

REV. 19:11 – 22:21

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XII. Role of Christ in the judgment highlighted (19:11-21)

A. Vision of the heavenly Christ as the king behind the destruction of opposing powers (19:11-16)

1. These verses highlight Christ's role in the meting out of God's wrath that has occupied much of the book.

a. That role was alluded to in 6:16-17. There the powerful and the lowly are hiding among the rocks and longing to die rather than face "him who is seated on the throne" and "the wrath of the Lamb."

b. In 14:19-20 the earth is harvested by an angel and thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Here the Lord Jesus is identified as the one who treads that winepress (19:15).

c. In 17:12-14 the beast and the kings united with him make war on the Lamb and are conquered by him. In 19:19-21 that same event is symbolized.

2. John sees heaven open, and there appears a white horse. This is a warhorse, and as I noted before, white was the color of victory. R. H. Charles cites in his commentary (1:162) a number of triumphant warriors prior to Revelation who rode white horses. This is Christ the king coming to conquer those who have made war on him.

3. He is called "Faithful and True" and in righteousness he judges and makes war. He is perfectly faithful to God the Father, and he is true, right, in all his judgments and in the justice he administers. The rightness of his judgments and actions, including his going to war against those who have made war against God and his saints, is not in question or up for debate. He is truth and wisdom and justice and righteousness personified; he is the God-man.

4. His eyes are like flames of fire, repeating the description from 1:14 and 2:18. This suggests not only his penetrating vision, his divine ability to discern all things, but also the fiery judgment that will result from that discernment.

5. He has many crowns on his head, and these are rulers' crowns rather than victors' crowns. This symbolizes his unlimited sovereignty. He is "King of kings and Lord of lords," as stated in 19:16 (see also 17:14).

6. He has a name written that no one knows but himself. One's name expresses one's nature, so this suggests that the full nature of Christ and his relationship

to the Father and to humanity transcend present human understanding. There is a mystery to divinity that mankind can never exhaust, but the point here seems to be that we will receive new insight into God when Christ returns.

7. His robe is dipped in blood. This is the blood of the enemy shed in conflict. The figure draws heavily on Isa. 63:1-6 where God's robes are red with the blood of his enemies trodden in his winepress (note 19:15). The fact his robe is soaked in blood as he is *arriving* for the final battle leads some to believe it must not be the blood of his enemies because that blood is yet to be shed. Osborne remarks, "But this argument fails to consider the circularity of the imagery throughout the Apocalypse. Chronology is ignored for the sake of rhetorical effect."

8. The name by which he is called is the "Word of God." He is God expressed in the form of a human being. The message he brought to mankind is the message of God, and the judgment he is bringing is the judgment of God. In Hebrew thought, a word was efficacious; it actively accomplished the intention of the one who spoke it. Jesus is the active agent who, in this instance, achieves God's intention to punish his enemies.

9. In this symbolic picture, the armies of heaven, the holy and pure angels of God Almighty, follow the Lord Jesus on their own white horses. The angelic accompaniment of the Lord's return in judgment is a common theme in the New Testament (Mat. 13:41, 16:27, 25:31; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7; Jude 14).

10. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which he will strike down the nations. This symbolizes the lethal power of his word of judgment. His pronouncement effects the judgment, makes it so. See 2 Thess. 2:8 where Christ destroys the lawless one "with the breath of his mouth" at his second coming.

11. His striking down the nations with the sharp sword from his mouth is the way in which he will rule the nations with a rod of iron. That is a different way of putting the same truth of judgment. In Psalm 2 God says to his Anointed, "I will make the nations your heritage . . . You shall break them with a rod of iron." To rule with a rod of iron means to destroy.

B. Christ's role in Harmagedon, the completion of God's wrath (19:17-21)

1. In imagery drawn from Ezekiel's apocalyptic-style oracle against Gog (Ezek. 39:17-20), an angel invites the birds to gather for the great supper of God, to feast on the flesh of those who are going to be killed in the battle.

a. The condemned are described very similarly to those in 6:15 (see also 13:16) who were hiding in terror over the great wrath about to be disclosed. Having one's flesh eaten by birds is not only a frightening picture but is also a symbol of divine punishment and rejection (Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7, 34:20; Ezek. 29:5).

b. Osborne writes (p. 687), "There will be two great messianic banquets at the eschaton: the feast with the Lamb for the saints and the feast *on* the sinners for the carrion birds. The saints will partake of the great banquet, and the sinners will *be* the great banquet."

2. Bruce Metzger offers this reminder of the symbolic nature of these depictions (p. 91-92):

All this is symbolism at its highest. No one imagines that such statements are literal. Never shall we see the "white horse," or the sword projecting from the mouth of the conqueror, or the birds gorged with the flesh of fallen warriors (19:21). The descriptions are not descriptions of real occurrences, but of symbols of the real occurrences. The message that John conveys through this symbolism is that evil will surely be overthrown. Here that message is presented in apocalyptic pictures of almost repellent realism.

3. The forces of Antichrist are gathered for the final assault against the forces of heaven. This is a reference to their uniting in opposition to God as they launch their war on the Lamb, the great persecution of the church, that was referred to in 11:2, 11:7-8, 13:7-10, 14:9-12, 16:6, 16:13-16, 17:5-6, 17:13-14, and 18:24.

4. The actual warfare is not described. It is as if the sword from the Lord's mouth ends the battle instantly. Perhaps this is to emphasize the unrivaled power of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

a. The beast and the false prophet are thrown *alive* into the lake of fire, which has the connotation of *conscious* punishment. Osborne remarks (p. 690), "it may be that John expected the reader to remember that with respect to the other three groups [cast there]." We soon learn that the beast and false prophet are joined by the devil (20:10), Death and Hades (20:14), and the unbelievers, who are described in 20:13-15 as those whose names are not in the book of life and in 21:8 as the cowardly, faithless, idolatrous, and immoral.

b. All the condemned will be cast in the lake of fire "alive" – they share a common fate (Mat. 25:31; Rev. 14:11) – but most will be alive by way of a resurrection after having experienced death (Jn. 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:11-15). That is why the lake of fire is called the "second death" in 20:14 and 21:8. It is a "second death" in that it is a negative, sin-caused separation that follows (generally) a resurrection from the first death.

5. Those who sided with the beast in his opposition to God are killed by the sword from the Lord's mouth. The scavenging birds that were summoned in advance now gorge themselves on their flesh.

XIII. God (not Satan) controls the coming of the end (20:1-10)

A. At chapter 20 I think we are once again backing up, this time to magnify or put the spotlight on God's dealing with Satan prior to the final battle. Since Satan is the true opponent, the power behind the beast and the false prophet and the one who has raged against God's people since being cast down (12:7-17), his story is told separately to emphasize the certainty of God's control over the end. The point is that Satan will in no way set the end-time agenda. God's sovereignty and control over Satan is exhibited in the fact that he alone is orchestrating salvation history.

B. Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

1. John sees an angel descend from heaven who is holding the key to the Abyss or bottomless pit and a great chain. The angel binds Satan for a thousand years, throws him into the pit, and shuts and seals it over him.

2. To understand what is being symbolized here, v. 3b is crucial because it specifies the reason why this was done. Its purpose was to deprive Satan of his power to deceive the nations for the period of time that was set by God. In God's time, in the time God has determined, Satan will be released from the restriction God placed on him. When that happens, he then deceives the nations to gather them for the great battle against God, as it says in 20:7-8.

3. Bible teacher Sam Storms comments in "Revelation 20:1-15 - Part I" at (<http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/revelation-20:1-15---part-i>):

The question must be asked: "In regard to what is Satan bound? Is the binding of Satan designed to immobilize him from any and all activities?" The PM thinks so. Beasley-Murray tells us that Satan's binding entails his inability "to harm the race of man." But is this what John says? Clearly not. The PM interpretation errs in that it has attempted to universalize what John explicitly restricts.

Two statements in Rev. 20 tell us the purpose of Satan's imprisonment. First, in v. 3, John says that Satan was bound "*so that he should not deceive the nations any longer.*" Then secondly, in v. 8, John tells us that upon his release from the abyss Satan 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." Note well what John does and does not say. He does *not* say that Satan was bound so that he should no longer persecute Christians, or so that he should no longer prowl about "like a roaring lion" (1 Pt. 5:8) devouring believing men and women. He does *not* say that Satan was bound so that he should no longer concoct schemes to disrupt church unity (2 Cor. 2:11), or so that he should no longer disguise himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He does *not* say that Satan was bound so that he should no longer hurl his flaming missiles at Christians

(Eph. 6:16), or so that he should be kept from thwarting the plans of the apostle Paul (1 Thess. 2:18).

Rather, John says that Satan was bound so that he should no longer deceive the *nations* (v. 3), the purpose behind which is to mobilize them in an international rebellion against the city of God (v. 8). And the language John employs in 20:1-3 makes it clear that there is no possible way for Satan to do so during the thousand years. The restriction on this particular aspect of his sinister ministry is absolute and invincible. ***The intent of the devil is to incite a premature eschatological conflict, to provoke Armageddon before its, that is to say, before God's time. But the exalted Christ, through the agency of an angelic being, has temporarily stripped Satan of his ability to orchestrate the nations of the earth for the final battle*** (regardless of the form that battle might assume).

The final offensive against the Lamb and his elect shall come only when the restriction placed on *this* element of Satan's work is lifted. For the duration of the present Christian era Satan's hand is stayed. Upon release from his imprisonment he will dispatch his demonic hordes "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).

Although Satan may and will do much in this present age (as the epistles clearly indicate), there is one thing of which John assures us: ***Satan will never be permitted to incite and organize the unbelieving nations of the world in a final, catastrophic assault against the church, until such time as God in his providence so determines.*** That event, which the Lord will immediately terminate with the fiery breath of his mouth (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 20:9), will come only at the end of this age.

4. As we have seen throughout Revelation (13:13-14, 16:14, 18:23 [probably], and 19:20) and as is indicated elsewhere in the New Testament (Mat. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9-10), it is largely through the exercise of miraculous power that Satan will deceive the nations into gathering against God. Since the purpose of this binding is to prevent him from so deceiving the nations, I submit to you that this binding symbolizes the removal of Satan's power to perform "nation-gathering miracles," the kind of jaw-dropping miracles that seem to confirm his divinity.

5. As Beale notes (p. 991) regarding v. 3, "It is possible that ἔτι could be rendered 'yet' with the resultant translation 'he should not yet deceive the nations.'" In that case, there is no idea of a former ongoing deception that is coming to an end. Though Beale acknowledges there is "Johannine precedent" for such usage, he considers that meaning improbable here partly because of his understanding of the overall argument throughout this segment. I disagree and think the meaning "yet" fits the argument well. The point is not that Satan was exercising nation-gathering miracles previously but that he was stripped of his ability to do so in the future until God's appointed time. NET

seems to adopt this sense of ἔτι by translating v. 3a simply: The angel then threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it so that he could not deceive the nations until the one thousand years were finished.

6. That power will be restored to Satan, he will be "set free" from that restriction, only when God chooses to consummate the kingdom, to bring this overlap of ages to a close.

a. This may well be what Paul is referring to in 2 Thess. 2:6-8 when, in a discussion about Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, he says: *And now you know the one restraining, so that he [Antichrist] may be revealed in his [the Restrainer's] own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, only he now restrains until he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord [Jesus] will do away with by the breath of his mouth and will destroy by the appearance of his coming.*

b. The idea seems to be that the mystery of lawlessness is already at work in the world but has not culminated in the appearance of Antichrist because one of God's angels is restraining that appearance in some way so that Antichrist will only be revealed in God's time. That obviously fits with an angel-administered restraint on Satan's power to perform the kind of miracles necessary for Antichrist to fulfill the role of organizing the world in rebellion against God.

7. The time of 1,000 years symbolizes the fullness of God's time (ten cubed). Satan will in no way "jump the gun" and thereby dictate the timing of the end; he will not be "released" until the precise moment God desires.

8. Satan is released from the restriction on his power to perform nation-gathering miracles for "a little while" in that he promptly, through Antichrist and the false prophet, gathers the world in opposition to God and his saints and then is done away with at Christ's return (20:7-10).

9. That this is a stepping back to present Harmageddon from a different angle rather than a chronological continuation from chapter 19 is supported strongly by the fact Rev. 19:11-21 portrays the complete destruction of all of God's enemies at the return of Christ (all men, free and slave, small and great). The kings of the earth and their armies are gathered against the Lord and are crushed. As R. Fowler White notes, "it makes no sense to speak of protecting the nations from deception by Satan in 20:1-3 after they have just been both deceived by Satan (16:13-16) and destroyed by Christ at his return in 19:11-21" (quoted in Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism*, 204).

C. Reign of the martyrs (20:4-6)

1. Here is a translation that reflects my understanding of 20:4-6:

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them and judgment was given to them, that is [*kai* taken epexegetically], the souls of the ones who were beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, the kind who [*kai* taken epexegetically and *hoitines* taken qualitatively] did not worship the beast nor its image and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one having part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death does not have power; rather, they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him the thousand years.

a. *Kai* is often used epexegetically, to mark an explanation of what has preceded. This usage is commonly expressed in English by "that is" (see, e.g., Aune, 1071; Boxall, 283; Blount, 364; BDAG, 495), but it need not be translated where the explanatory sense of the following clause is made clear by use of a comma (see, e.g., Rev. 1:19 in RSV, NRSV, CSB, NET, NIV). I translate the first "that is" and leave the second untranslated. Brian Blount (p. 365) agrees that both of these *kais* should be understood epexegetically. Many scholars accept that the second clause is a way of more particularly defining the martyrs identified in the first clause despite the fact *hoitines* is a masculine nominative pronoun (e.g., Beasley-Murray, 293; Mounce, 355; Aune, 1088; Osborne, 706; see also, NKJV and CSB).

b. The relative pronoun *hoitines* (form of *hostis*) can be used in a qualitative sense, meaning to indicate that persons belong to a certain class (BDAG, 729). C. F. D. Moule says in *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (p. 123) that *hostis* can mean something like "who is such that."

(1) According to A. T. Robertson's *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (p. 727), which grammar is cited favorably in BDF (p. 153 and elsewhere), "The value of the pronoun [*hostis*] sometimes does not differ greatly from *hoios* and expresses quality." BDAG (p. 701) says that *hoios* "pert. to being similar to someth. or belonging to a class, of what sort (such)." You can see the meaning of *hoios* from its use by Plutarch, a Greek historian of the first and early second centuries. He wrote in *Apophthegmata Laconica* 229F ("Sayings of the Spartans," one of the books of the *Moralia*): "this high honor should belong not to those who were **descended from Heracles** (*hoi ap' Hērakleous*), but to **men like Heracles** (*hoi hoios Hēraklēs*)."

(2) This qualitative sense of *hostis* is reflected in various translations of 1 Cor. 5:1: Fornication is actually reported among you, such fornication **of a kind that/as** [is] not even among the Gentiles. Jerome Quinn and William Wacker (*The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, ECC, 495 and 618) translate *hostis* as "**the kind that** engulf people in utterly ruinous destruction" in 1 Tim. 6:9 and "**the kind who** will also be competent to teach others" in 2 Tim. 2:2. Quinn (*The Letter to Titus*, AB, 97) translates it "**the kind who** teach things they ought not" in Tit. 1:11.

2. John sees the souls of those who were faithful even unto death sitting on thrones and reigning in heaven with Christ throughout the age of Satan's restricted power.

a. The message is that the souls of those who die in Christ in the age prior to the great tribulation, meaning those who die having maintained their loyalty to Jesus, as represented by the martyrs, will enjoy blessed intimacy with Christ in heaven as they await the literal resurrection. Just as the faithful of the final generation, those who in the vision died under Antichrist, are shown experiencing a blessed heavenly existence (e.g., 7:9-14, 14:1-5, 19:1-3), so all the faithful prior to that generation experience that blessing. As I suggested repeatedly, the blessing of the faithful of the final generation implied the blessing of the faithful of prior generations because the faithful of the final generation were expressing the faith they held in common with the prior generations. They are cuts from the same cloth just taken at different times. Here that implication is made clear.

b. This is what the voice from heaven declared in 14:13. John was told, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Truly, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow after them" (recalling that "from now on" may not be the correct reading of the verse).

c. We here get a different perspective on the martyrs throughout history whose souls were depicted in 6:9-11 as being under the heavenly altar, symbolizing that their lives had been poured out in sacrifice to God.

(1) That it is a different perspective on the same group is indicated by the fact we have in both places disembodied souls of people who had been killed for the word of God and their testimony about Christ and who are living in the divine presence in heaven. Here, however, the emphasis is on the blessing of their condition, their intimacy and exaltation with Christ in heaven, rather than on their cry for God's final vindication of their faith through the final judgment.

(2) Paul had the blessing of this intermediate state in mind when he said in Phil. 1:23 that his desire was to depart and be with Christ for that is far better. This was also behind his statement in 2 Cor. 5:8 that they would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

d. The blessing of the Christians' existence in the intermediate state, the time before their physical resurrection, is here portrayed as their souls sitting on thrones and judgment having been given to/for them.

(1) The reference to thrones and disembodied souls (they were beheaded) strongly indicates that this scene is in heaven. As Sam Storms points out (<http://www.samstorms.com/all-articles/post/revelation-20:1-15---part-iii>):

The word *thronos* appears 62x in the New Testament, 47 of which are in the book of Revelation. Twice (2:13; 13:2) it refers to Satan's throne

(being synonymous with his authority or power) and once to the throne of the beast (16:10). On four occasions it refers to God's throne on the *new* earth in consequence of its having *come down from heaven* (21:3,5; 22:1,3). **In every other instance (40x) *thronos* refers to a throne in heaven**, either that of God the Father, of Christ, of the 24 elders, etc.

(2) Their sitting on thrones is an indication of divine favor. Even now, before the consummation, they are given the privilege of sharing in some way in Christ's rule. Beale states (p. 996-997):

When saints are translated to heaven at death they join Christ on his judicial throne to rule over the enemy in inaugurated fulfillment of the promise given to "overcomers" in 3:21 and 2:26-27, though these promises will reach complete fulfillment at the final resurrection of the saints (3:21: "to the one overcoming I will give to him to sit with me on my throne, as I overcame and sat with my Father on his throne"; so likewise Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30). . . . They actually carry out their reign with Christ probably by agreeing with and praising his judicial decisions, and their witness becomes a basis for Christ's judgment of the ungodly at the end of the age (e.g., see on 19:14). . . . Consequently, the saints are pictured as beginning to reign and to execute the judicial function that they will carry out consummatively at the end of the ages in fulfillment of Dan. 7:22 (so also Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2; 1 *En.* 38:5; 48:9; 95:3; 98:12).

(3) If it means judgment was given "for" them, it is way of saying their blessed state was God's judgment in their favor, an indication of his approval.

3. These martyrs, these expressions of the Christian faith throughout history, are "such as," "the kind who," did not worship the beast. In other words, they are the same kind or class, they have the same faith, as those who suffered under Antichrist in John's earlier vision (11:7; 13:15; 17:6; 18:24). They exhibited in their time and place the same unshakeable loyalty to Christ as the Christians in John's vision who suffered under the beast. In historical chronology the beast's great persecution of the saints, his war on the Lamb, comes *after* the suffering of Christians during the time of the Satan's restraint, but that great persecution has already been revealed in the vision. So John can say that the historically earlier saints are like the later saints who suffered under the beast because in the vision the character of the later saints has already been revealed.

4. Non-Christians who die during this period do not "live," meaning their souls or spirits do not enjoy fellowship with God, which *is* life. Their lot in the intermediate state is the dreadful realm of the rich man in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. They will not "live" until the end of all things, until the general resurrection, when they will live in a different way. They will at that time be raised to life *bodily* but only to be "thrown into the lake of fire" (20:11-15), which is the second death.

a. This admittedly makes "live" in v. 4 and "live" in v. 5 mean different things, but such a switch is possible. After all, Jesus said in Mat. 8:22 and Luke 9:60, "Let the dead bury their own dead," switching from a spiritual to a physical meaning in just a few words. And in Jn. 5:25-29 Jesus speaks of both a spiritual and a physical coming to life; for the former the hour "now is" and for the latter the hour "is coming."

b. Also, "first" and "second" can reflect a difference in kind in addition to a difference in order or sequence. In other words, labeling things first and second need not imply that those things are identical except for their order of appearance. For example, the "first" heaven and the "first" earth in Rev. 21:1 do not refer to the first in a sequence of the same kind of heaven and earth. Rather, there is a contrast between the two. The "first" heaven and earth is a fallen creation that is contrasted to the "new" creation, the redeemed creation which comes after the first. So "first resurrection" need not imply it is the same nature as the second or final resurrection.

5. So there is the first death, which is dying physically, a separation of body and spirit/soul. For the saints, that first death is followed by a new kind of spiritual life with God, so it is a figurative resurrection, a move from death to that life. This figurative resurrection that is limited to the saints is called the *first* resurrection because it will be followed a second, literal resurrection, a bodily resurrection, in which all the dead will join. For the lost, this second resurrection is followed by being cast into the lake of fire, an eternal punishment. This is the second death, in which the bodily resurrected saints will have no part because they are not condemned. Their eternal destiny is the glorious life with God in the new heavens and new earth.

First death – death in a literal sense (separation of body and spirit) – saved and lost

First resurrection – resurrection in a figurative sense (uniting of spirit with God) – saved alone

Second resurrection – resurrection in a literal sense (uniting of body and spirit) – saved and lost

Second death – death in a figurative sense (separation of whole person from God) – lost alone

6. The passage of the righteous from death to the spiritual blessings of the intermediate state is nowhere else called a *resurrection*. That is not surprising given that resurrection literally refers to the restoration of bodily life. But such figurative usage is not out of the question in an apocalyptic book like Revelation, especially given the fact John distinguishes this resurrection by the adjective "first," the only time that is done in the New Testament. Even N. T. Wright, who thinks such a figurative use of resurrection is unlikely, acknowledges that it is "possible with the kind of imagery we find in Revelation" (*Resurrection of the Son of God*, 474).

D. Satan's fate in the end (20:7-10)

1. In God's time, Satan is released, i.e., is empowered to perform nation-deceiving miracles, and he promptly exercises that power to gather the nations for battle against God. This is the same battle referred to in Rev. 19:19, what in Rev. 16:14-16 is called the battle at Harmageddon on the great day of God the Almighty. This is clear from the fact that both Rev. 20:8 and Rev. 19:17-18 are referring to the battle against Gog

in Ezek. 39:17-20. As R. Fowler White remarks, "if we are expected to interpret the revolts in Revelation 19 and 20 as different episodes in history, we would hardly expect John to describe them in language and imagery derived from the same episode in Ezekiel's prophecy."

2. In Ezekiel 38-39 Gog refers to the leader from the land of Magog, the leader of a distant and fierce people who, in a great alliance with people from all over the world, attacks Israel, the people of God. John sees the fulfillment of that prophecy in the hostile nations that are drawn by Satan into attacking the church. "Gog and Magog" were frequently interpreted in Jewish (rabbinic) circles to refer symbolically to the nations in Psalm 2 that are in rebellion to God and his Messiah and that will be destroyed in the eschatological battle (Smalley, 512).

3. The enemies of God march against his people, who are called the "camp of the saints" and are equated with "the beloved city" (*kai* taken exegetically). The church is referred to as the "holy city" in 11:2, and in 3:12 Jesus says that he will write on the faithful the name of his God and the name of the city of his God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from God out of heaven, and his own new name.

4. As the church is under siege by God's enemies, the judgment of God comes, described as "fire from heaven." Recall that the breaking of the seventh seal in 8:1, which made available the revelation of the scroll, is followed by the angel hurling fire onto the earth (8:5). This symbol of divine judgment then gets developed and expanded as the contents of the scroll are revealed.

5. Revelation 20:10 states: *And the devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where also the beast and the false prophet, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* Notice it does not say that the beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake long before Satan. In fact, it says nothing about the timing of those events. One could supply "are thrown" as easily as supplying "were" or "had been thrown." And even if the text indicated the beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake before Satan, it could mean they were thrown in just before or that their being thrown in was shown first *in the vision*. Sam Storms writes:

So when were the beast and false prophet cast in? The answer would appear to be, at the conclusion of the war, when the devil himself was cast in. The three jointly instigated the Armageddon/Gog-Magog revolt and are therefore jointly cast into the lake of fire to be jointly tormented forever and ever. The text does not say that the beast and false prophet were "already" in the lake of fire when Satan was cast in. Even if it did, this need only imply that after the war the beast and false prophet were first judged and cast into the lake of fire, a judgment and fate then immediately applied to Satan. . . .

All that we may legitimately conclude is that the vision given to John of the beast and false prophet being cast into the lake of fire precedes the

vision given to him of Satan being cast in. In order to prove the historical antecedence of the former to the latter, far more is needed than what the text itself supplies. It is just as likely, if not more so, that what we have here is simply the literary antecedence of one vision to another, not the historical sequence of their respective contents.

E. Some objections to the premillennial interpretation

1. Let me briefly note some additional problems I have with what is known as premillennialism. There are different "flavors" of premillennialism – traditional (also called historical), the more complicated dispensational (represented in the *Left Behind* series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins), and progressive – and I do not want to take the time to explore these in any detail. For our present purposes, just know that all of the flavors have Christ returning to the earth at the time of Antichrist and defeating him at Harmageddon, then binding Satan, and then establishing a literal earthly kingdom for a thousand years (or a long period symbolized by a thousand years). At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released, gathers the unconverted to attack Christ at his earthly headquarters, and is defeated in the Gog-Magog battle and thrown into the lake of fire.

2. All of the premillennialist views have the resurrection of the righteous, the saved, occurring *before* the thousand-year reign and the resurrection of the wicked, the unsaved, occurring *after* the thousand-year reign, after Christ defeats the recently released Satan. They also have the final judgment and the assignment of all persons to their eternal dwelling places occurring *after* the thousand-year reign, after the defeat of the recently released Satan.

3. In my mind, this splitting of the resurrection of the righteous from the resurrection of the wicked and this splitting of the final judgment from the second coming of Christ cannot be justified from Scripture.

a. The final judgment is tied to Christ's second coming in a number of texts (2 Thess. 1:7-10; see also, Rev. 22:12; Mat. 16:27, 25:31-46; Jude 14-15). It does not occur a thousand years after that coming. Indeed, Peter in 2 Pet. 3:4-13 links the beginning of the final state, the creation of the new heavens and new earth, to Christ's return (see also Rom. 8:19-23). If the final state occurs in conjunction with Christ's return, there is no room for an earthly reign of a thousand years after that return.

b. The Scriptures also teach that there is one bodily resurrection of believers and unbelievers. In the parable of the wheat and the weeds in Mat. 13:24-30, as explained in vv. 36-43, the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one are harvested at the same time. Paul says in Acts 24:15 that there will be "a resurrection," singular, of both the righteous and the wicked. Jesus specified in Jn. 5:28-29 that the resurrection of both believers and unbelievers would occur *at the same hour*, not a thousand years apart. He also declared in Jn. 6:39-40, 44, 54 that the saved would be raised *on the last day*, not a thousand years earlier. This may not rule out *all* temporal separation between the resurrection of the saved and the lost, but separating the resurrection of the two groups by

a thousand-year period that is a distinctive phase in salvation history (the millennial kingdom) seems to me to stretch the "oneness" and the temporal coincidence of the general resurrection beyond the breaking point.

c. The seven bowls *complete* the wrath of God (15:1; 16:17). This final wrath follows the gathering of the kings of the whole world for the battle at Harmagedon (16:12-16) and is poured out on "Babylon" (16:19), the empire of Antichrist (Revelation 13; 17:3, 17:8-14). If God's final wrath is poured out at the time of Antichrist (Harmagedon), there cannot be another punishment of earthly enemies a thousand years later (20:7-9).

d. Paul indicates in 1 Cor. 15:50-54 that death is abolished, "swallowed up in victory," at the time of the resurrection, the time when perishable bodies are raised as immortal bodies. Since death is abolished at the time of the resurrection, there is no room for the death that the premillennialist insists occurs after the millennium when Satan launches the attack on Christ (Rev. 20:9-10).

XIV. Eternal judgment and description of final state (20:11 - 22:5)

A. Eternal Judgment (20:11-15)

1. The Judge

a. John sees a great white throne and him who was seated on it. "Great" refers to the size and majesty of the throne, and white probably here reflects both purity and victory.

(1) The one seated on the great white throne is probably to be understood as God the Father (see, 4:2, 9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10, 15; 19:4; 21:5). We know, however, that Jesus is intimately associated with the judgment rendered from this throne, so much so that the New Testament speaks of both the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) and the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10), implying a unity (see, Jn. 10:30), and in Rev. 22:1 there is a reference to "the throne (singular) of God and of the Lamb."

(2) The idea seems to be that Jesus, or more specifically one's relationship to him, is the criterion, the basis, of the judgment that is rendered by the Father. In that sense, God has given judgment to the Son though he still renders it. That fits with the key role given to the "book of life" in vv. 12 and 15, which is further identified in 21:27 as "*the Lamb's* book of life."

b. The earth and sky are pictured as fleeing from God's awesome presence. This may be poetic way of expressing the fear of the corruptible in the presence of God. Or it may symbolize the dissolution of the universe as we know it in preparation for the new heaven and new earth (21:1). In its flight, the universe could find no place to hide from God.

2. The Judgment

a. With Grant Osborne, I think v. 12 refers to the judgment of the righteous, the saved. John sees all the righteous dead, those from all stations in life (great and small), who have now been literally resurrected (the second resurrection) and are standing before the throne. The resurrection of the second group, the condemned, is referred to in v. 13 by the statement that the sea and Death and Hades "gave them up."

(1) The realm of the dead "giving up" its captives was a traditional way of referring to resurrection (see Richard Bauckham, "Resurrection as Giving Back the Dead: A Traditional Image of Resurrection in the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocalypse of John," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*). The parallel with the first group, along with teaching elsewhere in the New Testament, makes clear that they too were resurrected.

(2) The souls of the righteous dead, the saved, were in heaven, and thus their resurrection would not be described as the sea or Death and Hades giving them up. The sea, Death, and Hades are personified as malignant forces in the book (sea: 12:12, 13:1; Death and Hades: 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14) which better fits with their being the realm of the unsaved dead.

b. That v. 12 refers to the righteous and v. 13 refers to the condemned also may be hinted at in the fact the book of life is said to be opened with regard to the judgment in v. 12, whereas the book of life is not mentioned in the judgment in v. 13. Those in v. 13 are simply said to be judged according to what they had done, which corresponds to the books of deeds. Perhaps opening the Lamb's book of life signifies inclusion in it and not opening the book of life signifies exclusion. Verse 15 specifies that anyone who was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

c. The relationship between the books of deeds and the book of life is not specified. There are several possibilities. Perhaps the books of deeds include all that a person does, including his response to God's grace in Christ. Or maybe the books of deeds serve only to condemn, salvation being solely dependent on one's name being in the book of life. I suspect that, since saving faith in Christ will inevitably produce good works, the books of deeds reveal the reality of one's faith. But, of course, deeds without faith in Christ are inadequate to save anyone; the record of our deeds can only condemn us. So both books are consulted. Those who have genuine faith in Christ will have their names in the Lamb's book and will also have evidence of that faith in their lives. The books will reflect a harmony of faith and life.

d. As personified enemies, Death and the realm of its prey, Hades, are subjected to the same fate as Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and all the unsaved: they are thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Their power over

mankind is ended in that they are excluded from the new heavens and new earth, the sphere of eternal life of God.

e. Anyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life, meaning any accountable person who is not a disciple of the Lord Jesus, is also thrown into the lake of fire. This is the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels of which Jesus spoke in Mat. 25:41. As it says in 14:11, the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever and they have no rest, day or night. It is the worst fate imaginable.

B. The Final State (21:1 - 22:5)

1. The new creation (21:1-8)

a. A new heaven and earth replace the first heaven and earth.

(1) In contrast to the horrible fate of those whose names are *not* written in the Lamb's book of life, we here see the breathtaking splendor, glory, and joy that is the eternal blessing of those whose names are written in that book. As Grant Osborne states (p. 726), "Not just the Book of Revelation but the whole Bible has pointed to this moment. Since Adam and Eve lost their place in Paradise and sin reigned on earth (Rom. 5:12-21), the divine plan has prepared for the moment when sin would finally be eradicated and the original purpose of God when he created humankind could come to pass."

(2) In Isa. 25:8 God spoke of swallowing up death forever, in Isa. 65:17 he declared his intent to create the new heavens and new earth, and in Isa. 66:22 he promised that he would create the new heavens and new earth that would remain before him forever. The reference in Isa. 65:20 to death at 100 and to failing to reach 100 in the context of the new heavens and new earth probably should be taken, in light of Isa. 25:8, as a counterfactual hypothetical that serves to emphasize the length of life. Eternal life is portrayed as a state where if one *were to die* at 100 (which one will not) he would be considered only a child and if one *were to fail* to reach 100 (which one will not) he would be considered cursed. See Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, p. 530; and Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, p. 721-722. Given John's reference to Isa. 65:17 in Rev. 21:1-8 (esp. vv. 1, 5), that is apparently how he understood it.

(3) In Mat. 19:28 Jesus refers to the "new world" (also translated the "renewal of all things" or the "regeneration"), which is widely recognized as a reference to the new heavens and new earth. In 2 Pet. 3:10-13 Peter speaks of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth after which there will be new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. In Rom. 8:19-25 Paul indicates that creation itself will be freed from its slavery to decay and will enter into the end-time glory to be enjoyed by God's children. We and it both are getting the "ultimate makeover."

(4) George Ladd comments on the new creation (p. 275):

Throughout the entire Bible, the ultimate destiny of God's people is an earthly destiny. In typical dualistic Greek thought, the universe was divided into two realms: the earthly or transitory, and the eternal spiritual world. Salvation consisted of the flight of the soul from the sphere of the transitory and ephemeral to the realm of eternal reality. However, biblical thought always places man on a redeemed earth, not in a heavenly realm removed from earthly existence.

b. The sea is eliminated from this new earth because it was associated with ideas inconsistent with the new creation. In the ancient world, the sea symbolized unrest (Isa. 57:20), danger, evil, and separation, and this symbolism is employed in Revelation (13:1; 17:1-6).

c. The transformation of creation involves its "heavenization," which is here depicted as the heavenly uniting with the physical creation through the image of the new Jerusalem descending from heaven with all the beauty and splendor of a bride adorned for her husband. This adornment is elaborated on in 21:11-21. This city represents both the eternal abode of the redeemed, God's perfect community, and the redeemed themselves; it is a place and a people. Mitchell Reddish remarks (p. 403), "Interpreters must not be overly concerned about the lack of consistency in the city/bride imagery. . . . John's imagery is fluid. The new Jerusalem is the community in which the people of God will dwell, but even more, it represents the people themselves." There is an obvious contrast between the earthly city, Babylon the whore, and this heavenly city.

d. With the completed redemption, the "heavenization," of creation, God's dwelling is with redeemed humanity (21:3) and the throne of God and of the Lamb is among them (22:3). It will be an existence of complete love, joy, fellowship, and satisfaction lived out in the very presence of God Almighty.

e. I just love the promise of verse 4: *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.* In that eternal state there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain because the old order has passed away, meaning all the brokenness of this fallen creation has been healed. God wipes away the tears of the redeemed by bringing them from a fallen creation full of sorrow and suffering that produces tears into the redeemed creation in which such things no longer exist.

f. In one of the few occasions in Revelation in which God himself speaks, he declares that he is making all things new and commands John to record those words because they are trustworthy and true. It is a "done deal." You can "take it to the bank" that God is going to redeem creation, bring the new heavens and new earth into existence, because he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; he is absolutely supreme, the creator of all things and sovereign over all. This is the ultimate encouragement in the Christian walk.

g. God freely gives the water of life to the thirsty. He provides life, refreshment, and satisfaction to all who long for him. Those who overcome, who persevere in their faith, will inherit the glorious blessings of the eternal state, and God *will be* their God and they *will be* his sons (children). As I have explained before, we in one sense already are sons of God (Rom. 8:14), but the full experience of that reality awaits the consummation (Rom. 8:23 – We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons.). That is the time to which God is referring in v. 7b.

h. Those who choose the world over the Lord will be thrown into the lake of fire. They will experience the eternal torment of the second death. This list of sins illustrates the non-Christian character of this group. The reference to the "cowardly" speaks of those who reject Christ when under pressure. The remaining descriptions reflect non-Christian and overtly anti-Christian (murderers) behavior.

2. Details of the new Jerusalem (21:9 - 22:5)

a. One of the angels who carried out the seven last plagues (chap. 16) commands John to come and see the bride, who is now called the wife of the Lamb, which suggests that the marriage has taken place. (Since the city and its inhabitants are one, it represents the dwelling of the redeemed and the redeemed themselves, the church, which will spend eternity with her husband.) This is probably the same angel who in identical language in 17:1 commanded John to come and see the judgment of the great whore (Babylon). This draws attention to the contrast between Babylon and the new Jerusalem.

b. The presence and glory of God gives the city a brilliance like that of a precious stone. The city is surrounded by a great wall that has twelve gates and an angel stationed at each gate. The gates are inscribed with the twelve names of Israel, and the wall's twelve foundations have the name of the twelve apostles on them.

(1) The great wall was part of the description of an ancient ideal city. It also symbolically reinforces the fact that those God has excluded are completely and forever excluded (see, 21:8; 21:27; 22:15).

(2) The angelic gatekeepers are a mark of dignity. Their presence symbolizes that this is God's city. It may further reinforce the fact that exclusion from eternal life in God's presence is permanent. Nothing will pass through these gates that is not permitted to do so.

(3) The names of the twelve tribes of Israel and the names of the twelve apostles suggest that all of God's faithful throughout history are included in the city. Jews who prior to Christ's first coming shared the faith of Abraham and not simply his bloodline are included because the benefits of Christ's atoning death were applied to them "on credit" so to speak, applied to them because Christ was coming. After Christ's coming, having the faith of Abraham meant accepting God's truth about who Jesus is. In other words, true Israel in the New Testament consists of Jewish

Christians. "New Israel" is the church, the body of Christ consisting of Jewish and Gentile believers, the latter having been grafted into the Jewish root (true Israel), as Paul explains in Romans 11. The point is that all Old Testament and New Testament saints are there.

c. The angel measures the city with a golden measuring rod. This focus of attention indicates care and protection (e.g., 11:1-2), but here the emphasis may be on the enormous size and perfect symmetry of the eternal dwelling place of the faithful.

(1) The city is a perfect cube, 12,000 stadia (about 1,500 miles) in length, width, and height. This symbolizes the immensity, perfect symmetry, and splendor of the new Jerusalem, but also the presence of God. The shape of the Holy of Holies was a cube (20 cubits in each direction – 1 Ki. 6:20; 2 Chron. 3:8-9)

(2) The wall is 144 cubits (about 72 yards) high or thick. As a multiple of 12, it probably symbolizes a complete separation of the city from the outside.

d. The wall is built of jasper and the city is pure gold, like clear glass. This symbolizes its immense splendor and worth. "Like clear glass" may mean as pure, as unadulterated, as such glass. The foundations of the walls are adorned with precious stones, a different one for each foundation. Each gate is made of a single huge pearl, and even the streets of the city are gold as pure as transparent glass. It is magnificent beyond description.

e. There is no temple, no unique expression of God's presence, because the presence of God and the Lamb permeates the entire city. The presence of God that was symbolized by the heavenly temple in 7:15 is now, in the heavenization of creation, described as universal and all-encompassing. The whole thing, the entire new creation, is the Holy of Holies!

f. The city has no need of sun or moon to shine because it is illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb. There is no night, no darkness, but one eternal day.

g. As the home of all redeemed people, it will include the rulers and people of Gentile nations. They will have humbly come to God (brought their glory and honor in the sense of paying homage), and having done so, will live in the light of his presence. They must be redeemed people because only those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life may enter.

h. The city's gates are never shut, which symbolizes the absence of any enemies. So the one picture, the angels at the gates (v. 12), highlights the *exclusion* of God's opponents from eternal glory, whereas this image focuses on their *absence*. They

are excluded permanently by having been removed permanently, having been cast into the eternal lake of fire. They are different emphases on the same reality.

i. Existence in the glory of this new creation, this ultimate Holy of Holies, is only for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. They are contrasted to the unclean because they are clean, sanctified, by the blood of the Lamb. They are contrasted to those who engage in detestable things and falsehood because disciples of Christ are not like that. It is the pagans, the unbelievers, who engage in idolatry, wallow in sin, and deny the truth of who Jesus is.

j. The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the city. The faithful will share in this life-giving stream that proceeds from God himself. It is a fitting symbol of eternal life that is provided by God, as water is absolutely essential for physical life. A permanent supply of crystal clear and flowing water would speak more powerfully to ancients than to modern westerners who have always been able to get water from a tap.

k. The river is bordered on either side by the tree of life that bears fruit continually throughout the year.

(1) This clearly is a reference to the tree of life from the Garden of Eden which symbolized God's continuing provision of life to mankind. Access to this tree was cut off when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen. 3:22), meaning humanity would now be mortal, would now suffer death, because God would no longer sustain our lives forever. He withdrew what would have been a permanent provision.

(a) That is why Paul says in Rom. 5:12 that death entered the world through sin. That this includes physical death is the clear implication of 1 Cor. 15:21, where the *bodily* resurrection brought by Christ is contrasted to the death brought by Adam. The parallel breaks down if one denies the causal link between Adam's sin and physical death. Rom. 5:21 likewise contrasts the death brought by sin with the eternal life brought by Jesus Christ, an eternal life that includes bodily resurrection.

(b) Physical death is an intruder into God's creation, something foreign and hostile. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:26, in his discussion of bodily resurrection, that death is an enemy to be destroyed (see also 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 20:14, 21:4).

(2) So the fall of mankind into death, into mortality, is reversed in the end through the gift of resurrection life, life in bodies that are immortal and imperishable (1 Cor. 15:52-54). Death is defeated, swallowed up in victory. And as the fall into death was indicated by exclusion from the tree of life, so the restoration of immortality (now unconditional) is indicated by regaining access to the tree of life.

(3) The singular "tree of life" presumably is a collective singular that refers to many trees lining both banks of the river (since the tree is on both

sides of the river there obviously is more than one). If that is correct, we have the river of life flowing down the middle of the street and multiple expressions of the tree of life lining both banks. It is Eden transcended, Eden made even more blessed and glorious.

(4) The statement in 22:2b that "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" probably means the leaves symbolize the physical and spiritual healing that God *has provided* in consummating the kingdom, in bringing about the eternal state (Osborne, 772). It does not mean that healing will still be needed. There is no sin, no hunger, no disease, no death, and no suffering in the eternal state. Beale writes (p. 1108):

Does the tree's fruit continue to heal throughout eternity even as it continues to produce fruit? The answer must be negative since there will be no more death or pain to be healed from in the new creation (21:4). Just as the tears that God will wipe away refer not to pains being endured throughout eternity but to a once-for-all relief from such pains (see 21:4; 7:16-17), so it is likewise here.

l. The curse to which God subjected creation at the time of Adam's sin, the curse from which creation has been longing to be freed (Rom. 8:19-23), is finally lifted. "No longer will there be anything accursed" (22:3a). All things have been made new; all the brokenness has been healed.

m. The redeemed shall worship God, see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. Even Moses was not allowed to see God's face (Ex. 33:20; see, 33:23). The name reflects ownership and likeness. The process of transformation now under way (2 Cor. 3:18) will be brought to completion in that ultimate and ideal state. The saved shall reign with God forever and ever.

XV. Epilogue and benediction (22:6-21)

A. The vision of the new Jerusalem really completes the prophecy. The final verses (vv. 6-21) function as a kind of epilogue that stresses the genuineness and authority of the book, the ever nearness of Christ's coming, and an appeal to heed the words of the prophecy so as to enjoy the eternal blessings that are in store for the faithful.

B. This section is peppered with statements that the fulfillment would be soon – what must soon take place (22:6); I am coming soon (22:7); do not seal up words of the prophecy for time is near (22:10); I am coming soon (22:12); I am coming soon (22:20). I offered my thoughts on this issue in the Introduction portion of the class.

1. Notice that the "coming" of which he speaks is when he will "repay everyone *for what he has done*" (22:12). This clearly is a reference to the final judgment in 20:11-15 when everyone is judged "according to *what they had done*." This judgment follows the general resurrection, when the sea and Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them (20:13), and involves the creation of the new heavens and new earth as the

eternal abode of those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, the book that is opened during the final judgment (20:12, 21:27). So whatever "soon" means, it must fit with the fact it applies to the coming of the ultimate end at the return of the Lord Jesus, when he consummates the kingdom he inaugurated at his first coming and ushers in the final eternal state.

2. As I explained during the introduction of the book, the fact Jesus does not know the time of his return (Mat. 24:36; Mk. 13:32), which implies that God is not going to reveal it in advance, means this should not be taken as a statement of absolute timing. Rather, it is an indication of a perspective with which this future event of uncertain timing is to be viewed. It means something like, "The time of my coming is uncertain, so you are to live in the expectation that I am coming soon."

3. It is like someone saying to leaders of a city that must maintain levies to prevent flooding in the event of a catastrophic storm, "The storm is coming soon." That is not intended as a literal assertion of timing, because nobody knows when such a storm will come. Rather, it is a warning, a statement about the need for constant readiness in light of the uncertainty as to when the storm will come.

4. To cite just one commentator, Craig Keener states (NIVAC, 519):

[T]he rhetorical function of the language [of imminent fulfillment in chapter 22] is not to give times or seasons (no date is offered), but to summon us to preparedness. The text teaches what many of us mean by imminence: Until he comes, Jesus' return is always potentially near, and we must always remain watchful, for inevitably he will come, catching the morally unprepared.

5. The seemingly absolute declaration that the things revealed are "what must *soon* take place" (Rev. 1:1, 22:6) is not an independent assertion but a reference to the LXX of Dan. 2:28, which speaks of God having revealed to Nebuchadnezzar "what must take place *in the last days*," a revelation that encompassed both the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom (Dan. 2:34-35, 2:44) without sharp distinction. Changing "in the last days" in Dan. 2:28 to "soon" in Revelation is a way of indicating the impact of Christ's having come. His coming ushered in the "last days" and from that time we have lived on the brink of his consummating return. As a result of his coming, the kingdom in its consummated form moved from distant to "soon," not in terms of absolute timing but in the sense it could now occur quickly at any time (as distinct from any moment). It moved from distant to soon perspectively, in terms of what our expectations are to be.

6. Does the fact Daniel is told to seal up the vision for it refers to many days from now (Dan. 8:26) whereas John is told *not* to seal up words of the prophecy for the time is near (Rev. 22:10) prove that John's prophecy must be fulfilled in a shorter time than Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled? In other words, if the time between Daniel's prophecy and its fulfillment was so great as to prompt sealing of his prophecy, how can a

greater time between John's prophecy and its fulfillment not likewise prompt sealing of his prophecy?

a. First, Rev. 22:10 follows the clearly eschatological descriptions in 20:11 – 22:6, so the prophecy that is not to be sealed includes the consummation of the kingdom at the Second Coming of Christ. Therefore, unless one claims that Christ has already returned (hyper-preterists), which has almost universally been rejected because of its insurmountable problems, one recognizes that the command not to seal the prophecy does not exclude a fulfillment more than 1900 years later.

b. The "nearness" of the fulfillment of the Revelation prophecy and the "distance" of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Dan. 8:26 apparently relate to something other than a strict time measurement. That is, in some sense Christ's return was "near" despite, as it turns out, being more than 1900 years away and Antiochus Epiphanes' arrival was "distant" despite being only centuries away.

(1) I believe Christ's return was "near" in the sense noted above. It was near as a constant expectation that shaped and reinforced Christian faith and ethics. Antiochus Epiphanes' arrival, on the other hand, was revealed as something that would not occur for centuries and which had no comparable devotional relevance.

(2) Whatever the correct solution, it must harmonize the fact that a complete fulfillment of the Revelation prophecy that exceeds 1900 years *is not* so long as to prompt sealing of the prophecy whereas a significantly shorter time in fulfilling the Daniel prophecy *is* so long as to prompt sealing.

C. In v. 7 the risen Lord says those who keep the words of the prophecy of this book, those who remain steadfast in their faith and resist the societal pull to lapse into sinful living, are blessed.

D. As in 19:10, John in vv. 8-9 again falls down to worship at the feet of the revealing angel. Perhaps John mistook the first-person statement in 22:7 being reported by the angel ("I am coming soon") as words of the angel himself, which led him to think this was a theophany of some kind. In any event, the angel makes clear that he is not divine and that worship of him is thus improper. God alone is to be worshiped.

E. In light of the Lord being ever "at the door" (Jas. 5:9), there is the somewhat enigmatic command in v. 11: "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

1. Brian Blount comments (p. 406-407):

The angel's words, spoken to John but certainly intended for John's audience, functionally resemble the frustrated comments of an annoyed parent who sees her child repeatedly testing her authority by refusing to cease his misbehavior. "Keep it up! Hear!" Though a child deaf to the

tones of discipline could take the apparent command literally, the parent certainly does not mean that the child should indeed keep it up. In fact, she means, and urgently so, just the opposite. A contextual appropriation of her comments indicates that she has just issued a stern warning that her child should alter his course of behavior because intervention in the form of parental judgment is imminent. The command to keep it up in such a context is in reality a last-ditch call for repentance. The angel's context is comparable; he offers a glimpse of God's imminent intervention as a means of shaking up those who are not yet living a life that witnesses in word and deed to God's lordship. "If you're doing evil, well, keep it up!" Though a hearer or reader deaf to the apocalyptic tones reverberating throughout John's book of prophecy might take the command literally, the angel means, and urgently so, just the opposite. No doubt that is why he ends his remarks by encouraging those who are already living a life of witness, as well as those who take advantage of the time that is left and start living such a life, to really "keep it up": persevere in acts of justice, courageous witness, and (thus) holiness, as people claimed and set apart for the realm of God.

2. Mitchell Reddish (p. 426) expresses the meaning with this paraphrase: "Let those who are wicked continue in their wickedness if that is what they choose; but they must pay the consequences. On the other hand, let those who are righteous continue to do what is right because that is what God expects and demands from them."

F. Verses 12-15 indicate that Jesus, who is God (compare vv. 13 with 1:8), will at his coming bless Christians with eternal life in a perfect reality represented by "the city" described in chapter 21. The unbelievers, characterized as "dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood," are excluded (see 21:27). Elsewhere it is clear that they not only are excluded from the blessing but receive eternal punishment (see 20:15 with 21:27).

G. In v. 16 Jesus identifies himself as "the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star." He is the fulfillment of the Isaianic promise that the Messiah shall come forth as "a shoot from the stump of Jesse" (Isa. 11:1, 10). He is "the bright and morning star" in that this was a familiar symbol (from Num. 24:17) of the messianic king.

H. In v. 17 the Spirit-empowered church calls the world to eternal life, and those who heed that call (who hear) join in calling others. Whoever is willing may take this life-giving water without charge.

I. Verses 18-19 is a grave warning to the *hearers* of the book not to misrepresent its content, not to claim it says something it does not say or deny it says something that it does say. We have no right to alter the word of God by adding our own words to it or by removing any part of it. The content is not ours to tamper with. Though this is addressed specifically to Revelation, the principle applies to all of Scripture because it is all God-breathed.

J. In verse 20b John prays for the Lord's coming (see 1 Cor. 16:22). The final verse is a benediction pronounced, in the first instance, on the churches to which the book was addressed. By extension, it is a request for the Lord's grace to be upon all his people.