

Exegetical Analysis – Revelation 20:1-15

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1 – Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. (1. Καὶ εἶδον ἄγγελον καταβαίνοντα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔχοντα τὴν κλεῖν τῆς ἀβύσσου καὶ ἄλυσιν μεγάλην ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ)

At the beginning of the chapter, John uses the Greek phrase (Καὶ εἶδον), which denotes a direct chronological (historical & visional) linkage to chapter 19. This has been John's indication throughout the book of Revelation that the visions follow chronologically, rather than recapitulating each other. Looking back at chapter 19 we will be able to establish a pattern which will enable us to understand how (Καὶ εἶδον) is being used here at the beginning of chapter 20.

In Revelation 19:17 the identical term (Καὶ εἶδον) is used to point back to events that are referenced in (vs.11-15) demonstrating a pattern of exegetical synthesis.

- P1** – The rider on the white horse (Jesus) comes with his saints and angels (vs.11-14)
- P2** – The rider is prepared for battle to strike down the nations (vs.15-16)
- P3** – Then (Καὶ εἶδον) John sees the angel calling the birds to gather for the feast (vs.17-18)
- P4** – Then the beast and kings of the earth battle the white horse rider (vs.19)
- P5** – The beast and false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire (vs.20)
- P6** – The rest were killed by the rider (vs.21)
- P7** – The birds that were called to gather for the feast “gorge” on the flesh of those slain (vs.21)

In evaluating the chronology of events that occur in (19:11-21) it is reasonable to conclude that (Καὶ εἶδον) in (20:1) is meant to function in the same manner as (19:17). There are no recapitulations here, no breaks in the texts, just a seamless explanation of events that follow the return of the Lord. (Καὶ εἶδον) is meant to function as a chronological marker for events that necessarily follow from one another. Revelation 20:1 is no different.

This position is validated by scholars:

“Yet, there is strong evidence to indicate that the visions of Revelation 19 and 20 are presenting a chronological progression in time. The literary device that John uses to indicate this progression is the phrase translated “and I saw” (Καὶ εἶδον). This is found in Revelation 19:11, 17, 19 and Revelation 20:1, 4, 11 and Revelation 21:1. This seems to indicate that the series of visions happened one after the other and not as parallel visions which are recapitulating the same period of time....Revelation 19:19-21 introduces the third sections where the beast and the false

prophet are judged. There are five points we need to consider: (1) The kings of the earth and their armies are referred to in the previous section (vv.17-18) which demonstrates a progressive chronology. (2) The latter half of verse 19 describes the war against the Lord who was sitting on the horse and against His army which connects us back with 19:11-16. (3) The author in verse 20 makes a description of the beast and the false prophet which refers back to their activity Revelation 13. (4) Revelation 19:21 again demonstrates a progression in this section by referring to the “sword” which came out of the mouth of the Lord. Thus, in verse 15 the author describes the Lord and the sword which comes out of his mouth and then in verse 21 the author reports that the sword is used to kill the enemies of God. (5) The last part of verse 21 also demonstrates historical and visional progressive chronology. Notice in verses 17-18 that the birds are summoned to the supper of the flesh of mankind and in verse 21 it describes the birds actually eating the flesh of mankind.”¹

“The introductory words “and I saw” (kai eidon), used 32 times in the book, usually denote the next vision seen by John (e.g., 13:1, 11; 14:1, 6, 14; 15:1; 16:13; 17:3; 19:11, 17, 19; 20:4, 11, 12; 21:1). Though these words are not as forceful a chronological marker as “after these things I saw” (meta tauta eidon; 4:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1) or “after these things I heard” (meta tauta ekousa; 19:1), they do show chronological progression.”²

“The first word, “And,” supports the idea of chronological sequence. It implies a continuation from what John just revealed (cf. Revelation 19:11; Revelation 19:17; Revelation 19:19; Revelation 20:4; Revelation 20:11-12; Revelation 21:1-2; Revelation 21:22) ... It is logical that having judged the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20) Jesus Christ should next deal with Satan.”³

“No matter how many flashbacks or disruptions of chronological sequence one might want to argue for elsewhere in Revelation, it makes absolutely no sense to put one in between Revelation 19 and 20 as [amillennialists] must do.”⁴

“There is a distinct progression throughout chapters 19-22 from the return of Christ to the millennium to the final judgment and finally to the descent of the new heavens and new earth. The recapitulation theory does not do justice to this progression and to the difference of details at each level.”⁵

“...although it should be noted that the recurring “and I saw” of 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 12; and 21:1 appears to establish a sequence of visions which carries through from the appearance of the

¹ Steve P. Sullivan, *Premillennialism and an Exegesis of Revelation 20*, 4, 6.

² Harold Hoehner, *Evidence from Revelation 20, A Case for Premillennialism*, eds. Donald K. Campbell & Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 247-248.

³ Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable*, Commentary on Revelation 20:1.

⁴ Craig Blomberg, *The Posttribulationism of the New Testament: Leaving ‘Left Behind’ Behind* by Craig L. Blomberg, in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism: An Alternative to “Left Behind” Eschatology*, edited by Craig L. Blomberg and Sung Wook Chung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 67-68.

⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, ECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 715.

Rider on the white horse (19:11) to the establishment of the new heaven and new earth (21:1 ff).”⁶

“As it frequently does in Revelation, the phrase “And I saw” indicates chronological progression.”⁷

“This chapter follows the events of the previous chapter.”⁸

“Chronological sequence is the natural understanding of the visions.”⁹

“Still, only premillennialism can properly explain the episodic sequence of Revelation 19-20.”¹⁰

“These verses (1-3) are integrally related to 19:20-21.”¹¹

Along with the sequential view of (Καὶ εἶδον) there are several other indicators that this passage is chronological.

1. The Content of the Visions – A proper evaluation of the visions received in chapters 20:1-6 will prove that the events in chapter 20 must follow chapter 19 and cannot be said to be occurring during this present age. This includes Satan being presently bound in the abyss (impossible considering totascriptura), the two resurrections separated by 1,000 years, etc.

2. The Judgment of the 3 Masterminds – A proper study of the correlation of events depicts that the beast from the sea and earth are destroyed at the 2nd coming of Christ and are cast into the lake of fire, yet Satan is still left untouched. Revelation 20 follows chapter 19 in that it clearly depicts Satan as being the last one to be tossed into the fire (where the 2 beasts already reside). Ergo, it cannot be recapitulating chapter 19.

3. Cessation of Satan’s Deception – In chapters 12-19 Satan is depicted as deceiving the nations and in chapter 20 that deception ceases demonstrating a chronological sequence.

As it has been clearly demonstrated, chapters 19-20 are not recapitulating they are describing a sequence of events.

The angel (ἄγγελον) that comes down out of (ἐκ) heaven (οὐρανοῦ) is specifically holding a key (ἔχοντα τὴν κλεῖν) which opens and closes the abyss (ἄβύσσου). The angel was holding a key, most likely a reference to the key in Rev 9:2 that Satan (Star) was holding. It had been

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), NICNT, 352.

⁷ John MacArthur, *Because the Time is Near*, 297.

⁸ Charles Lee Feinberg, *A Commentary on Revelation: The Grand Finale*, 144.

⁹ Robert L. Thomas, *An Exegetical Commentary: Revelation 8-22*, 405.

¹⁰ Robert B. Sloan, *Holman Concise Commentary*, 679.

¹¹ Alan F. Johnson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition*, 1219. (Brackets added by me).

transferred from Satan to the Angel, demonstrating a shift in authority.

We will now examine the word (ἄβυσσος), as it is often interpreted in two different ways. The word for abyss is often understood as either being a symbolic metaphor for a spiritual location which the devil operates or some sort of literal hole in the ground. The most likely meaning here for the word “abyss” is neither of the supplied options. I would agree with Matt Waymeyer that the appropriate understanding, is rather an actual location in the spiritual realm where the evil spirits are confined, and therefore prevented from roaming free on the earth.

“The immediate problem with this argument concerns the false alternative it establishes between a literal and figurative interpretation of the abyss. According to the amillennialist, the abyss must be understood as either (a) a literal reference to a physical, bottomless pit which extends endlessly into the depths of the earth, or (b) a symbolic metaphor signifying “the spiritual sphere in which the devil and his accomplices operate.” But this ignores the possibility that the abyss in Revelation 20 is a spirit prison for demonic beings, an actual location which imprisons them and prevents them from functioning outside of its confines. According to this third view, the abyss is neither a physical hole in the ground (the woodenly literal view) nor the spiritual sphere of demonic activity in general (the amillennial view), but rather an actual location in the spiritual realm where evil spirits are confined and prevented from roaming free on earth. A careful examination of ἄβυσσος indicates that this is indeed the meaning of this word in Revelation 20.”¹²

The other argument that validates this perspective comes from Luke 8:

Luke 8:28-31 NASB

Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." [29] For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. [30] And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. [31] They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

Legion clearly tells Jesus not to send them away into the abyss. To torment the demon was to send him to the “abyss” (ἄβυσσος), where the demon would be separated from all earthly activity. Instead Jesus commanded the demons to go into the swine and not into the abyss:

Luke 8:32-33 NASB

Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. [33] And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and

¹² Matthew W. Waymeyer, *The Binding of Satan in Revelation 20, 25*.

was drowned.

“[T]he narrative in Luke 8 indicates that confinement in the abyss involves the complete removal of demonic activity and influence upon the earth. This can be seen in the request of the demons in verse 31. The reason for the demons’ request was not because they were so determined to kill the swine. The reason for their request was because imprisonment in the abyss would have cut them off from having any influence in this world—at least as long as they were in the abyss—whereas a departure into the swine would allow them to continue to roam free and wreak havoc on the earth. This indicates that these evil spirits could either be imprisoned in the abyss or they could be prowling about the earth—engaged in demonic activities—but they could not be both.”¹³

“So, succinctly summarized from the verses of Scripture, here are the necessary biblical requirements and characteristics for the demons to be in abyss: (1) Removed by God from “the playing field” of earth and instead are confined in prison (1 Pet.3:19) (2) Currently under torment (Luke 8:28) (3) In a temporary hell [tartarus] (2 Pet. 2:4) (4) Committed to pits of darkness (2 Pet. 2:4) (5) Kept by God in eternal bonds under darkness from which they cannot escape (Jude 6)(6) God specifically keeping them in this abyss of torment for the judgment of the great day (Matt. 8:29; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) (7) Also, nothing from these verses indicates anything about those demons who are cast into the abyss as merely having a reduction of their spiritual strength while still remaining on earth and committing the same sins that other demons do.”¹⁴

The angel (ἄγγελον) is also holding a great chain (καὶ ἄλυσιν μεγάλην) in his hands (ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ). The chain that the angel is holding is not a literal chain but rather a demonstration of the authority of the Angel, and his ability to restrain Satan. Angelic powers have been restrained numerous times in scripture.

2 Peter 2:4 NASB

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

Jude 1:6 NASB

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

“Since spiritual beings, such as angels like Satan, cannot be restricted by physical means, we must understand the chain to denote a supernatural restraint which is ultimately provided by God for the express purpose of the angel’s task. In a similar way that the rebellious angels were

¹³ Matthew W. Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* (The Woodlands, Tx, Kress Christian Publications, 2016), 185.

¹⁴ Gregory H. Harris, *Premillennialism in the New Testament: Five Biblically Doctrinal Truths*, MSJ 29/2 (Fall 2018) 177–205.

locked away and unable to roam, so too will be Satan. The figure of a chain is used: the restraint provides no degree of freedom whereby it may be stretched.”¹⁵

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; (2. καὶ ἐκράτησεν τὸν δράκοντα, ὁ ὄφεις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὅς ἐστιν Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς, καὶ ἔδησεν αὐτὸν χίλια ἔτη)

The angel of (vs.1) lays hold (καὶ ἐκράτησεν) of the dragon (τὸν δράκοντα) which is a reference to Satan (ὁ ὄφεις ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὅς ἐστιν Διάβολος) and binds Satan (καὶ Ὁ Σατανᾶς, καὶ ἔδησεν) for a time of 1,000 years (αὐτὸν χίλια ἔτη).

Questions that must be asked at this point are: Is the timing of Satan’s binding present or future? Is Satan accomplishing things while being bound in the abyss? What does the NT teach about Satan’s activity after Jesus was exalted to the Right Hand of the Majesty on High? What do we do with the 1,000 years?

It is clear from the NT teaching that Satan is currently active on earth during the present economy. He was not removed from his present domain and placed into the Abyss which is sealed and shut over him.¹⁶ Based upon these passages how are we to conclude that Satan is presently bound in the abyss? It would appear from a brief analysis of the New Testament that there is no indication that Satan is presently bound in the abyss but is roaring around like a lion looking for someone to devour.

“The primary reason that Satan’s imprisonment cannot be considered a present reality is because Revelation 20:1–3 is incompatible with the New Testament’s portrayal of his influence during the present age. According to this passage, Satan will be cut off from all earthly activity during the thousand-year reign of Christ. The imagery of Satan being bound with a great chain and cast into the abyss—which is then shut and sealed over him—provides a vivid picture of the total removal of his influence on earth. In fact, if a vision were intended to teach that Satan is rendered completely inactive during the thousand years, it is difficult to imagine how this could have been portrayed more clearly.”¹⁷

“Much attention often is given to whether the activities of Satan are curtailed or ceased, but before one even considers the activities of Satan, one must recognize what is happening to Satan himself, as a personal being. Satan himself is incarcerated and confined in a real place, a place called “the abyss.” Our point here is that not just a specific function of Satan (i.e. deceiving the nations) is hindered; Satan himself is absolutely confined to a place that results in a complete

¹⁵ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/revelation-20/revelation-20-1.html>

¹⁶ Acts 5:3; Ephesians 2:2, 4:27, 6:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:2-3, 13-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Timothy 2:26; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 2:10, 12:9.

¹⁷ Matthew W. Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* (The Woodlands, Tx, Kress Christian Publications, 2016), 177.

cessation of all that he does.”¹⁸

Often, amillennialists will appeal to Mark 3:22-27; Matthew 12:22-29; Luke 11:14-22 as proof that Jesus did in fact bind the “strong man” Satan (paralleling Revelation 20:1-3).

There are several issues here:

P1 – Most amillennialists believe that the binding of Satan occurred when Jesus conquered death through his resurrection. If Jesus had not yet bound Satan through his resurrection, how is he able to cast out demons? It is simply impossible.

P2 – In Mark 3:22-27 the purpose of the binding here was to enable Jesus to heal the demon possessed man and not the not bind him so that he could not deceive the nations.

Mark 3:22 NASB

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

P3 – The point of the parable is not to say that Jesus was inaugurating the binding of Satan for a period, but rather to demonstrate his power over Satan and his superiority. Jesus had taken away property (the demon possessed man) that belonged to Satan to demonstrate his power over him. This showed Jesus breaking his power to possess people. When you compare that to Rev 20:3 we again have a problem. Jesus is said to bind him from deceiving the nations which involves sealing him in an Abyss (never happened in Mark 3:22). Mark 3:22-27 (Satan is bound in his own domain/house) Rev 20:3 (Satan is removed from his domain and bound in an Abyss) ... The binding of Satan in Mark 3:22-27 was a local event restricting his ability to possess people. The binding in Rev 20:3 is a universal reference to his inability to deceive the nations of the world.

Harry Boer (an amillennialist agrees):

“The binding of the strong man in the Synoptic Gospels bears no recognizable relationship to the thrust of the amillennial view. That thrust is that the binding of Satan applies only to his ability to deceive nations. But where are the nations in the pericopes that refer to the binding of the strong man? They are not to be seen. What is very much in view is the local sufferers from demon possession and Satan’s inability to prevent Jesus from healing them; what is not at all on view is the now blessedly undeceived nations.”¹⁹

The binding of the strongman is not the same as the binding of the dragon in the Abyss.

“The binding imagery used is in a parable about a thief plundering a house. The binding is neither meant to be completely restrictive, nor permanent. In this case, the context does limit the

¹⁸ Michael Vlach, *The Kingdom of God and the Millennium*, 246.

¹⁹ Harry R. Boer, *What About the Millennium?* (RefJ 25, no 1 [Jan 1975]), 29.

extent of the binding, but not through the use of purpose statement. Instead the activity of Jesus is clearly revealed, and the consequences for Satan are delineated. The parallel in Luke 11:22 demonstrates that the binding is not an image of imprisonment, but of conquest. The details of Rev 20:1-3 are quite different. It is part of a visionary sequence in which the imprisonment of Satan has an impact on the other elements of the sequence. In Rev 20:1-3 an angel imprisons Satan and he is prevented from deceiving the world. In Matt 12:29 and the parallels, Christ himself binds Satan, and Satan is helpless from keeping Christ from exercising His authority over the demons. The two passages have more differences than they do similarities.”²⁰

The final point that requires addressing is the time period of 1,000 years. A lot of debate exists around the time period of 1,000. Should this be literal, should this be figurative, is this an extended period?

Let’s first look at the grammar of the word [1,000 — χίλια]:

χίλιοι (chilioi) is used 11 times in the New Testament. 2/11 times it is used by Peter in his letter (2 Peter 3:8), and then the rest are used in Revelation. Many make the argument that because 2 Peter 3:8 ...” with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.” identifies an extended period of time χίλια in Revelation 20:2 must be applied the same way. This is a fallacy:

“The appeal to 2 Peter 3:8 (a thousand years is like a day to God) is a clear exegetical fallacy, called an “illegitimate totality transfer” where the context of one passage is transferred into another passage without regard for the passage being exegeted (see James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Languages* London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 218). In other words, the context of 2 Peter 3:8 (that God’s perception of a literal thousand years is the same as God’s perception of a literal day) has no business undoing the plain meaning of the six cases in Revelation 20 where the literal thousand years is supplied in order to reveal a length of time for humans to anticipate. And in any case, Peter’s point only makes sense if the thousand years has a numeric value of a thousand. What would this argument imply about six days of creation, or three days in the grave? Peter clearly did not intend to communicate that when God reveals a time period we should disregard that revelation completely since God uses numbers differently than humans do.”²¹

What is interesting to note in Revelation 20:2 is that John uses an “accusative of time” (“for a thousand years”). This “accusative of time” means “throughout the entire extent of that time”.

“Which is (ὅς ἐστιν — hos estin). The relative here relieves the construction and takes the place of ὁ καλούμενος — ho kaloumenos in Revelation 12:9 before Διαβολος και ο Σατανας — Diabolos kai ho Satanās bound him (και ἐδησεν αὐτον — kai edēsen auton). First aorist active indicative of δέω — deō a thousand years (χίλια ἐτη — chilia etē). Accusative of extent of

²⁰ Charles Powell, *Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6*, 3.

²¹ Clint Archer, *Why 1,000 Means 1,000*, May 15, 2017.

time.”²²

Let’s take a further look now at the differences between the accusative of time and the genitive of time:

Accusative of Time

“Accusative of Measure (Extent of Time or Space) [for the extent of, for the duration of] The accusative substantive indicates the extent of the verbal action. This can either be how far (extent of space) or for how long (extent of time).”²³

If John wanted to communicate that Satan was bound for an extended/indefinite period of time, he would have used a “genitive of time” instead.

Genitive of Time

“Genitive of Time [within which, during which] The genitive substantive indicates the kind of time, or time within which the word to which it stands related takes place. The easiest way to remember the genitive of time (as opposed to the dat. and acc. of time) is to relate the genitive back to its basal significance. The genitive is the case of quality, attribute, description, or kind. Thus, the genitive of times indicates kind of time.”²⁴

The “accusative of time” puts a huge damper on anyone trying to read this as a “long or extended period”, because that indeed leads to the “kind of time” not “extent of time”. Why does this become problematic? The “accusative of time” is not just used in Revelation 20:2 but also in relation to (vs.4-6), which specifically becomes problematic for an amillennial which sees *χίλιοι* [in relation to regeneration] as a kind of time. (More will be discussed in Rev 4-6).

“And why is this a problem for amillennialism? Because neither of its two views of the first resurrection is compatible with John’s description of the saints being raised at the start of the millennium and reigning together for the entirety of the thousand years. According to the view that the first resurrection equals regeneration, believers are regenerated throughout the thousand years so that the entrance of these saints into their reign is distributed throughout the millennium. In this scenario, those saints who are saved during the present age do not reign for the entirety of the thousand years—as John says they will—and some of them do not begin their reign until the millennium is almost over. Similarly, according to the view that the first resurrection refers to believers entering the intermediate state at the point of death, the entrance of these saints into their reign is also distributed throughout the millennial period. In this scenario, believers do not live in heaven and reign with Christ for the entire thousand years, and some of them do not begin their reign until the millennium is nearly completed. Again, neither of these scenarios is

²² A.T. Robertson, *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Commentary on Revelation 20:2.

²³ <http://www.bcbsr.com/greek/gcase.html>

²⁴ Ibid.

compatible with John's description in Revelation 20:4-6."²⁵

If John has wanted to communicate an indefinite period of time, there is a far more appropriate set of words that he could have used. In (vs.3) John says "for a short time" (μικρὸν χρόνον), which is more likely an indefinite period, rather than using an accusative of time to say 1,000 really isn't 1,000.

"If 1,000 is a symbol, what about 7,000 (Revelation 11:13), 12,000 (Revelation 7:5), or 144,000 (Revelation 7:4)? Are these symbols also? If 1,000 years is a symbolic term, what about 5 months (Revelation 9:10), 42 months (Revelation 11:2), and 1,260 days (Revelation 11:3)? To ask these questions is to show the absurdity of regarding the numbers as figurative, for on what ground could one consistently hold that one, 1,000, is figurative, and the others, including where multiples of 1,000 are used, are literal?"²⁶

As we see many questions arise that are simply unacceptable in the grand scheme of things if a figurative outlook of (χίλια ἔτη) is presented. Making this passage figurative leads us to problems like disagreement among amillennialists as to what (χίλια ἔτη) means, or what it refers to. How does (χίλια ἔτη) suddenly become symbolic here, when there is no clear categorical implication that this is symbolic language in relation to numerology? There is really no reason that the 1,000 years needs to be spiritualized into a length of time, and clearly there is a lack of evidence exegetically for any such conclusion. The accusative of time better fits the Premillennialism model, and if John wanted to designate a period, he would never have used 1,000 [completion]. The accusative leaves us with no other possible grammatical understanding of the text.

3 – and 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; after these things he must be released for a short time. (3. καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον καὶ ἔκλεισεν καὶ ἐσφράγισεν ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μὴ πλανήσῃ ἔτι τὰ ἔθνη ἄχρι τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη. μετὰ ταῦτα δεῖ λυθῆναι αὐτὸν μικρὸν χρόνον)

Following from (vs.2) "he" (the angel) threw (the dragon) into the abyss. It is interesting to note that the angel didn't simply throw the dragon into the abyss, but that the abyss was "shut" and "sealed" emphasizing that there was no way out. The question is why? Why would the Angel seal and shut him in the Abyss? The next phrase tells us "so that he would not deceive the nations any longer". What does it mean that the dragon would not deceive the nations any longer? Powell states below that the confinement of Satan is an absolute cut-off from the outside world.

"This is the most extensive description of imprisonment anywhere in the NT. If the other

²⁵ Matt Waymeyer, *Amillennialism, Revelation 20, and the Importance of Grammatical Precision*, July 6, 2018.

²⁶ J.B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 269.

references to the imprisonment imagery refer to absolute confinement, then this passage must also. There seems to be no other reason for the extensiveness of the imagery. John went to great lengths to make clear that Satan is to be cut off from the realm of humanity for [sic] 1000 years. In all the above cases where imprisonment, and not simply conquest, are involved, the imagery should be taken in a straightforward manner and is comparable to the effects of imprisonment in the human world in AD first century. Humans who are imprisoned, especially those in solitary confinement, have little or no contact with the outside world. Satan also will have no contact with the world outside of the abyss when he is imprisoned.”²⁷

Berkouwer likewise sees the problem.

“The language Revelation uses here [20:2-3] is forceful and radical . . . Those who interpret the millennium as already realized in the history of the church try to locate this binding in history. Naturally, such an effort is forced to find evidence for a radical elimination of Satan’s power in that ‘realized millennium’. . . The necessary relativizing of John’s description of Satan’s bondage (remember that Revelation 20 speaks of a shut and sealed pit) is then explained by the claim that, although Satan is said to deceive the nations no more (vs. 3), this does not exclude satanic activity in Christendom or individual persons. I think it is pertinent to ask whether this sort of interpretation really does justice to the radical proportions of the binding of Satan—that he will not be freed from imprisonment for a thousand years.”²⁸

We also run into another problem with the amillennial interpretation. If it is to be said that Jesus—and his finished work on the cross—bound Satan, so that he would be cut-off from deceiving the nations, how is it possible then that Satan after the 1,000 years is back deceiving the nations again? So now the finished work of Christ to bind Satan becomes unfinished?

Revelation 20:7-8 NASB

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, [8] 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.

Satan—as demonstrated above in (vs.2)—is still on the prowl, and is still actively deceiving the nations. There is no reason to believe that Satan is bound in the abyss at this time. Satan is only bound “until the thousand years were completed” and then he will be set free for a “short time” (μικρὸν χρόνον).

4 – Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And 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. (4. Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα

²⁷ Charles Powell, *Progression Versus Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-6*, 4.

²⁸ G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 305.

ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μετώπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν καὶ ἔζησαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη)

After John has seen what will happen with Satan, we see that John sees “thrones” (θρόνους), and he sees people sitting on the thrones, and judgment was given to them. Who are these people? The reference here is most likely a reference to the saints in fine linen who return with the Lord in Revelation 19:14, 17. The antecedent of “they” in 4a is best supported by (vs.14, 17) from the previous chapter, so this must be the saints, as Daniel 7 mentions.

Daniel 7:26-27 NASB

But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. [27] 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.'

Revelation 3:21 NASB

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

John then sees “the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God”. These would be a reference for those who have been martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation.

Who are the souls?

“The reference to “the souls of those who were killed for the word of God and for the witness which they had” (6:9) corresponds closely to “the souls of those who were slaughtered for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God” (20:4). Apparently the same group is in view in both instances . . . except that in chapter 6 the number is not yet complete (v.11). This exception, however, is important because it serves as a caution against simply equating the two passages. They are obviously related, but their relation is one of continuity rather than simple identity. There is a progression from 6:9-11 to 20:4-6, so that if the former refers to the intermediate state (as it clearly does), the latter must refer to a subsequent stage in the experience of the martyred saints. This can only be bodily resurrection at the coming of Christ. There is an incompleteness about the situation of the group described in chapter 6. They are waiting and crying out, “How long, O holy and true Master, before you pass judgment and avenge our blood from the dwellers on the earth” (6:10). Although they have died, they are still clearly on this side of the consummation . . . To put it in simplest terms, the prayer of 6:9-11 is answered in 20:4-6 . . . The intermediate state in Revelation is thus seen as a state of longing and anticipation, not unlike our physical existence here and now. The prayer “How long?” corresponds exactly to the prayers of the suffering righteous on earth in the Old Testament (e.g., Ps.13:2ff; 79:5; Zech.1:12). Though

the saints are given a white robe and told to “rest” (6:11; cf. 14:13), this grace is only a temporary measure. The real answer to their plea is the glory of an actual resurrection, granted at last in 20:4-6.”²⁹

It seems apparent that the souls here are physical souls resurrected into the physical world. There is no reason to believe that the bodies here are resurrected spiritually.

“In Revelation 20:4–6, there is no such contextual clue for a similar variation of interpretation. The language of the passage is quite clear and unambiguous. There is no necessity to interpret either word spiritually in order to introduce meaning to the passage. At the beginning of the millennial period, part of the dead come to life [the martyrs]; at its conclusion, the rest of the dead come to life. There is no evident play on words. The passage makes perfectly clear sense when interpreted literally... If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain [psychai ezēsan] at the first, and the rest of the [nekroi ezēsan] only at the end of a specified period after that first,—if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave;—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to any thing.”³⁰

The amillennialist is stuck believing that the souls who were regenerated were regenerated after they have been beheaded...

“... the absurdity of having souls being [spiritually] regenerated after they had been beheaded for their faithfulness to Christ.”³¹

“The strong presumption is that the verb in v.4 should be taken in the same sense as it is in v.5. In the second case the statement, “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended,” certainly refers to a bodily resurrection at the close of the millennial period. If “they came to life” in v. 4 means a spiritual resurrection to new life in Christ, then we are faced with the problem of discovering within the context some persuasive reason to interpret the same verb differently within one concise unit. No such reason can be found. Alford’s much-quoted remark is worth repeating: “If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned . . . the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave;—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything.”³²

John then also sees “those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand”. We know this is a reference back to the

²⁹ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The First Resurrection: A Response*, *Westminster Theological Journal* 39 (Fall, 1976): 107-108.

³⁰ George E. Ladd, *Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 265–266, 267.

³¹ Alva J. McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), 488.

³² Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 364.

Tribulation (Rev 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20). These were those who had not taken the mark or worshiped the beast and/or his image in Rev 13.

“and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” — all of those who had been martyred (beheaded for their testimony of the Lord) and all those who had not taken the mark and reigned with the Lord for 1,000 years.

I mentioned in (vs.2) the importance of the “accusative of time” (for a 1,000 years) which ends up returning here again. Amillennialists run into another huge problem. If it were the case that John was referring to spiritual regeneration “and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” then it would be impossible for all those being regenerated to be regenerated at the start of the 1,000 years and for them to reign for the entire 1,000 years. You would have people not reigning for the *entire period* of 1,000 years which is why the accusative is important. Some would be saved right up close to the end of the 1,000 years and would not reign with the Lord throughout the *full extent* of time. If the extent of the verbal action (reigned for 1,000 years) must be in full, then amillennialists cannot conjure up a full extent or measure of time for their belief that the resurrection to life is a spiritual regeneration cannot be what John is referring to. A genitive *must be used* here if the amillennialists position is to hold water. It is not, ergo, it is incorrect. At the very beginning of the thousand years the saints will reign with the Lord and they will reign together with Christ for the entirety of that period.

5 – The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. (5. οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔζησαν ἄχρι τελεσθῆ τὰ χίλια ἔτη. αὕτη ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη)

“The rest of the dead” (λοιποὶ νεκρῶν) here in (vs.5) are non-believers/wicked/unjust. John has identified two separate sets of people here in (vs.4-5) and two separate sets of resurrections:

1st group: Martyred Tribulation Saints (vs.4) resurrected prior to the Millennium (1,000 years) — First Resurrection

2nd group: Rest of the Dead (vs.5a, 11-13) resurrected after the Millennium (1,000 years) — Second Resurrection

“This” (αὕτη) is a reference back to (vs.4) and the Martyrs of the Tribulation, linking the “First Resurrection” (πρώτη ἀνάστασις) as the resurrection of the just (paralleled in Luke 14:14). It is clear from an initial understanding here that there are clearly 2 Resurrections (Martyrs Raised before the Millennial Reign, The Rest of the Dead Raised after the Millennial Reign).

“This is the first resurrection – The resurrection of the saints and martyrs, as specified in Revelation 20:4. It is called the “first” resurrection in contradistinction from the second and last – the general resurrection – when all the dead will be “literally” raised up from their graves and

assembled for the judgment, Revelation 20:12.”³³

“This is the first resurrection; which is not to be connected with the living again of the rest of the dead at the end of the thousand years, for that will be the second and last resurrection.”³⁴

Combining (vs.4) and (vs.5) we get the following information:

Premillennial — First Resurrection

- Tribulation Martyrs Raised to Life [Rev 20:4]
- Resurrection of the Just [Luke 14:14]
- Resurrection of Life [John 5:29a]

Millennial Reign Occurs [1,000 Years]

- Tribulation Martyrs Reign for 1,000 Years [Rev 20:4]
- Saints Reign on Thrones [Daniel 7:18;27, Rev 20:4a]

Postmillennial — Second Resurrection

- The Rest of the Dead are Raised to Life [Rev 20:5a]

Resurrection of Judgment [John 5:29b]

- Leads to Second Death [Rev 20:6]
- Great White Throne Judgment [Rev 20:11-15]

Some will try and assert that the resurrection of believers is what happens in (vs.11-15). However, it is clear contextually and for several reasons that this relates to unbelievers.

P1 – The direct antecedent of “the rest of the dead” in (vs.5) is “the dead” in (vs.12).

P2 – The resurrection of the dead in (vs.11-13) is the Second Resurrection as implied by The “First Resurrection” (πρώτη ἀνάστασις) in (vs.5b), and this resurrection leads to the 2nd death in (vs.6a) of which believers have no part.

P3 – The outcome of this judgment is the Lake of Fire (vs.15).

P4 – The book of life is only referenced to show that the names of the dead are not written there.

In analyzing this passage, we see there is no hope for believers here, this passage is strictly about judgement for unbelievers. Amillennialists will often try and make the case that (ἀνάστασις) means regeneration or spiritual rebirth, however almost all cases [except for an example of a passage like Luke 2:34, which is clarified by the context] where (ἀνάστασις) is used in the New Testament, it is referring to a physical resurrection. Secondly, it would make no sense for those

³³ Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible*, Commentary on Revelation 20:5.

³⁴ John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Whole Bible*, Commentary on Revelation 20:5.

who would have been martyred for their faith and testimony of Jesus, to be spiritually regenerated. They would have already been regenerated *spiritually* if they had faith in Jesus prior to their martyrdom. How does one become born-again after dying?

Often brought up as this passage is being addressed is 1 Thess. 4:16-17. We will evaluate them both here. We can also look at the contrast between 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NASB

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Paul uses a particular term repeatedly in this section just prior to (vs.16-17). Paul refers to them as having “fallen asleep” not those who have been “beheaded because of their testimony of the Lord”.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 NASB

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. [15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

The term that Paul uses for “fallen asleep” (κοιμωμένων) just simply means that these are those who have died. John in Revelation 20 emphatically tells us that these are martyrs who have gone through the Tribulation and been beheaded for their faith. So, you have those who have died in Christ *believers*, and those who died *were beheaded* during the Tribulation and those who did not take the Mark of the Beast.

As we can see, two different people are being spoken of:

P1 — Dead in Christ [1 Thess. 4:13-15]

P2 — Dead in Christ (Beheaded in Tribulation) [Rev. 20:4]

We also can see the terms that were used by Paul. Paul never calls this event a “resurrection” (ἀνάστασις) but rather a “rapture” (ἄρπαγησόμεθα) or “catching up”. John also doesn’t subdivide the Martyrs in Rev 20:4 as Paul has subdivided the “Dead in Christ” and “those who are alive and remain”. The evidence is quite weak to say that Paul was referring to a resurrection, rather than a rapture in 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

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. (6. μακάριος καὶ ἅγιος ὁ ἔχων μέρος ἐν τῇ ἀναστάσει τῇ πρώτῃ· ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν, ἀλλ’ ἔσονται ἱερεῖς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ [τὰ] χίλια ἔτη)

John then goes on to tell us that “blessed and holy” is the one who takes part in the “First Resurrection”. We know then by this admonition that the First Resurrection can only apply to those *blessed and holy* and not to the unbelievers, for they are neither blessed nor holy. This is how we distinguish between the (First Resurrection & Second Resurrection). The ones that partake in the *first resurrection* are those that the second death (spiritual death and eternal damnation in the lake of fire) have no power over. Those who are blessed and holy are repeated to reign with the Lord for 1,000 years.

7 – When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison (7. Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ Σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ)

It is at this point (after the 1,000 years) are complete, that Satan will be *released from his prison*. “When” (ὅταν) is the temporal article and points back to (vs.3) “after these things he must be released for a short time.” Satan is released from the presence of his bondage in the abyss.

“BDAG, p. 731 states that when ὅταν is used with an aorist subjunctive “the action of the subordinate clause precedes that of the main clause. Therefore,” when the thousand years are completed (an aorist subjunctive in a subordinate clause), Satan will be released” (main clause). Osborne, Revelation, p. 710, n. 17 makes this helpful statement: “Some (Beale 1999: 1021, noting Morris 1987: 238) overstate the force of ὅταν (hotan) as an indefinite relative (“whenever”) to stress the symbolic nature of the thousand-year period, but in the Koine period it had often lost its indefiniteness and had a force similar to ὅτε (“when”; cf. Zerwick 1963: §337).”³⁵

8 – 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 (8. καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γὼγ καὶ Μαγὼγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης)

Satan will come out *for a short period of time* and deceive the nations, which he had been hindered from doing in (vs.2) during his confinement in the abyss/prison. It is also interesting that the amillennialists are arguing that his binding during this present time excludes him from deceiving the nations, but then he can deceive the nations again when he is released? It doesn’t make sense. What restrictions will be removed from him at the end of the age?

³⁵ Steve P. Sullivan, *Premillennialism and an Exegesis of Revelation 20*, 42. Citation: 98.

These nations exist to the far reaches and corners of the earth. Questions arise when dealing with “Gog and Magog” in this verse. The only other reference that we have goes back to Ezekiel 38:2.

Ezekiel 38:2 NASB

"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him

Could these be the same references? Harold Hoehner examines some of the challenges in interpreting these passages together:

“1) Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 are identified with a local northern power; in Revelation 20:8 Gog and Magog refers to the “four corners of the earth” 2) in Ezekiel Gog is a prince and Magog refers to land; in Revelation 20:8 Gog and Magog refer to people 3) in Ezekiel 39:4,17-20 the battle ends with a great feast of the corpses (which fits well with Revelation 19:17-21 – the battle at the end of the Tribulation at the second coming); in Revelation 20:10-11 fire comes down from heaven devours the nations and Satan is thrown in the lake of fire.”³⁶

It is likely that these aren't a reference to the same groups.

- Ezekiel 38-39 — Specific Nations
- Revelation 20 — All Nations
- Ezekiel 38-39 — Premillennial
- Revelation 20 — Postmillennial

It seems as though we could compare this to a type of world war here. Just as we experienced WWI and WWII, what Ezekiel describes is Gog and Magog I and as John refers to as Gog and Magog II. This is Satan's final attempt to wage war against the Messiah.

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. (9. καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς)

“And they came up” (ἀνέβησαν), a reference to the large nation and Satan coming up to the broad plain (πλάτος) or ends of the earth. This group then surrounded the “camp of the saints” (παρεμβολὴν ἁγίων) a clear reference to the camped saints in Jerusalem. There is no possible way that this could be understood spiritually, or allegorically. This is a battle that is on planet earth with Satan and his legions coming to attack the Saints and the Lord in the Beloved City (Jerusalem). Those who try to spiritualize Revelation will have a difficult time explaining how Satan is coming up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and Jerusalem if they are in heaven. Immediately after Satan is loosed there is no evidence that

³⁶ Harold Hoehner, *Evidence from Revelation 20 in A Case for Premillennialism*, 258.

he then comes down with the saints to Jerusalem. The reason that Satan comes against Christ at this point is because he has been ruling from the beloved city.

Psalm 78:68 NASB

But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.

Psalm 87:2 NASB

The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the other dwelling places of Jacob.

“The beloved city (και κατεβη πυρ εκ του ουρανου — tēn polin tēn ēgapēmenēn). Perfect passive participle of καταβαινω — agapaō “the city the beloved.” See Psalm 78:68; Psalm 87:2 for Jerusalem so described.”³⁷

“And the beloved city – Jerusalem – a city represented as beloved by God and by his people. The whole imagery here is derived from a supposed invasion of the land of Palestine – imagery than which nothing could be more natural to John in describing the hostility that would be aroused against the church in the latter day.”³⁸

“the camp of the saints and the beloved city — the camp of the saints encircling the beloved city, Jerusalem (Ecclesiasticus 24:11).”³⁹

“τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, i.e. Jerusalem, which, it appears from this place only, will be the seat and capital of the millennial kingdom.”⁴⁰

It is clear from our analysis that Jerusalem the literal city will be the place that Satan rises up to attack against. As Satan’s army comes to attack the beloved city, God puts an immediate end to this “fire came down from heaven and devoured them”. Notice that a war was never initiated, it was merely preparing to happen.

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. (10. και ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὅπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων)

Immediately after the fire devours the people who have risen to attack the saints, Satan, the Dragon is cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. He was cast into the same location that the Beast/Antichrist/Little Horn, was cast, as well as the False Prophet in Revelation 19.

³⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Commentary on Revelation 20:9.

³⁸ Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Whole Bible*, Commentary on Revelation 20:9.

³⁹ Robert Jamieson Fausset, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Commentary on Revelation 20:9.

⁴⁰ Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges, Commentary on Revelation 20:9.

Revelation 19:20-21 NASB

And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. [21] And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

This torment would never cease and would be unending. This was the final victory over Satan. Satan was defeated in part on the cross, but this will be the consummation of his defeat.

11 – Then 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. (11. Καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ, οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὑρέθη αὐτοῖς)

John uses the chronological indicator “Then I saw” (Καὶ εἶδον) at the beginning of this new section. John sees “a great white throne and him who sat upon it”. The colour “white” here most likely expresses God’s sovereignty and authority in His holy and righteous judgment. There is plenty of disagreement as to who the “Him” refers to, but it is most likely a reference to God the Father and the Son.

“Therefore, it is probably best to conclude that the oneness of the Father and Son (John 10:30; cf. John 8:16; Revelation 5:13; 6:16; 7:10, 17; 22:1, 3; 21:22-23) make both of them part of the judgment.”⁴¹

There appears to be a dissolution of the present order at this point as identified by the phrase “whose presence earth and heaven fled away”. This seems to be a period of change as Peter mentioned in his letter.

2 Peter 3:7 NASB

But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

This passage connects well with the judgment and destruction of the ungodly men, and the earth being reserved for fire, which we see happen in 2 Peter 3:10-13 & Rev 21:1.

2 Peter 3:10-13 NASB

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. [11] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to

⁴¹ Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 299; Johnson, *Revelation*, 12:589; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 364; Osborne, *Revelation*, 720; Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 271; and Thomas, *Revelation* 8-22, 429.

be in holy conduct and godliness, [12] looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! [13] But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Revelation 21:1 NASB

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

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 (12. καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκροὺς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικροὺς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοίχθησαν καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοίχθη ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν)

“And I saw the dead” (which we saw earlier was the antecedent laid out in Rev 20:5) which connects to (vs.12) which tells us that the group in view here are the wicked, unelected, and unjust, who will be punished. These dead were resurrected “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 appeared before the Lord at the throne. Once they had appeared books were opened, and a unique book (the book of life) was opened and there were those who died were judged based upon the things that were written in the book. It must be clarified here: This is not the Lamb’s Book of Life in which the names of the Elect are listed. This the book of the living. One may be blotted out of the book of life and not be recorded with the righteous.

Psalms 69:28 NASB

May they be blotted out of the book of life And may they not be recorded with the righteous.

Revelation 3:5 NASB

He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

To be blotted out of the book of life simply means that your name is removed from the list of the living, however if you did not appear in the Lamb’s Book you would perish and experience eternal damnation. The point of this section is not to identify the elect, but to demonstrate that the non-elect are not mentioned in the book, because of what follows.

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. (13

– καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν)

This is the final and second resurrection that is mentioned in this chapter. Those who were dead, were raised to life before God, and were judged in accordance with their deeds.

14 – Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (14. καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος ἐστίν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός)

This is the second death that was spoken of in (vs.6). This death is final, it is not another opportunity to redeem yourself. At this point Hades and Death are thrown into the Lake of Fire. Death and Hades here appear to be a personification and probably refer to a place & state of death. I like Adam Clarke's comments here:

“The sea gave up the dead – Those who had been drowned in it, and those millions slain in naval contests, who had no other grave. And death – All who died by any kind of disease. Death is here personified, and represented as a keeper of defunct human beings; probably no more than earth or the grave is meant, as properly belonging to the empire of death. And hell – Ἅιδης, Hades, the place of separate spirits. The sea and death have the bodies of all human beings; hades has their spirits. That they may be judged, and punished or rewarded according to their works, their bodies and souls must be reunited; hades gives up the spirits; and the sea and the earth give up the bodies.”⁴²

15 – And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (15. καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός)

Those who were not written in the book of life—mentioned above—were sent to the lake of fire along with Satan and his legions (Antichrist and the False Prophet). This place is a place of Eternal Conscious Torment (ECT) for all unbelievers. Now that the final enemy has been defeated, the Lord Jesus can hand over the kingdom to the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:24 NASB

then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Amen!

⁴² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Commentary on Revelation 20:14.