

Chapter Twenty

The Thousand Years, the Endgame, and the Resurrection

Once again, Revelation takes a step backwards to re-tell events in a different way. If we wanted to establish a *chronological* timeline, chapter 20 would fit between chapters 12 and 13. There is a war, where Satan loses, and is cast down to earth. Here, a great chain binds the dragon. They are the same event told from differing perspectives.

20:1 And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

Angel coming down: The three times angels descend in Revelation, they signify a spiritual message being delivered from heaven to earth. They are actually different depictions of Jesus Christ. He bore the Gospel, bringing it to earth. (10:1) Then He illuminated the earth through the apostles spreading of the Gospel. (18:1) With the advent of the truth (light), deception could no longer survive. This is seen in the third angel (Christ) grabbing hold of the unrepentant Jews and binding them. It is this gospel message which causes Satan's deceptions to be "locked up."

...there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...*some of them were persuaded* and joined Paul and Silas, *along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.* But the Jews, becoming jealous... shouting, "These men *who have upset the world* have come here also... (Acts 17:1-6)

Satan and his mouthpiece was in the process of being bound, not by literal chains, but by truth.

Key of the abyss: The abyss has already been seen to mean the nations and "the place of the spiritual dead." (See notes on 9:11) Christ descended into the abyss (Hades) when He died (Rom 10:7), meaning He experienced the same recompense of sin that sinners reap. They are all who are dead in trespasses and sins. (Eph 2:1, 2) *Abyss* means *depthless*, and typically symbolizes the sea (nations). The abyss—place of the spiritually dead—is darkness. In speaking of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, God "put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them." (Josh 24:7) Thus, the sea is defined as a place of darkness, which is why there is no sea in the New Heavens and Earth. (Rev 21:1)

Christ descends from heaven having a key—having the authority to lock or unlock this place of spiritual death. This is the same key Satan had in chapter 9. Since the Devil has been defeated, he loses his authority (key). In other words, the message comes from God, unlocking, or freeing the nations from a prison, yet also binding Satan. The Gospel had been sent into the nations and truth was replacing falsehood. Satan was losing his grip, being bound by the chains of Truth.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall *bind on earth* shall be *bound in heaven*, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt 16:19)

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Rev 1:18)

These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens. (Rev 3:7)

We see then the results of the Gospel message. A *binding* of Satan's influence was taking place on earth. The same restriction would be effected in the spiritual realm. What God had predetermined in *heaven*, before the foundation of the world, was now descending to the *earth* in fulfillment of that plan. Satan's darkness was fading in the ever-growing light of the Gospel.

The casting of Satan's empire and mouthpiece into the Lake of Fire effectively removed his power in the world. He now had no throne from which to rule and no way to deceive through the false prophet. Not only was the darkness of paganism fading in the glorious light of the gospel, but the unbelieving Jews were being swept aside.

Great chain: A symbol of overwhelming bondage, a great force of restraint guaranteeing immobility. As chains are used to restrain prisoners from escape and causing further mischief in the community, so it is with Satan. His influence over mankind was gone. Although death and Hell still cause people to tremble with fear, those who turn to the Savior are released from that bondage. (Heb 2:14-15) Satan no longer has any power over the believer.

20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

The great red dragon of chapter 12 is clearly defined here as the Devil himself. Since the symbol is already defined for us, it makes no sense to try and make the Dragon out to be Rome or some other political power. The Dragon is clearly spiritual and mythical. He *is* but he is *not*.

Thousand years: To God, 1,000 years is insignificant. (Psa 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8) To man, however, it seems like a long time. (Ecc 6:6) This number is the bible's way of describing something *indefinite* or *countless*. It speaks to fullness and inclusiveness wherever you find it in the bible. It uses *quantity* to describe *quality*.

Every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. (Psa 50:10-11)

Every beast, every bird and everything that moves is the same as, *the cattle on a thousand hills*. In other words, *all cattle everywhere*. So, when the scripture speaks of a thousand years, it's implying an indefinite or everlasting period. It conveys eternity (Psa 105:8).

Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a **thousandth generation** with those who love Him and keep His commandments. (Deut 7:9)

It is a description of God's infinite mercy and dependability. Therefore, when Satan is bound for a thousand years, it describes the *thoroughness* of that binding. It describes its *quality*, not the quantity. It's not so much the *length*, as it is the *measure*. It is a "filling up" (17:4) of events before judgment or unbinding take place.

Context needs to frame our perspective. The next verse says, "when the thousand years are *completed*..." This is not eternal. Only two things happen during this period: Satan's binding and the saints' reigning. Although Satan's imprisonment is temporary (20:3, 7), the saints' reign is eternal. (22:5) During this time, the nations bask in the light of God's redemption plan and are healed with Christ's salvation. (22:2) The saints rule with Christ and Satan can no longer accuse them of being unrighteous, since they are "alive in Christ." After a time has passed, however, Satan is again set free and the "rest of the dead" come to life. (20:4) With Satan's release, the nations are once again deceived. (Rev 20:2-7)

20:3 and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Being thrown into a pit comes was a common method of imprisonment of one's enemies.

Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and bring it down, her and the daughters of the powerful nations, to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit. (Ezek 32:18)

I made the nations quake at the sound of (Assyria's) fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. (Ezek 31:16)

Egypt's casting down into the pit was considered perpetual—permanent and complete. It would never again rise to world power but would "be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will not rule over the nations." (Ezek 29:15) The issue before us is that Satan is imprisoned within the darkness of heathendom, unable to deceive the same nations he is now part of. They are "shut and sealed" over him. Such concepts require some spiritual discernment, and are, frankly, difficult to understand. Thus, while the abyss may signify nations in darkness, it may also imply a *state of being* into which Satan is held in restraint.

To illustrate, imagine being in deep in debt. Bill collectors are demanding payment and you have no income. You lay awake at night, while worry, doubt and fear torment you. This is the condition of the unsaved person. The Ultimate Debt—Death—lurks around the corner, and there is no bargaining when the time comes to collect. This is Satan set free from jail, hounding you with fear, doubt and dismay. Now imagine that you inherit a large sum of money from a relative you didn't know. This is Christ setting you free. Your debt is wiped out. You can sleep at night and not have to worry. What happens to Satan? Though he is still *present*, he can no longer harass you! He has nothing with which to demand payment. The debt has been paid and he is imprisoned as a result. He is still *there*, but he is *bound* because Christ has locked him away.

Here's an example of why a person needs spiritual discernment: the "Jerusalem from above" is the *mother* of Jesus. She is the mother of the church. (Gal 4:26) Yet this same *mother* is also His *bride*, the wife of the Lamb. Can Christ's mother also be His bride?

For us to have any understanding of prophecy and/or revelation, we have to loosen our minds from everyday hang-ups or preconceptions concerning "male and female," "lions and lambs,"

“mothers and brides,” etc. Accepting the pictures at face value, and not demanding that the “spiritual” mother of Christ not be the “spiritual” bride of Christ free us to understand. These are spiritual concepts that need to be shown between people and the realm of God, with no other way to describe them. We know there is a vast difference between a lamb and a lion, yet we have no problem seeing Jesus as the lion of the tribe of Judah, while also seeing Him as the Lamb. –*Carl Hopper*

When Jesus was about to cast the demons from the Gaserenes man, the demons begged the Lord not to send them into the *abyss*. (Luke 8:31) The popular understanding of this text is that the demons did not want to be sent to Hell. However, note Mark 5:10:

He besought him much that he would not send them away out of the *country*. (KJV)
He began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the *country*. (NAS)

Thus, *abyss* is now *country*. According to Thayer, the word *chora* (country) means

- The space lying between two places or limits
- A region or country, that is, a tract of land
- The (rural) region surrounding a city or village, the country

Thayer’s definition gives weight to the abyss being a symbol for the nations. It must be remembered, however, that Revelation deals more with *conditions* as opposed to actual entities. The *beast* represents a *condition* of Israel. The Lake of Fire is a *condition* of eternal separation from God. So although the abyss may represent a certain dark condition of nations who “know not God,” the inhabitants of those darkened nations can still seek freedom in Christ.

Demons appeared to have no power where worship to God was practiced. In fact, the very presence of Christ and His apostles was antagonistic to evil spirits. (Matt 8:16; 10:1; Luke 4:41; Acts 16:16-18) As the Gospel message was preached throughout the world, enlightenment was dispelling the darkness. Demons were being cut off into smaller and smaller areas, ultimately becoming imprisoned, or bound.

After these things he must be released for a short time: After authority to judge is given to certain ones, and the first resurrection takes place, Satan is released. (20:7) His gathering together of nations to war against the saints is viewed as “a short time.” The phrasing, “he *must* be released” implies a legal mandate. Certain acts *must* be fulfilled which seem to require Satan’s cooperation.

When persecution by Paul (formerly Saul) ceased, up until the rise to power by Nero, the Romans had little interest in Christians. Pilate was removed from power in Judea, and Roman governors granted protection to the church. They didn’t allow the Jews to harass the Christians, primarily, because they were fed up with the Jews’ constant antagonism and attempts at stirring up conflict. As a result, the church existed and prospered in relative peace in Israel. Since the Jews couldn’t persecute the church, it grew and multiplied. The following verses prove this.

When the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to *what would come of this*. (Acts 5:24)

All the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, *were constantly added to their number*. (Acts 5:14)

The word of God kept on spreading; and *the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem*, and a *great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith*. (Acts 6:7)

“These (men) have turned the world upside down!” (The Jews complaining.) (Acts 17:6)

One hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel. (Rev 7:4)

To add to the increase of Christianity, sinners were being converted within Caesar’s own household. (Phil 4:22) Satan had been bound.

After these things he must be released for a short time: Historically, the church was planted and given the opportunity to grow and branch out into the world. This is described in *qualitative* terms as “one thousand years.” Satan is then released for a short time. Some believe this refers to Christian persecution under Nero and other emperors. Others conclude that Satan’s unbinding slowly takes place and ends sometime in the future. We can look back on history and try and judge “times and seasons.” Most get hung up on the thousand-year thing, trying to find profiles where it will fit. Since history won’t provide a satisfactory answer, the majority shove it into the future, where it’s safe from proof. The thousand years is a *symbol*, like the rest of the book’s symbols. You can’t pluck it out of the book, wave it around, and proclaim it’s a literal length of time.

Again, the phrase, “he must be released” implies a legal mandate; something that must happen.

20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

We’ve already seen that the groups mentioned here lived in the 1st Century. Now notice when they are again mentioned—*after the binding of Satan*. There are three groups here:

- Those who sit on thrones to judge.
- Souls of martyrs who come to life to rule.
- Those who had not worshiped the beast who come to life to rule.

Judgment is given to the first group. The second and third groups are resurrected and rule is given to them; they rule with Christ. They are descriptions of the same group, seen from various perspectives.

Thrones and they sat on them: The throne is a symbol for authority and rule. (See notes on 4:2) Jesus has His throne (Rev 1:4), and He reigns over the kings of the earth (1:5), who also have thrones. Since a throne is a symbol of authority and a horse is a symbol of judgment (war), we see Jesus moving from His throne to a horse. He sets out to wage war in order to destroy His enemies. This is judgment. The kings of the earth seek to war against Christ, signifying a desire to *judge* and *destroy* Him. (19:19)

The kings sitting on these thrones seem to be the *true* kings of the earth. They had come through the great tribulation (7:15) and had not succumbed to the false religion of apostate Israel. Note the pronoun

‘they.’ *I saw thrones and THEY sat on them.* Who sat on them? Reading backwards and looking for the antecedent, you have to go all the way back to 19:14:

And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. I saw thrones and they sat on them.

Horses = judgment. Thrones = judgment. Those who sit on horses also sit on thrones. Daniel saw a similar scene, but with a twist: “I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was the Ancient of Days did sit.” (Dan 7:9) In Daniel, God’s throne is the only throne occupied; the others are empty. In Revelation then, thrones are established and intelligent beings now sit on them. In Revelation, victory has been won over Satan’s kingdom, and those overcoming now can sit with Christ in His kingdom.

Came to life and reigned with Christ: They are ruling but only after being resurrected. This coincides with the Lord’s promise—“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (2:11) Why? Because they have already been resurrected by virtue of God’s promise. “He who overcomes shall rule the nations.” (2:26) In other words, they shall possess a throne. “He who overcomes I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne.” (3:21) Reigning with Christ involves a close relationship with Him, and is described in the final chapter as being in a state where “he who overcomes shall dwell with God in His tabernacle.” (21:3-7)

It’s interesting to note that the souls under the altar are best understood as OT martyrs up until those who died by the hands of the Jews in the persecution that arose over Stephen. The Jews executed offenders of the Law by stoning. However, the souls shown here have been beheaded. This was a Roman form of execution. It places the time squarely in the 1st Century and not in the far future. The ones ruling on thrones are doing so *after* Satan’s binding.

20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

The “rest of the dead” refers to those distinct and separate from others who were dead. This latter group are also faithful saints, as they “come to life.” It does not say they rise again for judgment and condemnation, but that they come to life. They are “blessed and holy” (vs 6). This part of the resurrection takes place after the long period of time (1,000 years) determined by God. They do not come to life *until* that period is complete, whenever that may be.

This is where most teachers and scholars stumble badly. First of all, they *assume* that the thousand-year reign of saints and martyrs is the same thousand years the Dragon was bound. Second—and this is a major mistake—they view these events chronologically. They see the binding of Satan in chapter 20 as *after* the destruction of the Harlot, the Beast, and the False Prophet. They are retrospective views. Revelation retraces and retells the story in different ways. Satan’s judgment in this chapter goes along with the judgment of the Harlot, Beast and False Prophet. When *they* are punished, he is *also* punished. Why is the description of Satan’s judgment then separated from the Harlot, Beast, and False Prophet? It is shown separately for the purposes of emphasis, not to distinguish it on a timeline.

They are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, *to gather them together for the war* of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Rev 16:14)

I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies *assembled to make war* against Him

who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev 19:19)

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, *to gather them together for the war.* (Rev 20:7-8)

Plainly, these are not three separate wars, but three different descriptions of the *same* war. Chapter 13 speaks of the Dragon giving its authority and power to the Beast. (vs. 4) The Beast can't do anything without the Dragon and vice versa. Binding Satan therefore binds the Beast. Loosing Satan also looses the Beast. The Dragon ascends from the Bottomless Pit (20:7); the Beast ascends from the Bottomless Pit. (11:7; 17:8) What happens when they are set free? Satan instigates (gathers together) the nations to war against the church. (20:7, 8) The battle of Gog and Magog was fought in chapter 19. (19:11-21) In chapter 16, the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet gather the kings of the earth to the battle of Armageddon. (16:13-16)

The binding of Satan shown here in chapter 20 is thus *fulfilled*, or *wrapped up* in the events found in previous chapters using different symbols. To place Satan's binding in the future is in error, leaving it hanging in limbo and bereft of proof.

While men want to make separate and distinct battles, when Revelation is speaking of one, the opposite mistake is made of the thousand-year reign of the saints and the thousand-year binding of Satan—they are not the same period of time, if indeed they are even related to time. Although the saint's reigning and Satan's binding share a common symbol, they have no connection as far as time or events. The reign of the saints is not defined by what happens to Satan. Here's why.

How can Satan be bound and the saints be reigning, when the former is then set loose to war against the latter once more? Those living and reigning here have died *as martyrs*—they died under the Roman and Jewish persecutions. Their reign follows their death. Their reign can't begin until Satan has been bound, or else they would be ruling before the event that caused their deaths. While Satan and the Beast are bound, they're safe. When Satan and the Beast are set loose, they die.¹

20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

For both martyrs and Christians, they are blessed, in that they will not face the Lake of Fire (eternal condemnation). A *second* thousand-year period seems to be implied.

- Martyrs are given thrones and they rule 1,000 years (an indeterminate period).
- The remaining faithful dead come to life *after* that 1,000 years (after the martyrs reign).
- Those in this first resurrection become priests, reigning for *another* 1,000 years.

This highly figurative language describes the glory and magnificence of what God bestows on those who follow Him. To clear up the confusion, we need to determine what, exactly, is the first resurrection. Note Paul's words from Romans 6:

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized

¹ Most people will reject this outright, since it implies that the thousand years may have taken place within a few literal years. They can't grasp the concept of *fullness*, or *completeness*, which is what the thousand-years symbolizes.

into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the *likeness of His death*, certainly we shall be also in the *likeness of His resurrection*...

Baptism is a burial—a death of the old nature. Baptism into the Holy Spirit is not what Paul is talking about, since *burial* and *death* are not qualities of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives life, not death. (John 10:36; 1 Cor 6:11; Heb 10:29)

...knowing this, that our old self *was crucified* (buried) with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ (in baptism), we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God...

Thus, baptism is absolutely necessary in order to destroy the old self and be freed from sin, as seen from these verses.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but *present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead*...(IE, risen in baptism) (Rom 6:3-13)

Baptism then, is a spiritual *resurrection*. It is an act of obedience *leading to* salvation. Salvation is not gained by mere mental assent, or by asking Jesus into your heart. Nearly all denominations see baptism as a work that has nothing to do with salvation. However, Romans 6 says that it is the vehicle that brings about the necessary “death” of the old self to sin. It also provides a promise by *resurrecting* the new self to serve God. In baptism, the Christian is “made alive.” The apostle makes it clear in Galatians that *all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*. (Gal 3:27) It is this “putting on Christ” that brings about the “first resurrection.” It is this “clothing yourselves with Christ” that causes you to look like Him. (Rom 8:29) There is absolutely no way for any of these conditions to be attained except through baptism. To exclude it as unnecessary for salvation is patently false. The notion that God does (or did) all of the work in salvation may be seen in these texts:

When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah... So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” Then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and **he threw it into the waters**, and the waters became sweet. (Exod 15:23-25)

Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, “Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add fifteen years to your life... Then Isaiah said, “Take a cake of figs.” And **they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered**. (2 Kgs 20:5-7)

Both acts—making poisoned water potable and extending Hezekiah’s life—showed God’s power to save. However, Moses had to perform a *physical* act with wood and Hezekiah had to comply with a

physical act to heal himself. This fundamental principle extends to God's covenant relationship with man. "I will do this" is based on "if you will do that." Moses didn't have to throw the wood into the pond; God could have purified the water just as easily. Hezekiah could have been miraculously cured; God didn't really need the poultice. Yet this is what the "faith-only" persuasion teaches. Their view of justification is God doing all the work; all we have to do is accept that fact. This is the most problematic and widespread false doctrine in evangelical circles today.

An example of this attitude is seen in Naaman the Leper, who became furious with Elisha, believing the prophet would come out and perform a ritual over the leprosy to heal him. (2 Kgs 5:11) It wasn't until Naaman humbled himself and dunked down into the Jordan River seven times that he was healed. As Naaman learned, we all have a part to do.

Without baptism, there is no first resurrection, no "crucifying the old self," and no putting on of Christ. Paul stated, "All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Gal 3:27) There is no other scripture anywhere that directs the putting on Christ in any other way. It is through baptism that we put on Christ; it is through baptism that we "die;" and it is through baptism that we are "resurrected." The quick-fix, drive-through window approach of "inviting Jesus into your heart" is a false doctrine preached by Satan's ministers. (2 Cor 11:14-15)

Another issue is that of viewing the resurrection as a future event. Concerning the bodily resurrection that is true. (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:35ff) However, since God's promise is sure, we have been resurrected *already*. Baptism gives us this promise. Jesus said, "To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He *has made* us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father." (Rev 1:6) It does not say that He *will* make us into a kingdom, or that He *will* make us priests. It has *already* happened. We are saved *now*. We possess eternal life *now*. (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47)

Since there are two resurrections, it follows that there may be two thousand-year periods spoken of here. The problem is one of grammar. There is "*a* thousand years," and "*the* thousand years." The same problem was seen in chapter 13, where translators have added the indefinite article '*a*' to verse 18. The symbolic number 666 is not the mark of *a* man, but the mark of man. The indefinite article was added to support the notion of a future world leader.

Thus, when you read 'the' thousand years and 'a' thousand years, you have to keep this in mind:

A great sign appeared in heaven: *a* woman... (Rev 12:1)

What appears? A woman. A new actor is brought out onto the stage. Now notice:

...the dragon stood before *the* woman... (verse 4)

...*the* woman fled into the wilderness ... (verse 6)

...he persecuted *the* woman who gave birth to the male child... (verse 13)

...two wings of the great eagle were given to *the* woman... (verse 14)

...the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after *the* woman... (verse 16)

...the earth helped *the* woman... (verse 16)

So the dragon was enraged with *the* woman... (verse 17)

We can see that *the* woman refers back to the very first time she is introduced as *a* woman. They are not separate women, as most will readily agree. The same usage is seen in the description of the Great Harlot. She is introduced as “*a* woman.” (17:3) In the remaining text, she is referred to as “*the* woman.” This minor grammatical rule has to be remembered if we’re to properly understand the text.

In that hour there was *a* great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in *the* earthquake. (Rev 11:13)

You can see it describes one earthquake. But then, when you move down to verse 19:

The temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and *an earthquake* and a great hailstorm.

This is not the same earthquake from verse 13, but a different one:

A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. The name of *the star* is called “Wormwood.” (Rev 8:10-11)

I saw *a star* from heaven that had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. (Rev 9:1)

These are two *different* stars. When the Great Red Dragon first appears in chapter 12, he is introduced as *a* great red dragon. Each and every subsequent time he is mentioned for the remainder of Revelation, he is referred to as *the* dragon. This is why grammarians call the definite article ‘the’ an antecedent—it points backwards.

Someone will probably point to 13:11, where it says the beast spoke like *a* dragon, and not as *the* dragon. However, the language is abstract, describing dragon-like attributes. Understanding the difference between the definite and indefinite articles is crucial to understanding Revelation, since it is clearly speaking of two thousand-year periods.² Using the explanations already given, let’s now look at these two thousand-year periods.

He laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for *a thousand years*. (Rev 20:2)

A new thousand-year period is being introduced. If it would have said, “the angel bound Satan for *the* thousand years,” the reader would have immediately recalled an earlier introduction of such a time. Yet there is not. This is a new time period.

He threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until *the thousand years* were completed. (Rev 20:3)

We can easily understand that it is speaking of the same thousand years, and not a separate period of time. Now notice the next verse:

² In Kurt Simmons’ book, *The Consummation of the Ages*, he describes this as *bimillennialism*.

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for *a thousand years*. (Rev 20:4)

This is a *new* time period being introduced, not the same one under Satan's binding and loosing. Satan's binding is separate and distinct from the saints' reigning with Christ. (Whoever has ears—understanding—let him hear what the Spirit says.) The two events are independent from one another. The reason they are presented in the same context is because they are related to the same *subjects*. They are *thematically* related, not connected by cause or time. The symbolism of a thousand years is common to them both, but the circumstances and events described by the imagery are completely unconnected.

20:7-8 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

In chapter 16, John saw three demons that looked like frogs. They came out of Satan's mouth, the Beast's mouth, and the False Prophet's mouth—lying spirits who caught others with their tongues. What was the result of their lies? They somehow convinced the “kings of the earth and the whole world” to get together to persecute the church.

The battle of Armageddon corresponds to the battle of God and Magog. They symbolize a battle for control and dominion—Evil trying to overcome Good. The lying spirits (lying accusations) coming from the Jews, Nero, etc., worked together to stir up hatred towards Christians. They were, in effect, bringing the persecution back to life. The term “four corners of the earth” refers to the *known* inhabited land. (Ezek 7:2; cf. Rev 7:1)

Thousand years completed: Whenever this period is *filled up*, or seen to be complete in God's sight, Satan will be allowed to deceive once again. As previously stated, the number signifies a “filling up” of events, in much the same way the Great Harlot's “filling up” her cup of immorality initiated her judgment. (17:4) In other words, before all of mankind could see God's salvation revealed, certain events had to be completed; IE, a making of righteous (straight) pathways and level roads, of bringing down those who had exalted themselves (mountains and hills) and a raising up of the humble (ravines). Israel had exalted herself above the nations—they were mountains. The Gentiles were deposed far below—they were ravines.

Satan released from his prison: Figurative language suggesting that prior constraints imposed upon the Devil are lifted. Satan was not allowed to test Job until God gave him permission. (Job 1:12; 2:6) The “lying spirit” secured approval from God before it was able to go and deceive Ahab's prophets. (1 Kgs 22:22) The serpent didn't just slither into the Garden of Eden by accident. All spirits are subject to the constraints of the King of the Universe. Those who went beyond the rules of engagement were “put in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” (Jude 1:6)

Although all of these took place in the guise of natural enemies and events, they are attributed to Satan, a Hebrew word meaning *adversary*. The text says that Satan is loosed, but how? In the sense that the political powers in existence at that time once again sought to persecute the church. Although Rome was eventually broken apart and adopted Christianity as its official religion under Constantine, Christians throughout history have been persecuted, and will continue to be persecuted.

However, with “Satan” in prison, the Gentiles could no longer be deceived by those entities he had formerly promoted—the Jewish influence and their false teachers. As soon as he is released, however, man rushes to embrace him. What did the Jewish religious leaders boast in? Obedience to the law. What plagued the early church? Judaizers who sought to levy Old Testament Law onto the church. What is still plaguing the church today? Legalism, ritualism, and traditionalism.

To understand Satan’s “release,” we must view it in the context of the first resurrection. “*After* the first resurrection, Satan will be released from his prison.” The first resurrection stretches from Abel to those being baptized and “made alive in Christ.” (See notes on 20:6) Events in scripture and history are always progressive. But most see this as where the Devil is suddenly let out of jail and the nations spontaneously attack God’s people. Israel’s time in Egypt went from a period of ease to one of oppression, but it did not happen overnight. Later, Israel rejected God bit by bit until He finally destroyed and exiled them. Saul evolved from an innocent young ruler to a paranoid killer, bent on destroying David. Solomon’s trust in the Lord was slowly corrupted through his many foreign wives. These and other examples show that events migrate progressively over time. Satan’s chain has been slowly cracking over time, link by link. A time is coming, and may be upon us, that he will be fully released to deceive the nations once more.

Nations in the four corners of the earth: Literally, all the nations of the earth, aptly describing the Roman Empire. (See notes on 7:1) This is no longer a “third of the earth” or any other portion. Satan’s influence is described as Gog and Magog, two OT figures.

Gog: The name *Gog* means *golden ornament*. A descendant of Joel from the tribe of Rueben was thus named. (1 Chr 5:4) It was also the name of the leader of a host of armies who attacked the Israelites. Described as “the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” Gog is also depicted as being “of the land of Magog” (Ezek 38:2-3), a “place out of the far north” of Israel. Ezekiel prophesied that Gog and his allies would attack Israel with a fierce and sudden invasion. (Ezekiel 38—39) According to the prophet, Gog was to be crushed on the mountains of Israel in a slaughter so great it would take seven months to bury the dead. (Ezek 39:12)

Magog: He was also an enemy of God’s people. Japheth’s second son and a grandson of Noah were both named Magog. (Gen 10:2) The descendants of Magog (Ezek 38:2) were possibly those who inhabited northern Asia and Europe. Josephus identified them as Scythians, known for their destructive warfare, and may be suggestive of the entire group of northern barbarians. The people of Magog are described as skilled horsemen (Ezek 38:15), and experts with bows and arrows. (Ezek 39:3, 9)

These two OT peoples would have had special significance to the 1st Century Jew. They are descriptions of two familiar groups banded together as “all nations” bent on destroying God’s chosen people. They are as *numerous as the sand on the seashore*, reflecting back to the 200 million horsemen of chapter 9. Note the similarities:

Revelation 9	Revelation 20
Number of them was 200 million (9:16)	Like the sand on the seashore (20:8)
Release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates (9:14)	Nations from the four corners of the earth deceived by lying spirits (20:8)

The construct of this war involves *truth* battling *falsehood*. The futurist’s interpretation of Revelation describes a literal grand battle between man and the Omniscient God. This teaching does

not square with scripture and is ludicrous to begin with. It is the Word of God riding a “horse” that is at the head of this battle. Therefore, this war is one of *words*, not of soldiers and military hardware:

I will make war against (the ones who embrace false *teachings*) with the sword of My mouth.
(Rev 2:16)

When Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning the religious leaders’ hypocrisy, He was referring to the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matt 16:12) Paul urged the church in Rome to “keep (their) eye on those who cause dissension and hindrances contrary to the *teaching* which (they) learned, and turn away from them.” He said that “by their smooth and flattering *speech* they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.” (Rom 16:17-18) The apostle John had a similar admonishment:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the *teaching* of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in *the teaching*, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring *this teaching*, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his *evil deeds* (IE, *false teaching*). (2 John 1:9-11)

As the Nicolaitans promoted false *teachings*, Jesus congratulated the church at Ephesus, saying, “... you hate *the deeds* of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Rev 2:6) Thus, John and Jesus are in agreement that false *teachings* equate to evil *deeds*. These are the primary “deeds” that will come under close scrutiny during the Judgment. It involves a discerning between truth and lies. Note Jesus’ words:

He who receives (accepts) you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. (Matt 10:40-41)

How were they to know the difference between a true prophet and a false one? The discerning of spirits was one of the supernatural gifts in the early church. (1 Cor 12:10) Additionally, the church used OT scriptures to “test the spirits.” (Acts 17:11)

Because you have kept the *word of My perseverance*, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. I am coming quickly; *hold fast what you have* (word of My perseverance), in order that no one take your crown. (Rev 3:10-11)

In other words, don’t knuckle under to lies—embrace and hang on to the truth. This is the theme of Judges, where the sons of Israel “forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroath.” (Judg 2:13) They traded the Lord’s commandments for pagan lies.

These “evil deeds” are what provokes the Lord’s anger and brings about punishment (war). The OT says that Ahab “did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him.” How so? According to the text, he considered it no big deal to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. He also married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidonia, served Baal and worshiped him, erected an altar for Baal, and made an Asherah pole. “Thus Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” (1 Kgs 16:30-33) Ahab and his kingdom suffered a 3½ year drought, reaping the Lord’s anger.

There are many in Christendom who plainly ignore these biblical teachings. Instead, they honor social convention and political correctness. To them, the bible's truths are unrelated and not relevant.

20:9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

Broad plain of the earth: Battles in ancient times were waged on open expanses. (1 Kgs 20:23, 25; Josh 8:14; Jer 48:21; 2 Chr 35:22) A plain was an empty place, as opposed to inhabited land. (Zech 14:10) It was a flat expanse, opposite that of an exalted mountain. (Zech 4:7)

Camp of the saints: Literally, the battleground of God's people, the *temporary* abode of God's people. This term and *beloved city* both refer to Jerusalem in the past, but are applied here to the church.

The noun 'camp' (*machannah*) is derived from the verb *chanah*, and occurs 214 times in the Bible, most frequently in the Pentateuch and OT historical books. The word is rare in the poetic and prophetic literature. Those who traveled were called *campers*, or in most versions (KJV, RSV, NASB) a *company* or *group* (NIV), as in Genesis 32:8. Naaman stood before Elisha "with all his company" (2 Kgs 5:15) or "retinue," depending on the translation. Travelers, tradesmen, and soldiers spent much time on the road. They set up "camp" for the night. Jacob "encamped" by the Jabbok river with his retinue. (Gen 32:10) Usage of *machaneh* varies according to context. First, it signifies a nation set over against another. (Exo 14:20) The word also refers to a division concerning the Israelites, as each tribe had a special *encampment* in relation to the tent of meeting. (Num 1:52) Thirdly, *camp* is used to describe the whole people of Israel. (Exo 19:16) God was present in the camp of Israel. (Deut 23:14) As a result, sin could not be tolerated within the camp, and certain sinners were to be stoned outside it. (Num 15:35) The Septuagint translates *machaneh* by the Greek word *parembole*, meaning *camp*, *barracks*, or *army* 193 times. The writer of Hebrews used the expression in conjunction with sacrificial animals, where the blood was brought into the sanctuary but the carcasses were "burned outside the camp." (Heb 13:11)

Two things can be seen from this. First, the camp is not only where God's people live, but where God also dwells among them. The verse says that the foreign nations—those who are not God's elect—not only surround the camp, but also the "beautiful city." That term is descriptive of the True Jerusalem. (Psa 48:2; Isa 52:1)

Second, the *camp* points back to the time when Israel spent its time wandering in the desert, with no permanent dwelling. This time was spent weeding out the rebellious generation (Num 14:29) and preparing the Israelites for war against the nations occupying the Promised Land. This was an OT type for the church today.

Truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Heb 11:15-16)

Thus, we have nations of the world engaged in a battle against God's people, who are also encamped in a spiritual battle formation. They are all wearing the "whole armor of God" and are brandishing the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Eph 6:17) As God brought Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness to forge them into an army, so also are we brought out of sin and prepared to battle the spiritual darkness that surrounds us today.

The beautiful city: A title for Jerusalem. This city is in the form of a temporary camp, and is not yet the beautiful bride of Christ described in Revelation's final chapters. The camp is the temporary and earthly form of the church in the world, surrounded by the denizens of the world and its evil devices. The Heavenly Jerusalem represents the final and permanent state of true believers.

Although difficult for us to understand today, we have to remind ourselves that the early Christians, especially Jewish converts, faced relentless persecution, loss of property and inheritances, and death. The letter to the Hebrews sought to reinforce their faith and reason for persevering, since the destruction of their enemies was imminent.

Fire came down from heaven and devoured them: A common figure for God judging and destroying those who opposed Him. Such was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24) and those who opposed Elijah. (1 Kgs 1:10ff) Jesus' disciples saw themselves justified to repeat Elijah's rain of fire down on the Samaritans. (Luke 9:54-56) Jesus told them that their desire to destroy the Samaritans—whom the Jews despised—was not in accord with the spirit of mercy and forgiveness that God was extending to all peoples of the earth.

The fire from heaven is also a spiritual *representation* of judgment, and not a *literal* repeat of Sodom and Gomorrah. As the Word of God riding a horse is figurative for God's word spreading throughout the world in judgment, so also is the fire which devours those opposed to the truth. Jesus said, "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49) He was not referring to literal fire.

Thus, when we approach this fire coming from heaven on those surrounding the camp of the saints, we must square it with the rest of scripture to understand it as a spiritual condition brought by God upon those rejecting Christ.

Historically, when the Jews decided to revolt against Rome, they lost their protection from the very power that had protected them. The word went out, and all Jews were slaughtered by citizens in cities and towns in the Empire and Asia Minor. Josephus wrote that Roman persecution after Jerusalem's destruction got so bad that some Jews sought to hide their circumcision through reverse surgery.

20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The nature of this deception is not identified. The results, however, are clear. Satan—in whatever guise he wore—had deceived nations, resulting in their destruction. He is now summarily tossed into the Lake of Fire, which is a symbol of God's Final Judgment. (See notes on 19:20) One can make application to apostate Israel and her prophets and teachers being destroyed before Satan's ultimate demise. One can also make assumptions about Nero and Rome here. The summation of what will befall evil men at the end of time can certainly be seen here.

In order of *appearance* we see that Satan comes first (12:17), followed by his kingdom (13:1), and then his false teachers. (13:11) However, in the order of the *destruction*, the reverse is true, with Satan being the last to be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Satan—*Source* of evil—shows up first—destroyed last
Beast—*Place* of evil—shows up second—destroyed second
False Prophet—*Voices* of evil—shows up last—destroyed first

The deception is destroyed first, then the vines that spawned it, and finally the roots from which it

all sprang forth. The destruction of Jerusalem and all it represented to the Jews can be seen in this light. The axe had chopped the tree down at the roots, where it was then burned.

Tormented day and night: Meaning 24 hours a-day, around-the-clock. (Psa 1:2; Lam 2:18; Luke 18:7; Acts 9:24) In a metaphoric sense, it means *forever* (Jer 33:25), or *constantly*. (Psa 55:10; Jer 9:1) The Greek means *without end*.

Forever and ever: Of the 12 times this phrase appears in Revelation, it's related 9 times to God and His eternal nature, twice for the smoke of torment, and once for the torment of the Unholy Trinity.

20:11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

After Satan and his devices are forever judged, the establishment of God's kingdom is now fulfilled, as predicted in the book of Daniel:

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. (Dan 7:26-28)

Some key things to note:

Daniel 7	Revelation 20 & 21
He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.	Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations...to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city
The court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.	Fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
The sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One	The tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them

Christ's kingdom was firmly established at the destruction of the Jerusalem. Daniel writes that the resurrection took place at this time (Dan 12:1, 2; 11, 23), although many reject this interpretation.

Great white throne: Great, meaning awesome and powerful. White, showing purity and righteousness. In righteousness He judges the world. (Acts 17:31; Rev 19:11) The judgment seat of

Christ is one of total authority and utterly divine justice.

Earth and heaven fled away: Similar to “...every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” (Rev 16:20) This is a metaphor for all spiritual and earthly principles from the former dispensation being swept away at the advent of Christ’s rule. The Gospel kingdom replaces all earthly kingdoms. The New Covenant—the new agreement between God and man—replaces the Mosaic Covenant and includes everyone. Justification by faith replaces that of trying to live by Law. No place was found for the old institutions any longer. (See notes on 16:20)

Who established the heavens and the earth? God. While those who live in the flesh and who set their mind on the things in this life place all hope in this system, God wipes it away, establishing a new hope in Christ. The Jews were trying to build their version of a new heavens and earth, a system designed around rigid obedience to rules and traditions. The pagan nations—now called by the Gospel—were in worse shape than the unbelieving Jews. God wanted to set man free through Christ.

20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

These dead are not resurrected to life, as are those from the first resurrection; they are resurrected to *judgment*. They stand before the throne of Christ and are pierced by His eyes of flaming fire. They have no bodies, and are obviously those who have passed out of this life and into Judgment. “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. (Heb 9:27) One’s fate is permanently sealed at the time of death. Although Christians will “stand before the judgment seat of Christ,” (2 Cor 5:10, 11) this doesn’t mean that our eternal life will be taken from us in a some sort of appellate court. The image before us of the dead standing before the throne describes the pronouncement of final judgment and sentence just prior to execution.

Books were opened: What these books represent is explained in the verse: “the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, *according to their deeds.*” King Artaxerxes was informed of historical records (books) speaking of the rebellious Jerusalem and an indictment of kings and provinces. (Ezra 4:15) These books are the recorded deeds of human beings. Just as Israel was judged “according to their ways and their deeds,” (Ezek 36:19) so too are men and women judged according to their deeds, whether good or bad. (Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 5:10)

Book of life: The first reference to such a book is when Moses pleaded with God to blot his name from “Thy book, which Thou hast written.” (Exo 32:32) Psalms 69 refers to those who were to crucify Jesus, their names being blotted from “the book of the living.”

Paul and Barnabas told the unbelieving Jews, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and *judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life*, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46) When the Gentiles heard the Gospel message, “they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and *as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.*” (Acts 13:48) The book of life then, is the Appointment Book of those whose names are written therein to receive eternal life. Those who embrace it and obey it will live; those who scoff and reject it will die.

20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

The sea is symbolic of the nations, as we have sufficiently explained in earlier chapters. The spiritually dead within the nations are released (given up) to come under the judgment of Christ. This is part of the fulfillment seen in all things coming under subjection to Christ. (John 5:22, 27; 1 Cor 15:27) Their reward is based on what they did.

For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law...on the day when, according to my Gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:12-16)

20:14 And death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire.

Death and Hades (*lit.* the grave) are *conditions*, not *things* that can be literally burned up. They are done away with in the Final Judgment. The Lake of Fire is not a literal lake, but a place of final determination. Sinners may think that the metaphor lessens its fearsome description. But the reality is worse. It is a place of terror and hopelessness, complete and total separation from God. It is described here as the Second and Final Death. From this, there is no hope of any future resurrection.

So when did this happen? Or is it yet to happen, as preachers like to tell us? Death and the grave are the last enemies to be destroyed. (1 Cor 15:26) During sin's rule, man was separated from God *in this life*, and sequestered in the grave *at death*. The bible describes Hades/grave as a repository for both the righteous and the unrighteous. This was man's *condition* until Christ's ascension, "when He took captive a host of captives." (Eph 4:8)

I've heard it said many times, "People still die, so Christ hasn't defeated death yet." But the plain truth of scripture says that by His substitutionary death and atoning blood, Jesus "*abolished death* and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim 1:10). Our problem is one of being unable or unwilling to see things from a spiritual perspective, where Time does not exist.

This is the second death: The first death is physical. Christians are not safe from the first death, only the second. Both the righteous and unrighteous die physically, but only the former are safe from the second death. The latter die physically *and* spiritually. Jesus said to fear God, who can destroy both body *and* soul. (Matt 10:28)

20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.

Those not conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29) are destroyed because they are not in accordance with the recipe and formula of the Gospel and NT teachings. They are not "in Christ." They are those who lived their own agenda and believed that any road led to heaven.

The events of the resurrection and judgment are not in reference to any *chronological* age, but a *theological* one. It was at the end of the Old Covenant, the age that the bible refers to. The trouble has always been, when we see the word 'age,' sometimes translated 'world,' we think it means "end of time." Even a cursory study of scripture will bear out that was referring to end of the Mosaic Dispensation and the Beginning of the New Heavens and New Earth, described in simple-yet-poetic language.

The Resurrection—Some Things To Chew On

Popular understanding of the resurrection is based on the idea that it will be a singular and instantaneous event encompassing every human being who ever lived. Two scriptures are used in this line of thought:

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29)

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Cor 15:51-52)

The Corinthian passage supports a singular event with two things happening: (1) Some won't die; (2) those who have died will be raised imperishable. Both groups "will all be changed." (1 Cor 15:52) No mention is made of the wicked. John's gospel speaks of a coming 'hour'—literally, "a coming *time*—an appointment." In Revelation 20, we see the following:

1. *And I saw* thrones and judgment given to *them* (vs. 4). Who are the "them"? You have to backtrack all the way to 19:14 to find out. 'Them' is an antecedent, pointing back to the last mentioned person(s). This would be the armies who followed Christ on His white horse. These are Christians engaged in spiritual warfare. This is not a resurrection.
2. *And I saw* the souls of those who had been killed for their faith...and *they came to life* and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (vs. 4). (Phase 1) This group is separate from "those who sat on thrones and were given judgment." It says "came" to life, almost as if they were asleep and woke up.
3. *The rest of the dead* (those not mentioned in verse 4) did not come to life *until* the thousand years were completed. *This is the first resurrection.* (Phase 2) The "rest of the dead" is telling. It implies that the prior groups mentioned were also dead. The *rest* of them makes up the remainder. The thousand years is the time of Satan's binding, when he can't deceive the nations as to the truth of the Gospel. Once he is unbound, this "long period of time" ends and this final group is resurrected. It is called the first resurrection, of which the wicked are not included. The reason for their exclusion is obvious: "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection." (Vs. 6)
4. The first resurrection, which takes place at water baptism, doesn't happen in one day, but stretches over time. I realize that some readers will have fits over this, but we have to keep ever before us that God isn't constrained by time. If we can understand that He has all of eternity to listen to the last-minute prayer of a pilot as his aircraft plunges towards earth, we can perhaps better grasp these concepts.
5. *And I saw* the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds (vs. 12) (Phase 3) There's no indication that this group has part in the first resurrection. The language is rather

vague. It does reveal that the book of life is the denominator that determines their eternal fate.

6. And the sea gave up (resurrected) the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds (vs. 13) (Phase 4) The conjunction 'and' separates the events.

There are, in this process, several groups resurrected under various circumstances. It is a fulfillment of John 5, but seemingly carried out in phases. The how-to's and wherefore's don't seem to be important, judging from the vague language. Whether the various groups are judged instantly or over the course of a millennia is one of academic, and perhaps, foolish debate.

The important thing is our own personal death and future resurrection. Are you "in Christ"? If not, you can be certain of your eternal fate—the Second Death. Even Christ will not be able to save you then.