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The Millenium in Revelation



When Shall These Things Be? - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg analyzes Revelation chapter 20 and the implications of the millennium. He explains that the pre-millennial, post-millennial, and amillennial views all have the second coming of Christ as the end goal in mind. From verses one to three, a thousand-year reign of Christ and the binding of Satan is discussed, leading to the belief of some that Jesus must return at the beginning of chapter 20 for this reign to work. However, Gregg argues that the evidence suggests the second coming of Christ does not occur at the beginning, but at the end of Revelation 20.

Transcript

Would you look with me at Revelation chapter 20? I would like to read it at this time, and we will be discussing its implications on the question of the millennium in this session. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.

And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection, over such the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and

Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beasts of the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. And books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

And the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Then death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

And then chapter 21, verse 1, And I saw new heavens and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

Now, although the question of the millennium also involves the many passages in the Old Testament, which are what we've called kingdom passages, the passages that talk about the reign of the Messiah, none of those passages in the Old Testament ever speak of that reign of the Messiah being a thousand years. In fact, this chapter that we just read is the only chapter in the Bible, the only place in the Bible, that mentions a thousand year reign of the saints, apparently with Christ. So there is the tendency, and I think justly, to consider that this passage gives us information about the same period of time that we find in the Old Testament passages, the kingdom passages, gives us some new information about the same period.

The best reason for identifying the thousand years found here in Revelation 20 with those passages in the Old Testament that talk about the Messiah's kingdom is that both of them speak of the saints reigning with Christ, with the Messiah. And that seems to be the same period of time, whether it's mentioned here or in the Old Testament. Now, there is one difference, and that is in the Old Testament passages it was often stated that the reign of the Messiah would be forever and ever, and of his reign there would be no end.

Whereas this passage specifically speaks of a period of a thousand years, during which Satan is bound, and after that there's a little season during which Satan is loosed. And that is different from the information in the Old Testament, although not necessarily entirely incapable of being dealt with reasonably. Now, because we find the thousand years mentioned in this passage and nowhere else in Scripture, we could say that this

passage is one of the key passages to deciding whether the Bible teaching is pre-millennial, post-millennial, or amillennial.

Remember, millennial comes from the word millennium, and millennium is simply an English word taken from the Latin words for a thousand years. Milla, thousand, annus, years, in Latin. So, a millennium is a thousand years, and that's true whether it's this particular millennium that we read of in Scripture, or it's generically the term that is used for a period of a thousand years, just like the word century is the ordinary word for a hundred years.

Now, when we talk about being pre-millennial, or post-millennial, or amillennial, basically the question is, when does the second coming of Christ occur with relation to this millennium, this thousand years that we read about? Most Christians that I have known in my lifetime have been pre-millennial, and that means they believe in a pre-millennial return of Christ, that these events will occur after Jesus comes back. He will return, and the first order of business will be to establish a kingdom on earth that will last a thousand years, and this is the thousand years of which we just read. After that thousand years, the pre-millennialists believe, Satan will be loosed again, will cause one last bit of trouble, he'll be put down permanently, thrown into the bottomless pit, and then it'll be the end of this present world.

The world will be burned up and replaced with a new heavens and new earth. This is the pre-millennial understanding of things. Now, the post-millennial understanding is not the same with all post-millennialists.

I believe that the original post-millennialists felt, the very term post-millennial means that Jesus will come after the millennium, that they believe in a post-millennial return of Christ. Well, they felt that the millennium is still yet to come, but it will come before Jesus returns. The original pre-millennialists, excuse me, post-millennialists felt that the world will be evangelized, that the missionary efforts of the church will be enormously successful, and that virtually everybody on earth will become a Christian, or if they do not become Christians, they will at least live under the influence of Christian governments and Christian societies and Christian regimes, so that they'll have to behave like Christians.

And under such circumstances, the world will know no war, the world will know no injustice, it'll be a millennium of peace and righteousness, but it will be prior to the coming of Christ. This is the post-millennial view. Some post-millennialists believe that this thousand years refers to that period of peace after the world has been evangelized.

In other words, they do not believe that the millennium has come yet. They believe that that will come when the world has been more thoroughly Christianized, and then this thousand years will be the order of things. There are some post-millennialists who believe that the thousand years is symbolic for the whole church age, but they still

anticipate a time when the whole world will be Christianized and evangelized, and there will be a reign of the saints, as it were, on the earth before Jesus comes back.

That is what post-millennialism means. Now, there is also the amillennial view, and when you add the letter A before the word millennial, it means no millennium. And the amillennialists sometimes are also called realized millennialists, because to say that someone is amillennial, it means they don't believe in a millennium.

But the amillennialist certainly believes that Revelation 20 has its fulfillment, and that the thousand years mentioned there, the millennium so-called, actually does exist. The difference is, between the amillennialists and the other camps, that the amillennialist believes that this thousand years, so to speak, began when Jesus was here the first time, and will run out at the second coming of Christ, or thereabouts. Now, of course, the amillennialist is aware that the period from the time of the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ is already more than a thousand years, and the amillennialist has an understanding of that that suits him and solves that problem.

We will be discussing these things in this series today. Now, in this session, the question is, of course, is the premillennial view correct, or the postmillennial, or the amillennial? I'd like to suggest to you that the amillennial and the postmillennial views have many things in common. In fact, there are some postmillennialists who interpret Revelation 20 exactly the same way as some amillennialists do.

The principal difference is between the amillennialist and the premillennialist. And the real question that divides these two is the question of whether this thousand year period occurs before Jesus comes, or after Jesus comes, that is, the second coming. Now, the premillennialist feels that when Jesus comes, he will establish this millennium of peace, and that such a millennium of peace could never be established without Jesus coming.

They do not believe that the church has sufficient power and assistance from God as to really change the world in the degree that they anticipate would be necessary for the millennium to exist. And so they believe that nothing less than the second coming of Christ himself could bring in an order of peace and security and righteousness such as they understand the millennium to be. Therefore, it is important for them to insist that the second coming of Christ precedes the thousand years.

And so, when you come to Revelation 20 and you read of the thousand years, the premillennialist believes that Jesus has already come back to earth before this chapter begins. So we've got the second coming of Christ at the beginning of chapter 20 in the premillennial scheme. Now, the amillennialist and the postmillennialist both believe that the second coming of Christ is at the end of this story in chapter 20.

In other words, amillennialist and premillennialist do not believe that Jesus will return before Revelation chapter 20's events begin, but at the end of those events. So, if we

could ascertain, biblically, whether the second coming of Christ is at the beginning of this chapter or at the end of this chapter, we would certainly decide between amillennialism and premillennialism. There might be still other things to consider as to the choice between amillennialism and postmillennialism, which would have some of the same understanding of this chapter as each other.

But the difference between amillennialism and premillennialism could easily be established, and which one is correct, if we could determine from this chapter where the second coming of Christ fits. You see, we don't read directly or plainly of the second coming of Christ anywhere in chapter 20. The premillennialist assumes that Jesus has come back before the chapter begins.

The amillennialist believes that Jesus' coming is spoken of symbolically later in the chapter. And yet, we don't have any plain statement about the second coming of Christ in the chapter itself. So, if we wish to decide who is correct, does Jesus come at the beginning of this chapter, as the premillennialists believe, or does he come at the end of the chapter, as the amillennialists and postmillennialists believe, we would have to do some careful investigation.

But I believe we can do that, and I believe that upon doing so we can reach a conclusion with some certainty. Let me first of all summarize the chapter for you, if I would. Later in this session I hope to go verse by verse through it and clear up some of the difficult points.

But let me simply observe first of all that this chapter divides up quite nicely into four segments. The first segment is three verses. The second segment is also three verses.

And the third segment is also three verses. So the first three segments are of equal length, essentially. There are three verses each.

The first three verses talk about the binding of the dragon, of Satan. And so that's what really is the subject matter of verses one through three. We see Satan bound with a chain and thrown into the bottomless pit.

The next segment, which is another three verses, verses four through six, describes the thousand year reign and what John saw that transpired while Satan was bound in the bottomless pit. That's what those three verses are about. Then the next three verses, that would be verses seven through nine, or at least part of nine, are about what is called the little while or the little season in the King James Version.

At the end of the thousand years, when Satan is released and he goes out and makes trouble again, and then he is dispensed with by God, by fire coming out of heaven, that is, of course, the third segment of the chapter, and it also is three verses, seven through nine, or part of nine. The remainder of the chapter, which takes up the last part of verse

nine and to the end of verse 15, that's six verses more, essentially, that would be the judgment day, the judgment scene. So here's what the chapter divides into.

You've got the binding of Satan, treated in the first three verses. You've got the thousand year reign of Christ and the saints during the time that Satan is bound in the next three verses. Then the third segment is also three verses, which tells of the little season or the little while at the end when Satan is released again and then judged.

And then the last six verses are about the judgment of the dead and their consignment to their eternal destinies. Of course, in the course of that description, we read of the heavens and the earth passing away, and then there is the new heaven and the new earth as we open chapter 21. Now that is how the chapter breaks down.

I would like to suggest to you that it can be demonstrated with a high degree of certainty that the second coming of Christ occurs late in this chapter, not at the beginning. Now, of course, if that is true, then premillennialism, the most popular view today, would have to be mistaken. Because premillennialism assumes that Jesus came at the beginning of the chapter.

But I believe it can be shown with a high degree of certainty that Jesus came or comes in his second coming near the end of the chapter. And that those things that happened before that event occur before the second coming. Let me just, first of all, deal with the question of why do premillennialists believe that Jesus comes at the beginning of the chapter? Well, one of their reasons, of course, is, as I said before, they believe that the millennial reign of righteousness and peace could never occur without the physical presence of Jesus here to enforce it.

And so it's sort of a theological necessity of their camp that they need to have Jesus here at the beginning of chapter 20 in order to have the millennial reign work at all. But there's another reason, and this works to their favor, and that is that the material immediately preceding this chapter, at the end of chapter 19, we find this vision. In chapter 19, verse 11, John says, Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.

And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except himself.

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his name was called the Word of God. And the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed him on white horses, and out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, with it he should strike the nations. And he himself shall rule them with a rod of iron.

Now, there's more to this, but as you can see, that description of the rider on the white horse with the sharp sword coming out of his mouth with which he strikes the nations is

clearly a picture of Christ. There can be no doubt about this, because we're told his name is called the Word of God, and in John's other writings, he clearly identifies Christ as the Word. For example, in John 1, or even in 1 John 1. But the point here is, we have Christ riding a white horse and conquering with the sword out of his mouth in chapter 19.

That's just before the events of chapter 20 that we read. Now, the assumption of the pre-millennials, or the interpretation that they take is that this picture in Revelation 19 of the rider on the white horse is a picture of the second coming of Christ. And then of course, immediately after you read of this second coming of Christ, you then read of the millennium in chapter 20.

Which strongly gives the impression that Jesus comes back in his second coming and then establishes this millennium. And that is, of course, a fairly reasonable way of looking at this. But before we decide that it is the correct way of looking at it, we need to consider whether there are other options.

Now, these other options need not be proven to be the correct ones, but it should be the case, if we have some reasonable other options, that we must be open to other possibilities if there's exegetical, biblical reasons for doing so. I would say, first of all, that not all biblical interpreters believe that this rider on the white horse, this vision that John saw, not all of them believe it is the second coming of Christ that John is seeing. Now, of course, everybody agrees that the rider on the horse is Christ.

But not all are agreed that this is a picture of the second coming of Christ. First of all, we have many descriptions of the second coming of Christ elsewhere in scripture, and he is never described as riding a horse. We are told in Acts chapter 1 that Jesus will return in the same manner as he left.

And he did not leave on a horse. And so that raises questions. Why would all other passages on the second coming of Christ omit this fact, that he is riding a horse, and yet this place to be the only one that speaks of that? It's quite a dominant feature of this thing.

He's on a horse, and so are his armies coming on horses. I mean, this could be the second coming of Christ, but if it is, it does not necessarily agree in detail with other descriptions of the second coming. It may be that it's adding a detail that we should have been given elsewhere, but we were not.

That's possible. But the point I would like to make is this, that there is no description necessarily of this white horse primarily going vertically. This horse is seen going horizontally through the earth, conquering the nations.

And the conquest is being done with a sword. Now this sword proceeds out of the mouth of the rider. Now, not all would agree, but certainly most would agree, that this sword

that comes out of Jesus' mouth is most likely a symbol for his word.

I mean, we know that elsewhere the scripture says that the word of God is a sharp two-edged sword, over in Hebrews 4.12, and that it is the sword of the Spirit, according to Ephesians 6.17, and therefore, this two-edged sword that comes out of Jesus' mouth seems to represent his word, and possibly the gospel itself being preached. There are many who believe, and I don't know if they're in the majority or not, but there are many who believe that this vision is not a picture of Christ coming at the end of the age, but it is a symbolic picture of the gospel going forth during the present age, and being preached, and Jesus himself is being carried by this horse. Now, there is a possibility that the horse itself represents God's people, who are the vehicle through which God, or Jesus, comes to the world in the gospel.

Why would we say that? Well, over in Zechariah, we find a passage that gives some impression that that could be a correct interpretation. It's in Zechariah 10, in verse 3, God says, And my anger is kindled against the shepherds, he means, of course, the false leaders of Israel, and I will punish the goat herds, for the Lord of hosts will visit his flock, the house of Judah, and he will make them his royal horse in the battle. Now, it says that God will make his people to be his royal horse in the battle.

And then in Revelation, which, by the way, the book of Revelation borrows many images from the book of Zechariah, we see Christ on this royal horse, as it were, and what is he doing? He's traveling through the world, and his word is making conquests throughout the nations. This could be a highly symbolic picture of the missionary efforts of the church, the church carrying Christ and his word to the nations and making conquests, because every time any of us turns to Christ, we have been conquered. We have surrendered, we've laid down our arms, we were enemies of God, and he has conquered us through the gospel.

And there are indeed many who believe that is what this picture in Revelation 19 is about. Now, I'm not going to try to convince you that that is or is not the correct interpretation of Revelation 19. All I'm going to say is that it is a possible interpretation, and there have been many good Christian scholars who have thought that's what it means.

If that is true, if we even allow for the possibility of that interpretation, then of course it takes away any weight from the argument that we have the second coming of Christ in chapter 19, and the events of chapter 20 must necessarily follow the second coming of Christ, because by this reasoning, we don't see the second coming of Christ in chapter 19, and it would tell us nothing about the relationship of that event to the events of Revelation 20. Now, there's another consideration, and that is that even if we allow that Revelation 19 is describing the second coming of Christ, let's allow that for the sake of argument. Suppose that is a picture of the second coming of Christ.

It's entirely possible. That does not necessarily mean that the events of chapter 20 follow chronologically the events of chapter 19. Now, the reason I say that is because there are many times in the book of Revelation where the vision material doubles back and repeats itself.

It's this way also in the book of Daniel, by the way. You might recall Daniel and Revelation have many things in common. In Daniel chapter 2, there's an image made up of four metals.

They represent Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Then five chapters later in Daniel chapter 7, there's another vision with four beasts coming out of the sea. They also represent the kingdoms of Babylonia, Media, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Both visions, the one in chapter 2 of Daniel and the one in chapter 7 of Daniel, cover the same period of time. Partially, at least. So we can see that sometimes these separate visions double back and go over the same material again, repeat themselves.

In fact, this seems to take place in the book of Revelation in another place in Revelation chapter 11 and chapter 12. Because at the end of Revelation 11, we have in verse 15 the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It says, there were loud voices in heaven saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Then we read the 24 elders speak, and they say, We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty. They say, The nations were angry. Your wrath has come.

And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, that you should reward your servants, the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth. Now that sounds a great deal, like that's the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. And there certainly are a great number of people who believe that that is talking about the second coming of Christ.

The judgment of the dead, the rewarding of the saints, and all of that. And yet, in chapter 12, the very next chapter in Revelation, we have a vision of a pregnant woman who bears a child. And most commentators agree, and I think the evidence is strong for it, that that child represents Jesus being born.

In other words, chapter 12 goes all the way back to the birth of Jesus Christ. Whereas chapter 11, the previous chapter, seems to have recorded the second coming of Christ. Now this shouldn't be too strange, because Revelation has its many doubling backs.

It's many times it will go back and go over the same material again, it would appear. And some people think it does this seven distinct times, that there are seven distinct visions, each of them covering the whole age. And beginning with the first coming and ending

with the second coming of Christ.

I don't know that I could support that particular outline of the book, but one thing we can say. And that is, that if we have the second coming of Christ in chapter 11 of Revelation, and the birth of Christ in the next chapter, chapter 12, then we have a precedent for saying that you may read of the second coming of Christ in the book of Revelation, and then after that, read of things that occurred earlier than that. And it goes back through another cycle.

Now suppose we apply that to this transition between Revelation 19 and 20. Suppose we say that that vision of the rider on the white horse is indeed a vision of the second coming of Christ in Revelation 19. But it would not necessarily follow that the events of chapter 20 then must follow the second coming of Christ.

It could be, as with the transition from chapter 11 to chapter 12, that the transition from chapter 19 to 20 goes back again to the beginning of the age, and starts over and tells us another angle of the same period of time. Now I'm not asking you to accept right off that this is the way it is to be understood. I'm simply saying that those reasons for believing that Jesus comes back at the beginning of Revelation chapter 20 are not necessarily very solid.

I'm not saying that they are bad ideas. I'm only saying that they're not the only reasonable suggestion. And that when we come to Revelation chapter 20, we may have to consider that the material inside the chapter itself will be more instructive as to where these events stand in relation to the second coming of Christ than a comparison with any other chapter like 19 would tell us.

Now I'd like to show you in Revelation 20, internally, within the chapter, why I believe that the second coming of Christ is not at the beginning of Revelation 20, but is at the end. There are several things in the description at the end of this thousand years that we read. We read, of course, there's this thousand years during which Satan is bound, and then there's this little while during which he is loosed.

And that all comes to an end in verses 9 and following. And there, in verse 9, it says, They, that is the nations following Satan, went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, the beloved city, and a fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. I'd like to make a case, in a moment, that that fire coming down from heaven and devouring the enemies, there in verse 9, is a description of the second coming of Christ.

Then verse 10 says, And the devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life.

And the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books. And the remaining verses simply give a further description of that judgment. Now, there are a number of things here we need to notice that occur as it were after the thousand years is over, and after the little season that Satan has been loosed.

One, we read that there is fire from heaven that comes down and destroys the enemies. Then we read of resurrection and judgment. The dead are brought to judgment.

Then we read of death being destroyed, because we read that death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire in verse 14. And then we also read of the end of the present order and its replacement by new heavens and new earth, because in verse 11 it says, I saw him who sat on the throne, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. Well, if the earth and the heaven fled away, they're gone.

But then we read in verse 1 of chapter 21, And I saw new heaven and new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. So, these four things are very important for us to notice. Fire from heaven comes down and destroys the wicked.

There's a resurrection of the dead and judgment. There is the enemy, death, destroyed, the last enemy. And you've got the destruction of the cosmos, the heavens and the earth, to be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth.

These four things I take to be associated elsewhere in scripture with the second coming of Christ. And that is a very important thing to note, because if we are correct, then what John is telling us in Revelation 20 is that the second coming of Christ occurs at the end of the events of this chapter, not at the beginning. And therefore, pre-millennialism would be incorrect, and either amillennialism or postmillennialism would have to be correct.

Now let me tell you why I believe that this is the case. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, we have the following description of the second coming of Christ. It says in verse 7 and 8, this is 2 Thessalonians 1, 7 and 8, it says, When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this tells us something of importance. And that is that when Jesus returns from heaven, he'll come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who are not believers. That's exactly what we read of happening in Revelation 20, in verse 9. Fire from heaven comes down and destroys all the wicked.

Just what Paul said. In 2 Thessalonians 2, he speaks in this way, in verses 8 and 9, it says, And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. That again, though it

doesn't mention fire per se, Paul did mention fire in the previous chapter, that does tell us of a great consuming, burning brightness that comes when Jesus comes that destroys the lawless one and all the wicked.

That would agree reasonably well with the wording of Revelation 20, in verse 9. Then we have this fire is also going to be the end of the world. Peter tells us this in 2 Peter 3. If you turn to 2 Peter 3, beginning at verse 10, Peter says, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Now, you know, the day of the Lord is the term that is used throughout the New Testament of the second coming of Christ.

I mean, there are times when it has other meanings, but this seems to be the meaning here, the second coming of Christ. He says, The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Remember, Jesus said that his coming would be as a thief in the night.

In which, now in which means in the day of the Lord, the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, but the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. And in verse 12 he says, Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, verse 13, We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Now, this is very interesting, because Peter is talking about eschatology, it appears. He seems to be talking about the end times. He seems to be talking about the second coming of Christ, because he's talking about the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night.

Certainly, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 speaks of the second coming of Christ as coming as a thief in the night. So we've got the second coming in both these discussions. And Peter doesn't seem to know about a millennium.

He apparently has never heard of it, because he says, In the day of the Lord, when the Lord comes as a thief in the night, the world will be burned up, and the heavens will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat. And then he says, We, according to his promise, look for, he didn't say a millennial kingdom on earth, he said, We look for a new heavens and a new earth. Now, there's something about this that's very strange.

One is that Peter is writing, as we hope, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he's giving us correct eschatology. Yet he tells us that in the day of the Lord, when Jesus comes back, it's going to be the end of the world. The heavens and the earth are going to melt and burn up and dissolve, and we're going to see a new heaven and a new earth.

Peter does not mention, and apparently is not aware, of any doctrine that would say that

when Jesus comes back, he's setting up a thousand year millennium on this earth, after which there will be a new heavens and a new earth. That is the premillennial scheme, but Peter apparently was not premillennial. What's interesting about this is that Peter tells us that this end of the present world and the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth occurs at the day of the Lord, that is, at Jesus' second coming, which comes as a thief in the night.

So, we have two of the elements that occur near the end of Revelation 20, occurring at the second coming of Christ. You've got Jesus coming in fire, burning up the wicked, and you've got the end of the world and the new heavens and the new earth created. Now, that in itself would probably be two events that correlate well enough to prove that we have the second coming of Christ not at the beginning of Revelation 20, but late in Revelation 20.

But there's more. We have the resurrection and the judgment. Now, we know that Revelation 20 is talking about the resurrection, because it says, I saw the dead, and they came and were judged, and even the sea gave up its dead, that is, the dead bodies of those who were buried at sea, they came forth and went to judgment.

So, you have the dead people coming forth and being resurrected to go to the judgment, some to a resurrection, obviously, of condemnation, and, I dare say, some to a resurrection of life. We are told that the books were opened, and the book of life was there too. Now, the book of life is the book that has the names of those who were saved in it.

It doesn't seem necessary to have that book there, unless some of the saved were there, being judged. And yet there are those there who are not saved. There are those whose names are not written in the book of life, and they're cast into the lake of fire, according to Revelation 20 and 15.

So, we have the judgment. This judgment includes righteous and wicked people, just as Jesus said it would. The resurrection and judgment is spoken of by Jesus frequently.

In John chapter 5, for example, and verse 28 and 29, Jesus said, Now, notice, Jesus believed that at one hour, He said, the hour is coming, it's not going to be separated by years or millennia, there's one time when all the dead are going to hear His voice, all those who are in the graves are going to come forth, some will be saved and some will be lost. There will be the righteous and the unrighteous resurrected to the judgment all at one time. That certainly is what we seem to be reading of in Revelation chapter 20.

And that occurs when? Well, Paul tells us when that occurs. If you look over at 2 Timothy chapter 4, 2 Timothy chapter 4, verse 1, says, This is Christ who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing in His kingdom. Now, at His appearing in His kingdom, I understand to be the second coming of Christ.

I think most would agree. This resurrection of the dead and the judgment, where the living and the dead are brought to judgment, this takes place at the second coming of Christ. Now, that is found at the end of Revelation 20, not the beginning.

So, again, we have evidence that the second coming of Christ does not occur at the beginning of Revelation 20, but at the end. In Matthew 25 and verse 31, there is another judgment teaching of Christ. This is the parable of the sheep and the goats.

I'm sure most of you know it. But I just want to call attention to some specific wording. In Matthew 25, 31, Jesus said, When the Son of Man comes in His glory and all His holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory, and all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and then He says He's going to send the sheep off to eternal life and the goats to everlasting punishment.

Now, this happens when? When the Son of Man comes in His glory with all His holy angels. That sounds to me like the second coming of Christ. That's when the resurrection and the judgment occurs.

So, what do we have in Revelation 20? After verse 9, we have fire from heaven, which apparently is the same as the second coming of Christ in 2 Thessalonians 1. We have the end of the world, the cosmos, the heavens and the earth burn up and are replaced by new heaven, new earth, according to Peter in 2 Peter 3, 10-13. That happens at the second coming of Christ. We have the resurrection and the judgment.

According to many New Testament passages, that happens at the second coming of Christ. And one other thing. We have in Revelation 20, 14, death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, this is the destruction of death. Now, we're told in 1 Corinthians 15-26 that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

And we're told in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 54 and 55, that that destruction of death will take place at the resurrection. At that time, Paul says, the saying will be fulfilled, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? That is to say, death will be defeated and destroyed. That's the last enemy that will be destroyed.

And we find at the end of Revelation 20, verse 14, death is done away with. Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire. Now, think about this.

Paul said that that last enemy, death, should be destroyed at the second coming of Christ, or at the resurrection. That's at the second coming. We already saw that.

Now, if that is true, if at the second coming of Christ there is the resurrection, and the resurrection is the destruction of death, and death is the last enemy to be destroyed,

that means there could be no more enemies to destroy after the resurrection. No more enemies to destroy, therefore, after the second coming of Christ. Think of the premillennial scheme, if you would.

Under that scheme, Jesus comes back at the beginning of Revelation 20. That would mean he must raise the dead, he must destroy death, and so forth. And yet, there's more enemies later.

In Revelation 9, they come and gather against the beloved city. How could there be more enemies after the last enemy has been destroyed? No, the last enemy is destroyed at the resurrection, and that occurs at the end of Revelation 20, not the beginning. And that is associated with the second coming of Christ.

So, there seems to be no way to avoid the conclusion, to my mind, that we have the second coming of Christ at the end of Revelation 20, and not at the beginning. Therefore, we do not have Jesus returning and then the millennial kingdom coming. We have the millennial kingdom running its course, and then at the end of that, Jesus comes back.

This means that either post-millennialism or amillennialism must be the correct interpretation of the chapter. Now, I would tell you this. Throughout history, most Christians have believed in amillennialism.

The church has held the amillennial view for many, many centuries. The premillennial view is much more popular today, but there were very good reasons why Christians through the ages did believe the amillennial view. In order to clarify that, I'd like to go through Revelation 20, verse by verse, and see if I can show you what the amillennial view teaches on this.

Okay, now remember the amillennial view holds that the binding of Satan, which is at the beginning of Revelation 20, took place at the first coming of Christ. If that is true, and I believe it can be established to be true, if that is true, then the thousand years and the little season after it fill the time period between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ, because we have the first coming of Christ in the first three verses, and we have the second coming of Christ in the last six verses. Therefore the in between verses must apply to the time between the first and the second coming of Christ, or what we would normally call the age of the church, the age in which we are now living.

Therefore the in between verses must apply to the time between the first and the second coming of Christ, or what we would normally call the age of the church, the age in which we're now living. Now how can this be? Well let's look at this bit by bit if we could. Let's take that first section of Revelation 20 which is the first three verses.

John says, Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key to the

bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold on the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.

But after these things he must be released for a little while. So these first three verses tell us of the binding of Satan. Let me say first of all is there any evidence within this section that we are dealing with literal language or symbolic language? I believe that we have right from the very beginning evidence of symbolic language.

The devil for example is called the dragon and that serpent of old. Now a dragon and a serpent are not the same thing but both of them are separate images that are used of Satan elsewhere in Scripture. He is called a dragon at times, for instance he was back in chapter 12 of Revelation, and he is called a serpent at various times.

He appeared as a serpent in the Garden of Eden. Now these are separate images but Satan is not a reptile. He's not a literal serpent in other words.

He is not a mythical beast. He's not a dragon. He is a spirit being.

He is an intelligent spirit being but here he is represented by the symbolism of a snake and of a dragon. Now right there we have evidence that we're dealing with a symbolic description rather than literal just as when Revelation speaks of Christ as a lamb. We realize a lamb is a symbol for Christ as the sacrifice victim but he is not a literal lamb.

He's a person and therefore we are dealing not with literal language but symbolic. Now we also have a bottomless pit and a chain. These things confine the dragon.

The dragon gets a chain around his neck and he's thrown into this bottomless pit. This results in him being bound for a thousand years. Now you know everyone is certainly welcome to reach his own conclusions about this but my own understanding is that a spirit being cannot literally be bound with a physical chain and we know of no other kinds of chains.

I mean what is a chain made of if not atoms? Is there a spiritual kind of chain? Maybe there is but my understanding is that a literal chain as we know the word would not bind Satan. Now you could bind a dragon I suppose or a serpent with a chain. The use of a chain fits the imagery of the passage but in terms of literalness you couldn't take a literal chain and bind the devil or demons or angels or spirits at all because they are spiritual not physical and therefore again this idea of a chain and so forth seems to have symbolic value it seems to me.

And the thousand years what about that? Is that literal? Now you see I've suggested that the thousand years represents the period of time between the first and second coming of Christ. Now in reality of course that period of time has been over over two thousand

years or approximately two thousand years and therefore a thousand years doesn't even come close to getting the number right. However we need to take into consideration the way that this number 1000 is commonly used in the scripture.

We may as Westerners who use numbers rather mathematically think of it as a literal statistical number but in the Hebrew scriptures and in the Bible in general we find that the number thousand is used as simply a term referring to a large and indeterminate number. I can give you many examples of this. For example in Deuteronomy chapter 1 and verse 11 Moses says to the people of Israel may the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are.

Now he doesn't necessarily care whether it's literally a thousand or not he's just picking a large number to invoke a blessing on them of you know multiplication of their population. He says may he make you a thousand times more numerous than you are. In the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy in verse 9 it says that God is the God who keeps covenant and mercy to a thousand generations.

Well what about after that? Does God stop keeping covenant after that? Obviously a thousand doesn't mean a particular exact number it just means for exceedingly long and great number of generations not necessarily a literal thousand. In chapter 32 of Deuteronomy in verse 30 it says one shall chase a thousand and two shall chase ten thousand. Again these numbers are not likely to be literal but rather simply saying a small number of Israelites can chase a large number of their enemies if God is on their side.

A thousand in fact. In Psalm 50 in verse 10 we're told that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Literally a thousand? What about the rest of the hills? Who owns those cows? It seems obvious that a thousand simply means a very large number.

In Psalm 84 in verse 10 David says a day in your courts is better than a thousand. That's not exactly you know there's not exact correspondence simply saying a thousand stands for a very large number not necessarily a particular number. In Psalm 90 in verse 4 it says a thousand years in thy sight are as but yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.

So we see a thousand years is like yesterday or another way of saying it is a thousand years is like a watch in the night. Peter picks up on this thought in 2nd Peter 3 8 and he says a day to the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. All of these are examples of how the number thousand is used in Scripture.

It's used simply to mean an indeterminate large number. It doesn't have to be literal it doesn't even have to be approximate. It just has to mean a very large number without any commitment to the exact number and that is how it is used elsewhere in the Scriptures.

Why would it not be used here that way as well? There's actually no reason to believe that the number thousand must be literal in this case if it is not in so many other places of the Bible and it seems to me very workable to say that if Jesus bound Satan at his first coming and his second coming is way off in the future and the Bible simply gives a number like a thousand years to suggest a very long time that that would work with the theory of the all-millennial view. I'm not saying that we're forced to that view I'm simply saying it works. It works fine.

Some other considerations force us to that view. Now when we talk about the binding of Satan we need to talk about that a little bit because the biggest complaint of pre-millennialists against all-millennialists is that we do claim that the binding of Satan took place at the first coming of Christ and most people when they instinctively feel like well that can't be true because Satan certainly doesn't seem to be bound now. Satan seems to be very active now.

It seems that Satan is having a heyday now. How could anyone claim that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ and indeed is bound today? Well again we need to resort to an appeal to the symbolism of the passage. Is it talking about a literal binding of Satan with a literal chain? Well you are entitled to think it is if it works out with the rest of scripture for you but I believe we have a very symbolic vision here where the binding of a dragon with a chain in a bottomless pit with a lid on it and a seal on it all of that is a very dramatic and deliberately so.

A graphic, dramatic way of describing the utter defeat of Satan that occurred at the cross of Jesus Christ. Now if we take it this way this is not necessarily the first time that the Bible speaks this way. In Matthew chapter 12 Jesus is talking about, now this is before the cross, but Jesus is talking about having already bound Satan in some sense during his earthly ministry because he says in verses 28 and 29 of Matthew 12, but if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God surely the kingdom of God has come upon you or else how can one enter a strongman's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strongman and then he will plunder his house.

Now he's saying that he's casting out demons by the finger of God and the kingdom of God has come he says. Now if I'm casting out demons I am in a sense plundering the devil's domain. These demon possessed people and the world itself is the devil's house.

It's his domain. This is his prison house and these were his prisoners but look I'm letting them go. I'm plundering his house.

I'm taking what was his. Now he says you can't go into a strongman's house and take what is his unless you first bind him. What is Jesus saying? Well the most reasonable interpretation of his words seems to me would be that he has bound Satan and therefore he is able to do what they see him doing.

That he is able to plunder Satan's house and Satan cannot stop him. It's as if Satan was tied up in the closet or something so that a burglar can take his stuff. Now of course Satan was not literally tied up nor do I believe that Revelation 20 speaks of him literally being bound to the chain.

I think both of these things are imagery to communicate something very literally true. It's a figurative way of talking about an important literal reality. Before I explain exactly what I think that reality is I'll appeal to another passage of Scripture.

This is in Luke 11 22 and it's quite clearly parallel to the one we just read. In Luke 11 verse 22 or 21 and 22 Jesus said when a strong man fully armed guards his own palace his goods are in peace but when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and divides the spoils. Now you can tell that this is essentially the same teaching that Jesus gave in Matthew 12 28 and 29 but a different imagery.

He's talking about Satan is a strong man and a strong man keeps his goods in peace unless someone stronger than him comes and overcomes him and then that person takes his stuff. Now in Matthew 12 the way Jesus expressed it is that you come and you bind the strong man. In Luke 11 the same concept is with different images.

He says one stronger comes and takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and then divides his spoils. So in one passage Jesus speaks of binding Satan. In a parallel statement he speaks of disarming him or taking away his armor.

Two different images but both ways of saying that Jesus has disabled Satan. Jesus has rendered Satan incapable of resistance. If Jesus comes into his house and takes what's his Satan is as incapacitated as if he was literally bound or as if he was a man with his armor taken away.

It's interesting that Paul picks up this imagery in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15 because they're speaking of what Christ accomplished at the cross. Paul says in Colossians 2 15 having disarmed principalities and powers he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them in it that is in the cross. Notice he disarmed the principalities and powers.

Sounds just like what Jesus said when he takes away the devil's armor in which he trusted which is equated with binding him in Matthew 12. You see all of these are images that apply to what Jesus did to Satan at his first coming. True the images change they all communicate the same idea.

Namely that when Jesus came he took Satan who had previously never had somebody equal to him or able to overcome him someone stronger than him and he has disabled him to the point that Satan cannot successfully resist the forward thrust of Jesus Christ

and of his church. It's as if he has been bound but it's important to notice it's as if he had bound him. It's not necessarily to be taken literally.

The visions of Revelation do not need to be taken with absolute literalness any more than these parabolic descriptions do that Jesus uses. Look at in Hebrews chapter 2 if you can. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14 says in as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood that means they're human he himself Christ likewise shared in the same that means he became human.

Why? Here's what Paul tells us or the writer of Hebrews tells us. Hebrews 2 14 so that through death Jesus might destroy him who had the power of death that is the devil. Now through death Jesus did something to the devil we're told.

The word that our King James and New King James use here is the word destroy. He might destroy him that had the power of death that is the devil. It's not a great translation.

The Greek word here is katergaio and the word katergaio is used frequently in scripture but if you look it up in a lexicon you'll find that the word katergaio means to render inactive or to reduce to inactivity. Interesting statement. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus through his death reduced Satan to inactivity.

Isn't that the same concept essentially as binding him or disabling him or taking him out of commission or whatever? The idea here is that something happened to Satan through the cross and the resurrection of the life of Jesus in his first coming that is like binding him. It's like disabling him. It's like disarming him.

It's like rendering him inactive. Now all of these expressions are not to be taken in a universal sense. Remember when Jesus said he had bound the strong man Satan was still doing many things.

There were still other demons to cast out. The devil had yet to enter Judas Iscariot and to get Jesus crucified. The devil still does stuff and to use the imagery of him being bound as Jesus did in Matthew 12 cannot mean necessarily that binding Satan means he can't do anything.

Obviously he did a great number of things even after Jesus claimed to have bound him. When the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus reduced Satan to inactivity it does not mean that Satan has never done a thing since. It seems clear that there is a limited sense in which this imagery is to be understood.

Satan still does things but there are some things he cannot do anymore. It's as if his hands are tied. It's as if he's been bound from certain activities.

What activities are those? In Revelation 20 we read that he bound that serpent so that

he might not deceive the world. And then later in Revelation 20 says when the thousand years have expired Satan will be released from his prison. He'll go out and deceive the nations.

Now the idea is that he's been deceiving the nations but he has been bound so he cannot deceive the nations. Once again don't take this more literally than is intended by the imagery. We know that Satan still deceives people.

We know that Satan still deceives even many in the nations. But take this in the context of what changed when Jesus came. Remember that before Jesus came all nations were subject to Satan.

There was not one nation that knew the true God except Israel and even Israel fell into idolatry and Satan worship on many occasions. The devil himself ruled the nations all except perhaps Israel and sometimes even had victory over them. But when Jesus came he changed that because he said to his disciples just before he parted he said go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to observe everything I have commanded.

In other words gross darkness was on the face of the earth and over the people but the light is now coming to them through the gospel and that being so Satan no longer has the unlimited ability to hold the nations in his deception because the nation everywhere the gospel has gone the forces of darkness have had to be pushed back and have been pushed back. Satan is like a bound man in his house or like a man who's been disarmed. He is unable to successfully resist.

He does put up resistance but he cannot succeed and this I believe is all that is intended by the dramatic imagery of Revelation 20 when it says that Satan was bound. Why should we object to saying that the binding of Satan in Revelation 20 can refer to the events of the first coming of Christ when other passages in Scripture clearly speak of Satan being bound or disabled or reduced to inactivity at the first coming of Christ and we cannot deny that those statements mean that why should it be hard to accept it here it is only because we are accustomed to taking these visions so literally but when you understand apocalyptic imagery one realizes that the the figures of speech and the images are there to get across a concept not necessarily to be taken in with an entire literalness. Now let's talk about the second part.

Let's suggest that the binding of Satan did take place at the first coming of Christ. What then? Well then we have the thousand years. Revelation 20 verses 4 through 6 says and I saw thrones and they sat on them and judgment was committed to them and I saw their souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the Word of God who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years but the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection over such the second death has no power but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years. The great difference between the premillennialist and the amillennialist on this particular passage is where are these people? These people who are on thrones, these people who are reigning with Christ a thousand years, are they on earth or are they in heaven? Now if they are, if Jesus has come back at the beginning of chapter 20 as the premillennial view teaches, then Jesus would then be on earth and so would these saints who are with him would be on earth.

But if this is the church age we're reading about, then these people might well be in heaven because that's where Jesus is during the church age. He's at the right hand of God reigning there and the saints reign with him after they've died and gone to heaven. Therefore we have two very different viewpoints on this section.

The premillennialist believes that these thrones and these saints and Christ himself are reigning on earth during the thousand years because they believe Jesus has already returned before this whole thing was set in motion. The amillennialist believes, at least some do, I do, that these saints are in heaven and they are not on earth and Jesus is not on earth. Notice throughout the entire chapter there is no reference to Jesus being on earth, nor is there any reference to these saints being on earth.

Consider this, we see first of all in verse 4 thrones. Interestingly enough the word thrones is used over 40 times in the book of Revelation, a very common image of authority and rule and so forth. Thrones.

But of all the times that Revelation uses the word thrones, only once is the word throne used of a throne on earth and that is when it talks about the throne of the beast in Revelation 16, talks about the throne of the beast. That's on earth. But the rest of the occurrences of the word throne in scripture are always in heaven.

Now that doesn't prove that that is so here but it would simply be in keeping with the rest of the book of Revelation that the thrones that the righteous are seen on throughout the book of Revelation are always in heaven and there's no reason to make an exception here. These thrones I believe are also in heaven. He sees there the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness.

That is that he sees the souls of the martyrs. He sees the saints who have died and gone on to heaven. Now they are in heaven and we know this because he doesn't see them in their bodies, he sees their souls.

I see the souls of those who are beheaded. Now of course it is true that sometimes the word soul in scriptures used to speak of a whole person but the expression the souls of so-and-so never means the persons of so-and-so. It is talking about the contrast between the soul and the body.

The body was beheaded but their soul is seen alive in heaven. John in other words has been caught up to heaven and he sees that although many Christians have been martyred on earth for their faithfulness to Christ, they are living on in heaven. Their souls are there.

Now the only way that he could see the souls of these people disembodied as this suggests would be if it is describing the time between the time they died and the time they're resurrected. Because in the resurrection they will not be disembodied souls, they will have bodies again as they did before they died. The only time that one could see the souls of saints without their bodies would be after they die and before Jesus comes back to resurrect them.

Therefore this thousand years where these souls are enthroned must be in heaven and must be before Jesus comes back. However this interpretation creates a few problems that we need to consider. One is when John describes these souls in heaven, he says at the end of verse four, and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Now the important thing I want to point out here is that the word lived, they lived, is in many translations rendered differently. Many many translations say they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Now if it says they came to life, it seems to be speaking of them having died and now coming back alive.

And that would seem to suggest of course the resurrection and that would suggest the second coming of Christ. What this means, I don't mean to confuse you, but what it means is if John says I saw these people and they came to life again and reigned with Christ, the wording itself would seem to suggest that they were resurrected from the dead because Jesus came back and now they're reigning during the millennium after the second coming of Christ, after the resurrection. And that rendering, they came to life, would certainly support that view.

However, not all translations support that translation, came to life. The King James and the New King James in particular do not. They translated they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Now this doesn't mean they came back to life again as a resurrection, but rather they lived on. That is, they were beheaded and from earth's point of view they seem to be dead, but in fact he was in heaven, he saw them, they were still living. They lived on and reigned with Christ.

So the big question with reference to this translation, this word, is does the Greek word here mean lived or does it mean came to life? Now I'll tell you what, the word in the Greek is *aseson* and it's the aorist indicative active of *zao*, which means to live. Now the aorist indicative active, of course, is a form of speech that most of us could not really tell what that means. However, I would point out there are two other examples in the book

of Revelation of the present indicative active form of *zao* in the book of Revelation.

This word *aseson*. One of them is in Revelation 2.8 where it says of Christ, that it says Christ who was dead and who *aseson*, the same word. Now we could translate that who came to life or who lives, right? Those are the two options.

Does it mean Christ who was dead and came to life? That's possible. That's certainly possible because he did come to life after he died, but could it be translated Christ who was dead and lives? Of course, entirely possible. It could be saying that in spite of the fact that he was dead, he isn't now, he lives now.

So we cannot determine from that reference alone whether this word should better be translated came to life or lived in Revelation 2.8. The only other place in Revelation that you find this aorist indicative active of *zao* is in Revelation 13.14. There we read of the beast and it says the beast who was wounded by the sword and *aseson*, this Greek word. Now remember the two possibilities are it could be translated lived or it could be translated came to life. The beast who was wounded by the sword and lived or the beast who was wounded by the sword and came to life.

Which is better? Well, I think lived on, lived is a better translation here because the beast was not killed. You might remember in the context the beast had seven heads and one of the heads had sustained a mortal head wound. But the other six heads had not.

The beast didn't die. It's possible that one of its heads died but it had six other heads and the beast was not dead. The beast did not sustain a wound and then come back to life.

There's no evidence the beast ever died. One of its seven heads had a wound. But that doesn't, it doesn't anywhere say the beast died.

Now if that is true, then it says the beast who had the wound and lived, that makes sense. That is although he was wounded severely he survived it. He lived on.

Now in this case the translation came to life would not work well. The beast who was wounded with the sword and came to life. Now that doesn't make sense in the context.

So we have three times in the book of Revelation where the word *aseson* is found. It's the aorist indicative active of *Zaho* to live. And in two of the cases it's not certain how it should be translated.

Christ who was dead and lived or Christ who was dead and came to life. Either one is possible. Likewise here in Revelation 20 the verse we're considering, verse 4. They lived and reigned with Christ or they came to life and reigned with a thousand years.

Both are possible. Both are equally possible. But in the only remaining case of this word

in Revelation, Revelation 13, 14, the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived makes sense.

The beast who was wounded by the sword and came to life does not make sense in the context. Which casts the vote, the deciding vote in favor of the translation lived rather than came to life. Now I, you know, persons are certainly welcome to think otherwise about this particular point.

But it seems to me from the Greek that the King James and the New King James have chosen the better translation than some of the modern translations have. So that John says in verse 4 not and they came to life and reigned with Christ thousand years but they lived and reigned with Christ thousand years. Although they had died they still lived in heaven in other words.

They didn't yet come to life as in the end time resurrection. But there's another objection to be raised here to my point of view and that is it talks about the resurrection. It says in verse 5 and 6 that the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power.

Now what is this first resurrection? The premillennialist believes that the first resurrection is what occurs at the second coming of Christ. The saints, the Christians are raised from the dead but the non-Christians are not. And then at the end of the thousand years we read of another resurrection judgment and that is only a resurrection of the wicked.

So on the premillennial view there are two different resurrections. The first one is at the second coming of Christ and the second one is a thousand years later at the end of the millennium. The first one only is a resurrection of some dead people namely the righteous.

The second one is the resurrection of the remaining people, the wicked. So you've got a resurrection of the righteous that occurs at the coming of Christ and a resurrection of the wicked that occurs at the end of the millennium in the premillennial scheme. Two resurrections.

Now apart from other difficulties one of the biggest difficulties of this view is that Jesus and Paul both taught that there's only one resurrection. When it comes to the resurrection who will be raised? Well according to Jesus we already saw this earlier in John 5 28 and 29 Jesus said the hour is coming which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and shall come forth those who've done good to a resurrection of life and those who've done evil to a resurrection of damnation. Now it sounds like he's talking about an

hour in which all the people who have ever died are raised and come out of their graves.

The good and the bad. Jesus did not seem to know about two different resurrections. One that takes part of the population and another one that takes the other part later on a thousand years later.

And there are other places that we see this taught also. Paul said in the book of Acts that he believed as did the Jews. This is in Acts chapter 24 verse 15 he says he believes in there will be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and the unjust.

There's one resurrection it will involve the just and the unjust. We already saw that Jesus said in Matthew 25 31 that when he comes he'll bring all the nations before him and separate between them as a shepherd separates between the sheep and the goats all at one time at the second coming of Christ. All the good and the bad the sheep and the goats will all be there together.

So the resurrection as taught by Jesus and Paul is one event that takes all people good and bad. The only place you would ever get the impression there might be a division of these resurrections is right here where it talks about this is the first resurrection. But the expression is ambiguous and it should not be thought that we should take it in such a way as to contradict the rest of the scripture on this subject.

Can we make sense of it without contradicting the rest of scripture? What does it mean this is the first resurrection? Now one thing I would point out to you is that there are two resurrections implied. It says this is the first resurrection which implies there must be another. Though it doesn't tell us of the other and it doesn't call it the second but we assume there must be a second if this is the first.

And there are two deaths. We are told of those who are cast in the lake fire this is the second death. Well what's the first death? Well the first death must just be natural death.

They died once and then they're thrown in the lake fire. That's the second death. Now notice this.

The first and second resurrections are somehow related to the first and second death. Because it says blessed and holy are those who have partaken in the first resurrection. On them the second death has no power.

So you've got the resurrections and the death. There's two resurrections two deaths. Now we can understand something about the resurrections by looking at the deaths.

The first and second death. Does this mean that part of the population dies in the first death and the other part of the population dies in the second death? No. No the first death is natural death which everyone experiences.

The second death is an additional death imposed upon some of those who have already died once. In other words some people have two deaths. The wicked die once and then they die again the second death in the lake of fire.

Whatever all that means. The point is that when we talk about the first and second death we're not talking about different segments of the population. The first death takes some and the second death takes others.

We're talking about two events that happen to the same people. They die physically first then they die spiritually. That's the first and second death.

Now what about the first and second resurrection? Is it not consistent with this thinking that the first and second resurrection are two things that happen to the same people rather than two groups of people resurrected at different times? Think about it. Is there a spiritual resurrection and a physical resurrection? Well we know there's a physical resurrection. Jesus spoke of it.

Those who are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth. What about a spiritual resurrection? Well Jesus said in John 5 24, He that hears my words and believes on him that sent me has eternal life and shall not come into condemnation but they have passed from death into life. Now he's talking about something that's already happened to those who are his believers.

We have passed from death into life. Now we were dead but we came alive right? We passed from death into life. That's a resurrection but it's a spiritual one.

In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul tells us that we before we're converted were dead in trespasses and sins but now he's made us alive. That's a spiritual resurrection. You see being born again is a resurrection of a sort.

It's a spiritual one and then of course being resurrected on the last day that's a physical resurrection and just as some people experience two deaths, some people experience two resurrections. The ones who experience two resurrections do not experience two deaths says the book of Revelation. The wicked will experience two deaths but the righteous experience two resurrections, the spiritual and the physical.

The first resurrection is that which Christians have already experienced. By being born again we've passed from death into life. We have experienced the first resurrection.

The second one awaits us. After we've died and Jesus returns we'll be resurrected physically. That's the second resurrection.

That agrees perfectly well with the theology of the New Testament in general and it agrees very much with what we've already seen with reference to the meaning of this chapter. Now some are stumbled by the fact that there is reference to the beast here in

verse 4 that the the saints that were seen ruling on these thrones are the ones who did not give in to the beast. They didn't take his mark.

They didn't worship him or his image and because we are accustomed to thinking of the beast as an individual who rises in the end times some have felt that these people must be simply people who lived in the last days and not a reference to all the Christians through the whole church age. However I believe that there are many ways that the beast has been understood and the idea that he's a last days figure is a very modern view. There was no Christian, there's no Protestant Christian who ever believed this view of the beast until the early 19th century.

Through most of church history it was believed that the beast was not an individual living in the end times but a system or a person or an organization or something that that lasts through the whole church age. For example the Reformers believed that the beast was the whole institution of the papacy that runs through practically from the beginning of the church age to its end. There are other views.

We cannot at this point discuss all those views. We wouldn't have time today but let me just say this there's no reason to insist that the beast in this case refers to a man who rises in the end times. Revelation does not insist on this and it's not the wisest in my opinion interpretation of that.

We'll have to talk about that later in our series on eschatology. Let's go on now. We've seen that the binding of Satan in the first three verses could be applied to what Jesus did at his first coming.

The thousand years spoken of in the next three verses seem to apply to the age of the church. The next three verses are where the thousand years have expired. Verse 7, Satan is released from his prison.

He goes out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the battle whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. Then the devil who deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and so forth.

So here the devil has one more chance to deceive the nations at the end of the church age. He is released again. Now if the binding of Satan had something to do with his being incapacitated at the first coming of Christ and put on the defensive rather than the offensive because the church was going forward and taking territory from him and he could not resist them, his being loosed must be a reversal of that situation.

It would seem that a time is yet to come or some have thought it's already here but one way or the other in the end of the church age there is a time where Satan is loosed. The

church is no longer able to press forward and have the same success as before but is rather besieged by the powers of darkness in the nations of the world. They come as it were and besiege the beloved city.

Now the beloved city is thought by pre-millennialists sometimes to be Jerusalem in Israel. In Revelation chapter 21 the beloved city is very clearly the church and that is what I believe it is here. So the church at the end of the church age comes to be under persecution as it were worldwide.

All the nations of the world set themselves against it and it would look to the natural eye as if the church will be annihilated at this point. However it will not because the gates of hell will never prevail against the church of Jesus Christ and it is saved from annihilation by fire coming down from heaven which I've already identified from 2 Thessalonians 1.8 is a picture of Jesus Christ coming again. So we have in this chapter a symbolic representation of the church age and the information that it seeks to give us is that for the vast majority of the church age represented by the figure of a thousand years the church is moving forward is reigning with Christ is taking ground from the enemy is evangelizing the missionary efforts of the church are proceeding but there's a little while just before the second coming of Christ when Satan is released and the church then has to become entrenched and hold her ground does not seem to be having the same missionary successes and is under persecution worldwide at that point we find that the church is in great danger but Jesus returns and he judges the wicked he comes in flaming fire vindicates his people and he establishes the new heaven and the new earth.

This is the all millennial perspective on this passage and to my mind it is the view that best accords with the comparing of scripture with scripture. Think for a moment if you would of the pre-millennial view and its implications. If pre-millennialism is true then all of this happens after Jesus has come back and he's on earth at this time.

It also means that we Christians who are resurrected and given glorified bodies at the second coming of Christ are in that beloved city with our glorified bodies. Can you imagine how it is that Satan would think he could destroy Jesus and us in our immortal bodies at the end of this thousand years if indeed we have already been resurrected and Jesus is here on earth. Can you imagine the nations of the earth actually being so brazen as to come against Christ of whom it is said that when he comes his brightness will destroy his adversaries and that from his face the heavens and the earth flee away.

You see we do see him on the throne at the end of this chapter but we are specifically told in verse 11 that when he is sitting on his throne in judgment it says from his face the earth and the heaven flee away. This is how glorious Christ is at his second coming. Enough so to burn up the universe to burn up and consume the man of sin to consume his enemies as fire from heaven.

This is the glory of Jesus Christ at his second coming so much so that the heavens the

earth themselves cannot continue. Now imagine the premillennial view it suggests that Jesus actually came back a thousand years before this. The heavens and the earth weren't too scared then they stayed around for another thousand years but for some reason his face becomes so glorious at the end of that time that the earth and the heavens have to vanish away.

Frankly that doesn't make an awful lot of sense to me as I understand the scripture or as I understand the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. I can't imagine that Jesus would be on earth and we in immortal bodies incapable of death or sickness or anything like that and the devil still think he's going to come and do some harm with his armies outside our walls. This simply is a strange scenario.

It was held by some of the early church fathers at least some similar idea to this was but throughout most of history the church has rejected premillennialism and has opted for this view which is perhaps not fortunately labeled but it is labeled amillennialism. That is the view that I believe is best taught in this passage once again as with the passages in the Old Testament about the kingdom age Revelation 20 is applied to the church age. The victories of Christ the great establishment of his kingdom and all the wonderful things that the prophets said Jesus would do he has established at his first coming and established a spiritual reality.

His saints spiritually reign with him over sin and sickness and over the world. John said whoever is born of God overcomes the world. We are spiritually reigning with Christ today and when he comes back he will establish a new heavens and new earth a new Jerusalem and we will live with him there.

At least that's how I read the book of Revelation. That's how I read 2nd Peter chapter 3. That's how I read a great number of other passages that talk about this subject. So you are now at least familiar with the amillennial view.

You do not have to accept it but I would suggest to you that you consider these scriptures and consider the ramifications of whatever other view you may have held or maybe considering and then make your decision based on the scriptures.