But we know He always has a plan, and His plan always has a purpose, and is always better than ours, and often beyond our understanding at this time.

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



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2nd Event: First Resurrection, Reign with Messiah

- ***“Thrones, ...and judgment was committed to them”***
...WHO ARE THESE? Not stated, but most believe these are the saints (*including those caught up*), same as those in chapters 4 and 5 (*elders on their thrones, the redeemed*).
- Another group seen, ***“souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus...”*** Clearly martyred saints of Tribulation. Resurrected, co-reign with Jesus, and other saints. End of 1st resurrection.

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It is **believed that 4 groups** will participate (co-reign) with Jesus during the Millennium:

- 1) ones on their thrones, same **elders** of chapters 4 and 5, the redeemed Church;
- 2) **tribulation martyrs**, those killed for their faith;
- 3) **Old Testament saints** (Daniel 12:1-4, Isaiah 25:8-9);
- 4) **living tribulation saints** (*those who remained true to God, who lived through the tribulation*).

Note, the only people who go into Millennium are believers. All the rest have been killed at the final battle.

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What is the **FIRST** resurrection?

COMMENTARY:

“The Resurrection at the Second Advent

One of the major revelations concerning the second coming of Christ is the prediction of the resurrections which will take place at that time.

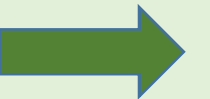
According to Revelation 20:4-6, the event described as the “first resurrection” takes place immediately after the second coming. ...



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COMMENTARY (cont.)

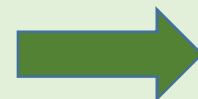
The expression “first resurrection” has constituted an exegetical problem for all interpreters. Posttribulationists cite this reference as evidence that the rapture could not occur until after the tribulation. Pretribulationists have rightly held that the first resurrection is not an event, but an order of resurrection. It is evident that our Lord rose from the dead as the first one to receive a resurrection body—others previously raised from the dead had merely been restored to their former natural bodies.



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COMMENTARY (cont.)

His resurrection, though widely separated from resurrections which follow, is included in the first resurrection, otherwise the event described in Revelation would not be “first.” According to 1 Corinthians 15:20, Christ is “the firstfruits of them that are asleep,” i.e., the first part of the resurrection of all saints. Likewise, the evidence that the translation of the church takes place before the tribulation would point to a large segment of the righteous dead being raised before the tribulation. These also would qualify as taking part in the first resurrection.



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COMMENTARY (cont.)

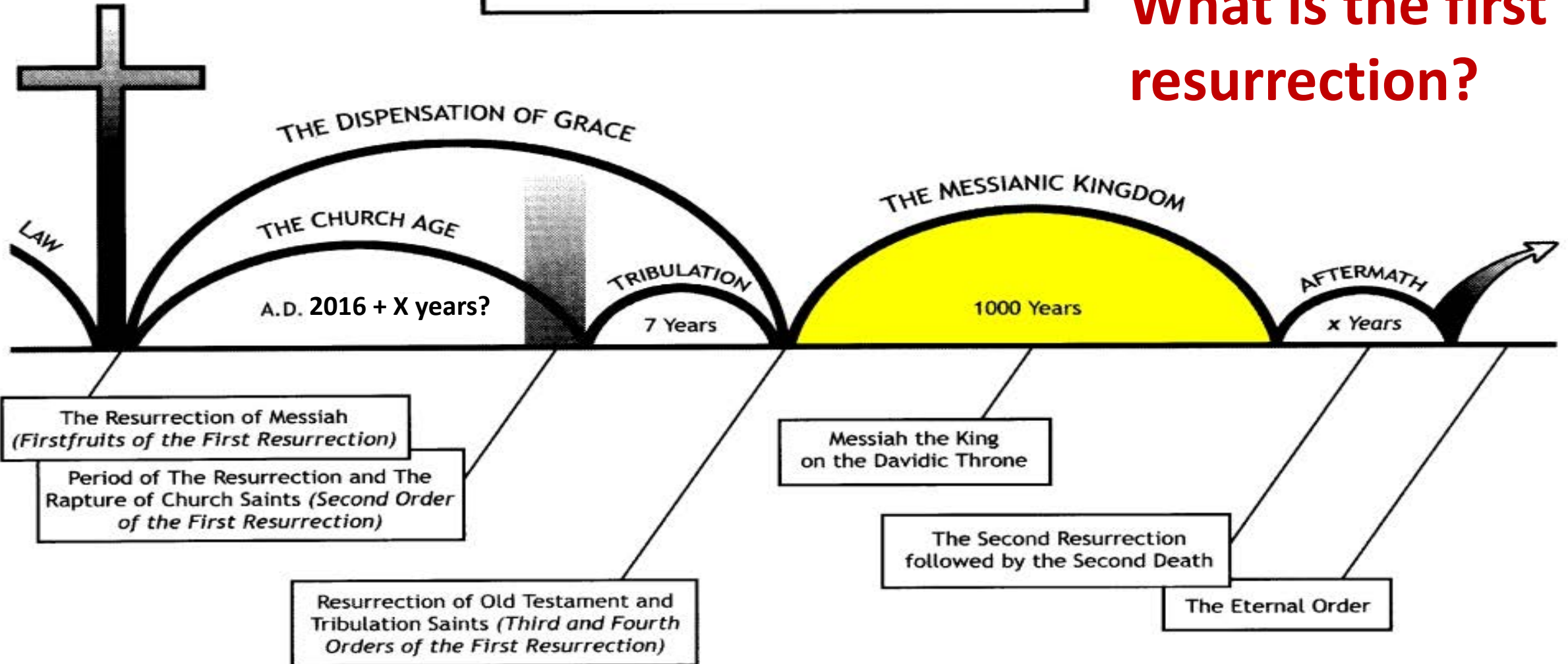
In contrast to the first resurrection of Revelation 20 is the resurrection of the wicked dead portrayed in the latter part of the chapter . The first resurrection therefore becomes the resurrection of all the righteous in contrast to the final resurrection which is the resurrection of the wicked.

(John Walvoord)

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Chronology of Eschatology

What is the first resurrection?

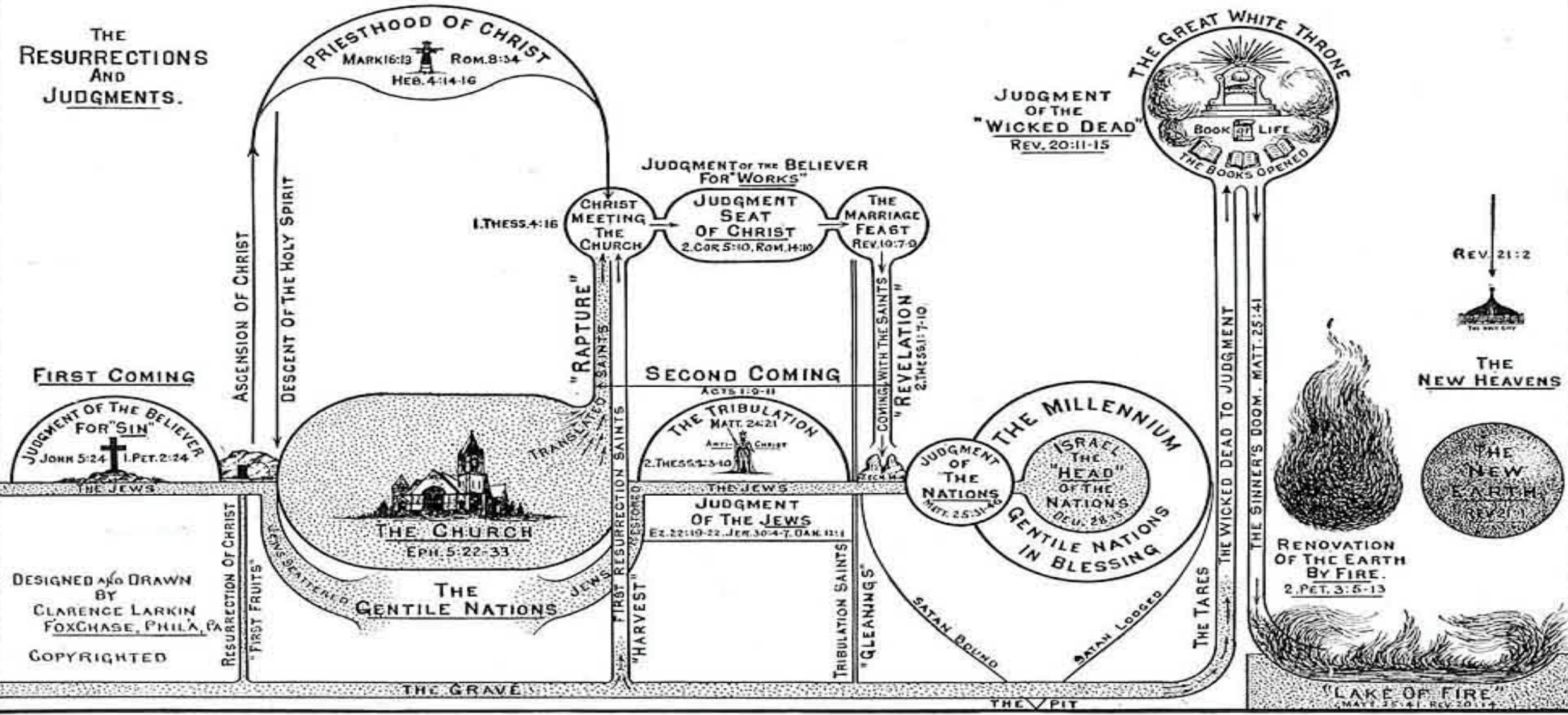


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Revelation 20

THE
RESURRECTIONS
AND
JUDGMENTS.



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Revelation 20

⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.



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- **The first resurrection is for believers only**, and is a “category” not a single event.
- ***“Rest of the dead”*** are all other dead (unbelievers) and are not resurrected until after the Millennium.
- Greek word here for **“resurrection”** is *“anastasis”* which literally means to stand up again, or be raised back to life. Resurrection is a literal event where all the dead believers are raised to literal life, with a literal uncorrupted body (*see 1 Cor. 15*).

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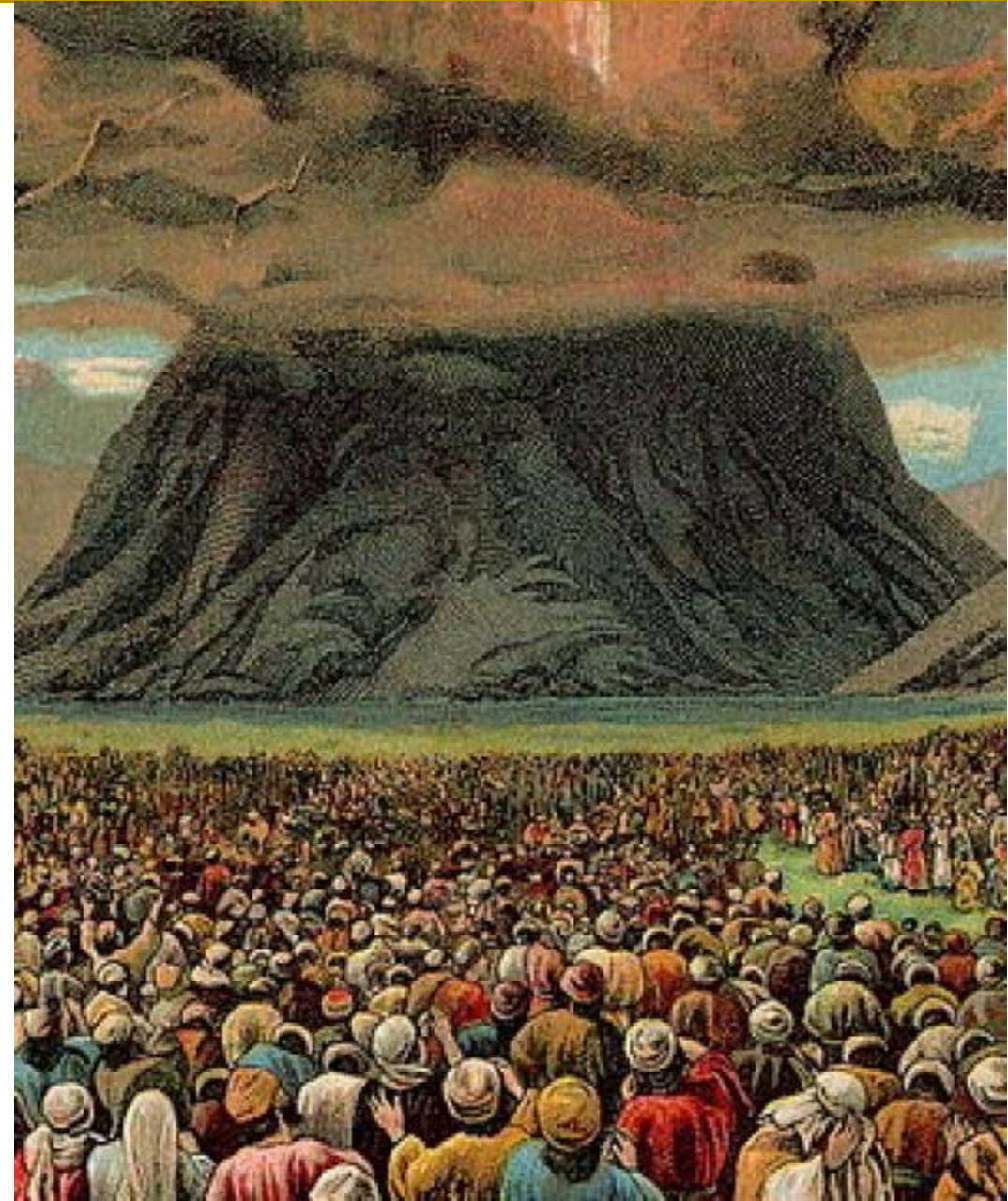
- ***"...over such the second death has no power..."*** The first death is of the body, separation of the body from the soul. The second death is the separation from God. **This second death, or separation from God, has no power over believers.** Reserved for unbelievers.
- ***"...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."*** Those who reign with Jesus will be of the first resurrection, all believers. All believers will be priests, not just the Jewish Levites. All serve Him in some capacity.

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- Many references in both old and new testaments about believers being “**priests**” of God.
- “priest” in Hebrew is **KOHEN (or COHEN)**. Literally means one who officiates, executes (administratively) and generally serves the highest authority. A “chief ruler” or “principal officer” of the Most High God.
- The role of the priests was multi-faceted, acting not only as officials of Temple worship, but also as intermediaries between God and man through the sacrificial system. Role was to keep order and execute laws of God. **We will serve in a similar way.**

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- At Mt. Sinai: *“And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests (cohanim) and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*
(Exodus 19:6, NKJV)



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In this book (CJB):

1. *“who has caused us to be a kingdom*, that is, **cohanim** for God, his Father — to him be the glory and the rulership forever and ever. Amen.” (1:6)*
2. *“You made them into a kingdom for God to rule, **cohanim** to serve him; and they will rule over the earth.” (5:10)*
3. *“Blessed and holy is anyone who has a part in the first resurrection; over him the second death has no power. On the contrary, they will be **cohanim** of God and of the Messiah, and they will rule with him for the thousand years.” (current verse, 20:6)*

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7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.



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3rd Event: Satan released, Gog and Magog, Lake of Fire

- Satan released at end of the 1000 years. He will immediately go out to deceive the nations again.
- **Shows the basic defect in man** - a perfect environment (*the Millennium*) still reveals the fallen nature of man. Human nature doesn't change even under the rule of the Lamb. *Human nature must be redeemed first*.

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- Millennium starts out well, populated with believers. However, over 1,000 years, unbelief and rebellion, the nature of unredeemed mankind, returns.
- Even after a perfect rule by a perfect ruler, the **black heart of man is still around**. Some believe this period of time underscores this fact that man is essentially evil in nature, even without the enemy's influence.
- This perfect environment will reveal this nature, because the *environment alone cannot produce a perfect heart*. **Only God can do this.**

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“Gog and Magog.”

**Don't confuse with
same mention in
Ezekiel 38 and 39.**

**There is much debate
and controversy about
these two references.**

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- Ezekiel indicates a pre-Trib or mid-Trib event, whereas Revelation 20 is post-Trib. There are **many similarities and many differences** between these two references.
- In Ezekiel, Gog is a person or ruler, and Magog is the land of this ruler. Ezekiel tells us other ancient names of nations united (an alliance) with Gog and Magog in their attempt to destroy Israel. These ancient names can be traced to modern Arab nations today.
- Most commentators believe this is a **Russian/Arab alliance** in Ezekiel 38-39. Revelation 20 is not specific.

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- The timing, participants and place are different. However, it is *also a group gathered together to do battle against God and His people - another vain thing!* (Psalm 2).
- Some commentators still insist this is the same as the Ezekiel battle. However, a careful analysis of both events should lead to the conclusion that they are separate and unique.

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- *"whose number is as the sand of the sea..."* These people gathered are a VERY large number. Sad to realize that huge numbers of people wish to rebel against God at this time.
- It is likely that there will be more people on earth than ever before since there is no disease, or want of anything. Mankind flourishes and populations swell.

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⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

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- ***"...surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city."*** The “camp of the saints” is an interesting term. It is where believers are found as a “group,” co-regents with the Messiah during the Millennium. This refers to ***Yerushalayim*** (Jerusalem).
- This large group in rebellion surrounds Jerusalem and outlying areas, again attempting to overthrow God and His people.

**A VERY
VAIN
THING!**

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- Although Babylon has been in ruins for a 1000 years, the spirit of Babylon drives sinful man to rebel against God again and again.

The Tale of Two Cities continues....

- **"And fire came down from God..." Boom. We're done!** Notice no battle mentioned here! They have gathered for battle, but it's apparently a non-event since God intervenes immediately and sends fire down to destroy them. *So much for that "battle."* Battling against God, whether in body or in spirit, has disastrous and often fatal results. **Always.**



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- ***"devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire..."*** Now the enemy is sent to his **ultimate eternal destiny** - the lake of fire - to join the antichrist and the false prophet, and eventually all other unbelievers. They will exist forever in torment.
- Notice the two earlier occupants of this place are still there. They have not disappeared or been annihilated. They remain in torment.

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Many people ask why this battle had to happen again, especially after one previous Gog and Magog, and Armageddon. **First, asking “why” questions is non-productive!** We cannot know the mind of God, only that He is perfect and just and righteous. **The only thing we can understand is that all sin must be destroyed prior to entering into the eternal state with God.** Since unredeemed people populated the Millennial Kingdom, the human heart still rebelled. This final battle reveals this, and also finalizes the preparations for the eternal state.

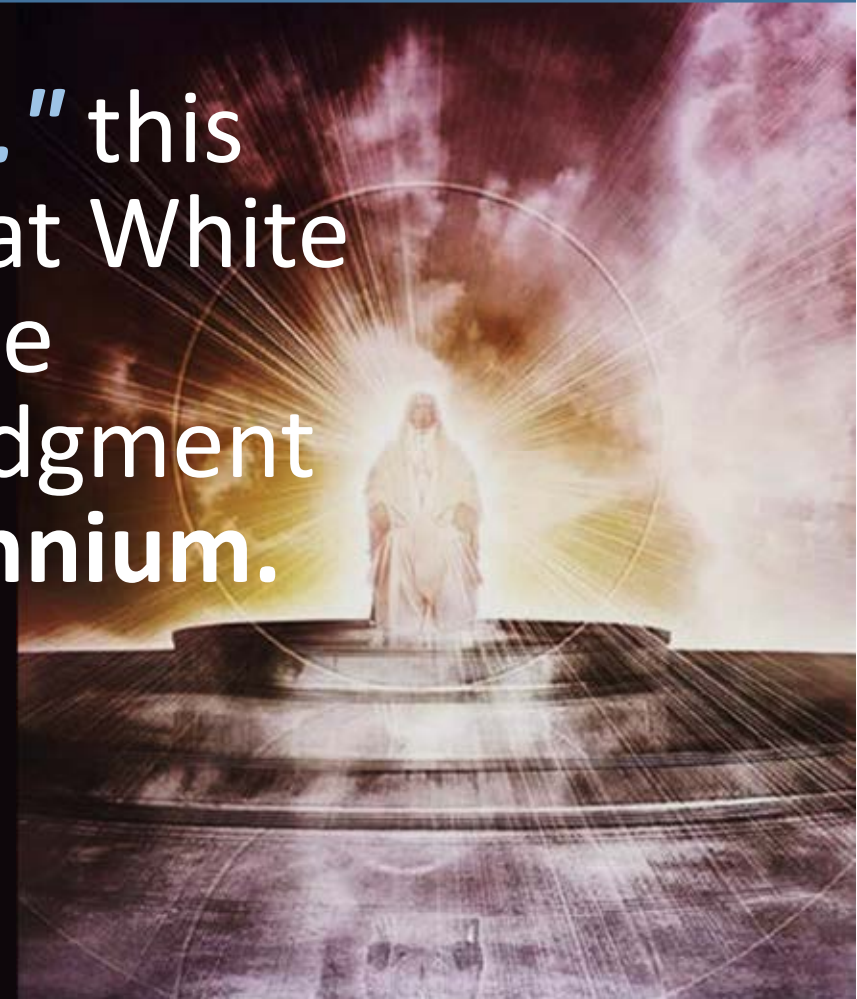
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11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away. And there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

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4th Event: Great White Throne Judgment, Final Disposition of Unbelievers

- *"Then I saw a great white throne..."* this event often referenced as the "Great White Throne Judgment" - judgment of the unbeliever, the doomed, not the judgment of the believers. **This is post-Millennium.**
- *"...and Him who sat on it.."*
Who is the judge? **Jesus!**



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- ***"...from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."*** Reminder of chapter 6, where sky rolled up and no one could stand before wrath of the Lamb!

¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place. ¹⁵ Then the earth's kings, the rulers, the generals, the rich and the mighty — indeed, everyone, slave and free — hid himself in caves and among the rocks in the mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne and from the fury of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the Great Day of their fury has come, and who can stand?" (6:14-17).

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- Sounds like the destruction of heaven and earth also referenced in chapter 21. A corrupt earth and heavens cannot remain in the presence of a holy God.
- The unbelieving dead are gathered here. These are the **second resurrection**. **All believers have been resurrected prior to this.**
- There is no difference between "small and great" in God's eyes.

Revelation 20

- ALL unbelieving dead appear here, including those in the sea, and Hades. These verses prevent belief in "existentialism" or the fact that after death there is nothing. **Wrong**. After death there is judgment for the unbeliever, and ultimately an eternal torment in the lake of fire. *Very sobering.*
- ***"...and books were opened."*** What books? We are not told what books. Perhaps books where all deeds are written by God, or perhaps the books of the Law. **God judges ONLY in **two** ways, either you are under the Law, or under Grace. We choose.**

Revelation 20



If under the Law, the **Law judges us guilty**, as all sin and fall short (*miss the mark, that's what the word "sin" means literally*) of the glory of God. If we are under grace, we are covered by the blood of Jesus, and judged by His righteousness. Jesus told the Pharisees that **Moses would judge them - the Law.** They declined His grace.

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- *"And another book was opened..."* This is identified as the **Book of Life**. Much speculation about this book. It is thought Book of Life initially contains the names of EVERY person ever born, as God desires that "none are lost." However, as people make choices against God, not to receive the gift of His Son, these people's names are removed from the Book of Life (*blotted out due to unbelief*). (See Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 21:27; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 18:8, Luke 10:20)
Notice this is NOT the Lamb's Book of Life!

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- ***"And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."*** The unbeliever's works are known here (*perhaps included in the books opened*) and compared to the Law.
- These have declined the grace of God, so this is their only other judgment basis. Results? **Romans 3:23**. This judgment is a formality only. No one in this judgment is pardoned. All are condemned to eternal separation from God, the second death.

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¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

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- All unsaved dead are raised here, regardless of where their “matter” ended up (the sea, fire, etc.)
- ***"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire..."*** This is literal physical death, coupled with Hades, the holding place of the dead (*Hades in NT, Sheol in OT, a temporary place, incorrectly translated sometimes as "hell."*) These two also thrown in the lake of fire (*No more death, no more Sheol/Hades*).
- The ***lake of fire is the ultimate permanent destiny of everything and everyone in opposition to God***. It is what most people today call "hell."

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- ***"This is the second death..."*** This death, which is separation from God, and an eternity of torment, is *only for the unbeliever*. Has no power over believer.
- Remember, this is **completely necessary** for a holy God, and for our protection from sin. Sin must be completely banished forever.
- All those whose names are not found in the Book of life are cast into the lake of fire. Their names have been blotted out. The Lamb's Book of Life is like a **subset of the Book of Life**.

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- OT saints didn't have Jesus to believe in, although they believed in God's promises of a Messiah.
- Everyone starts out in the Book of Life, then as decisions are made against God, those names are removed (blotted out). In the same manner, **as decisions are made for Jesus, those names are ADDED to the Lamb's book.**
- In this passage, these are all who never made that decision.

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- This is a simple and straight-forward passage. It is the final event before the ETERNAL state, or what we call eternity.
- There are a lot of things we don't know, but God **has given us what we need to know**. Any speculation beyond what we are told is futile, a waste of time and perhaps harmful.

Believe what God says. **That is enough.**

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- **What about the believer's judgment? There WILL be one.** We call it the BEMA seat of Christ, from the Greek word for the official seat of judgment - *bema*.
- It is referenced in **2 Corinthians 5:10** *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*



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- This is **not a salvation judgment**, but a rewards judgment. It is where we will give account for what we did with what God gave us.
- We don't know exactly when this will take place, but most think it will be sometime after the “catching away” and before the second coming.
- We will receive our rewards (*aside from salvation*) based on this judgment. **This is a “believers only” judgment.**

Coming up next....

The “Eternal State”