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*presents*



How did  
the early  
Jewish  
Christians  
understand...

# The Revelation Of Jesus Christ To John

Lecture #5

a seminar with Pastor Jeff Harrison

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST TO JOHN

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# Preface

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# The Fifth Vision Sequence

## The Great Multitude Rejoices in Heaven (19:1-10)

**19:1,2a:** After these *things* I heard *what was* like the loud sound of a large crowd in heaven saying, “Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power of our God! [2] For true and righteous *are* his judgments,

The words “*after these things*” alert us to the beginning of the fifth and final vision sequence. We’re back in heaven again, with the large crowd of believers from every tribe and nation (as in Rev. 7:9,10: “After these things I saw – and look! – a large crowd...standing before the throne and before the lamb...and they cry out in a loud voice saying, ‘Salvation is with our God!’” also Rev. 14:2,3; 15:2-4). They’re praising God for his salvation again, this time for salvation from his judgments.

Their words hint to Psalm 19: “*The judgments of the LORD are true, they are righteous altogether*” (Psa. 19:9; also Psa. 119:137).

**19:2b:** for he has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her sexual immorality, and he has avenged the blood of his servants *which is* in her hand.”

This is a hint to Deuteronomy 32, which as we saw earlier is a prophecy of the salvation of the Gentiles: “*Shout with joy, O nations [Gentiles], his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants and will pay back vengeance to his enemies*” (Deut. 32:43; The song of Moses >Deut 32:1-43). Or as it says in Psalm 79: “*Let vengeance be known among the nations before our eyes for the outpoured blood of your\* servants*” (Psa. 79:10).

**19:3: And a second *time* they have said, “Hallelujah! And her smoke ascends for *all the ages to come.*”**

This is a hint to Isaiah 34, a prophecy of God’s vengeance and judgment of the nations, and of Edom in particular: “[Edom’s] land will become burning pitch. It will not be quenched night or day. Her smoke will ascend forever” (Isa. 34:9,10; The judgment of Edom as part of God’s judgment of the world >Isa. 34:1-17).<sup>1</sup>

**19:4: And the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshipped the God seated on the throne saying, “Amen, Hallelujah!”**

This is just as we saw earlier in Rev. 5 and 11: “The four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb” (Rev. 5:8, also 11:16).

**19:5: And a voice went out from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all *you* his servants who fear him, the small and the great.”**

What is this voice from the throne, that directs the saints to praise God? Remember, the Bible is not a Disney movie with talking furniture. This is someone talking, but who is it? If it’s the Father, why does he say “Praise our God,” as if that were someone different than himself? Wouldn’t it be more natural to say “Praise me?” But if it’s not the Father, who else could be speaking from his throne? Revelation answers this puzzle for us in just another couple of verses. But we were already given the answer back in Revelation 3, where Jesus says: “As I also have conquered and sat with my Father on his throne” (Rev. 3:21). It’s the voice of Jesus.

“The small and the great” is an idiom used frequently in the Bible to refer to all the people in a particular group.<sup>2</sup> But that there are actual differences of rank or stature among God’s people may be

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<sup>1</sup> In prophecy, the rabbis understood Edom to be a hidden reference to Rome.

<sup>2</sup> As also in Rev. 11:18: “And the time[came]...to give the reward to your servants the prophets and to the holy ones and to those fearing your name, the small and the great.”

seen in Matt. 5, where Jesus says: “Whoever, therefore, looses [does away with] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches the people in this manner, will be called the least in the kingdom of the heavens, but he who obeys and teaches it [even the least commandment], this one will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens” (Matt. 5:19; also Matt. 20:16, 26; 25:14-23).

**19:6:** And I heard *what was like the sound of a large crowd and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord God, ruler over all, has begun to reign.*

This is the second time the sound of the heavenly crowd has been described with the same words used of the voice of Jesus and the Father, a symbol of our unity with God (as in Rev. 14:2, “And I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the loud sound of thunder”; used to describe the Father in Rev. 4:5, “And from the throne comes lightning and voices and thunder” also 11:9, 16:17; used of Jesus in Rev. 1:15, “His [Jesus’] voice was like the sound of many waters”).

The words that the crowd speaks are a hint back to Revelation 11:17, which foreshadows this moment of victory: “We thank you, Lord God, ruler over all...for...you have begun to reign.”

**19:7:** Let us rejoice and be glad, and let us give the glory to him, for the marriage of the lamb has come and his wife<sup>3</sup> has prepared herself.

It may seem strange to call a bride a wife before the wedding takes place. But this is according to ancient Jewish custom, in which the bride and bridegroom were betrothed prior to marriage. Jewish betrothal was much more definite than our modern practice of engagement. The betrothed man and woman were considered to be legally married even though they were not yet living together,

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<sup>3</sup> The original Greek clearly says wife, as KJV, not bride as NIV, NASB, NRSV, and Amplified.

and this first stage of marriage could not be broken except by a divorce. The time of betrothal was a time of preparation for the wedding and the marriage to follow.

In the same way, the Bible teaches that believers are now betrothed to Jesus: the true Church is already the wife of Messiah. The marriage is definite, even though we're not yet living in the same place. Now, during our betrothal, is our chance to prepare ourselves for the wedding, to make sure our garments are without spot or wrinkle, so we will be ready when he comes.

As Paul puts it: *“That he might present the Church to himself as glorious, not having a stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and blameless”* (Eph. 5:27; The relationship of the husband and wife compared to Jesus and the Church >Eph. 5:22-33). Or as Jesus himself said in the parable of the ten virgins: *“And those who were ready entered with him into the wedding celebrations”* (Matt. 25:10; Parable of the ten virgins >Matt. 25:1-13). This imagery can also be found in the Old Testament. Isaiah says, *“As the rejoicing of a bridegroom over a bride, so your\* God will rejoice over you\*”* (Isa. 62:5; The future glory of Zion >Isa. 62:1-12).

**19:8: And it was granted to her that she may clothe herself in a bright, clean garment of fine linen. For the garment of fine linen is the righteous deeds of the holy ones [the saints].”**

We have seen this theme of clean, white garments throughout Revelation: *“They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy”* (Rev. 3:4, also 3:5,18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9,13,14).<sup>4</sup> Here the meaning of this symbol is finally explained by Revelation itself. It represents *“the righteous deeds”* of the believers, as we learned earlier by using the parallel method of interpretation.

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<sup>4</sup> We are told that this fine linen is white in Rev. 19:14: *“...dressed in white, clean garments of fine linen.”* See also note below.

These garments are made of fine linen, a cloth called *byssus* in Greek. This is the same cloth used for the garments of the priests in Exodus: “*And they made the tunics of fine linen<sup>5</sup> [byssus in the Old Greek (LXX)] for Aaron and his sons*” (Ex. 39:27, Clothing of the priests >Ex. 39:1-31; also Eze. 44:17,18). In the time of the New Testament, a new priest was dressed in white only after first being examined and found free from impurities. For the believers to be dressed in linen is a symbol that they are approved as priests of God, as Peter said: “*And you yourselves as living stones are being built, a spiritual house [a spiritual Temple<sup>6</sup>], into a holy priesthood.... You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood.” (1 Pet. 2:5,9).<sup>7</sup>*

The verse itself, together with the marriage imagery of the previous verse (Rev. 19:7), is a hint to Isaiah 61: “*My soul will rejoice in my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation, with a robe of righteousness he has covered me, as the bridegroom plays the priest in a turban,<sup>8</sup> and as the bride puts on her things*” (Isa. 61:10, The restoration of Israel <Isa. 61:4-11). This is a beautiful picture of an ancient Jewish wedding, with the bridegroom dressed up with a turban, like a priest. Both Isaiah and Revelation connect marriage with righteousness and priesthood.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew word for fine linen used here, *shesh*, means literally “whiteness.” This is because of the brilliant white color of the cloth, which was similar in texture to silk.

<sup>6</sup> Among the Jewish people, the Temple of God in Jerusalem was most commonly referred to as the “house” of God.

<sup>7</sup> This, too, is a theme we have seen before: “*And made us into a kingdom, priests to his God and Father*” Rev. 1:6; also 5:10, 15:5.

<sup>8</sup> This beautiful, playful description, which clearly says in Hebrew “acts as a priest” or “plays the priest” (a verbal form of the Hebrew *cohen*, which means “priest”) is ignored by many translations, most of which do not use any form of the word “priest” at all. Exceptions are the NIV (“adorns his head like a priest”) and the JPS (“a priestly diadem”).

<sup>9</sup> As with so many of the parallels listed in this study, it’s not only the quoted verses but the entire section that is parallel and illumines our understanding. Isaiah is rejoicing in the coming endtime restoration of Israel and the establishment of righteousness in the earth (Isa. 61:4-11), just as Revelation is.

**19:9: And he says to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those invited to the wedding feast of the lamb.'" And he says to me, "These are true words of God."**

This is a hint to the many teachings of Jesus about the wedding feast: *"The kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a king, that prepared a wedding feast for his son.... Go therefore through the streets to the edges of the town, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding feast"* (Matt. 22:2,9; Parable of the wedding feast >Matt. 22:1-14). And in Luke 14, *"Blessed is everyone that will eat bread in the kingdom of God"* (Luke 14:15; Teaching about the resurrection >Luke 14:12-15).

Who it is that's talking here is not mentioned. But as the next verse shows, it's someone standing alongside the prophet:

**19:10: And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he says<sup>10</sup> to me, "Don't do that. I am a fellow-servant with you and your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."**

The one accompanying John is a fellow-servant with the believers, in other words, a human messenger.<sup>11</sup> This is confirmed by the passage that is hinted to here, in Acts, when Peter came to the house of Cornelius: *"Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Get up; I am myself also a man'"* (Acts 10:25,26; Peter enters the house of Cornelius in Caesarea >Acts 10:24-33). The parallel does not refer to an angel, but to a man. This is the same messenger that has been with John through the two preceding chapters, one of the seven priestly messengers that poured out the bowls (Rev. 17:1: *"And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls came and spoke with me..."* also 17:3,7,15).

In his rebuke, the messenger explains that the testimony or witness of Jesus that believers have is the same Spirit that is the source of all

<sup>10</sup> The present tense used here reflects the original Greek.

<sup>11</sup> Angelic beings do not have *"the testimony of Jesus"* since they cannot be saved by faith in him. *"The testimony of Jesus"* is also mentioned in Rev. 1:2,9; 12:17.

prophecy. This is similar to 1 John 5: *“The Spirit is the one who bears witness [of him], for the Spirit is the truth”* (1 John 5:6<sup>12</sup>). In other words, we should not be overawed by the gift of prophecy (or revelation), since it comes from the same Spirit that dwells in all who are believers in Jesus.

## The Second Coming of Christ (19:11-20:3)

**19:11: And I saw heaven open – and look! – a white horse and the one sitting on it, called Faithful and True, and he judges and wars in righteousness.**

In his prophecy on the Mt. of Olives, Jesus said that when we see the signs in the heavens, he will be at the doors of heaven: *“When you<sup>#</sup> see all these things, know that he [the Son of Man] is near, at the doors”* (Matt. 24:33). Now that door opens, and Jesus, the faithful and true witness, appears (*“The faithful and true witness”* Rev. 3:14 also 1:5). This is the true Christ, the true deliverer, of which the rider in chapter 6 was a false imitation (*“And I saw – and look! – a white horse”* Rev. 6:2). His judgment and warfare, unlike that of the nations of the world, are just. This is stated about Jesus using almost the same language used of God the Father earlier, another example of the transfer of imagery between the Father and the Son (*“True and righteous are his judgments”* Rev. 19:2).<sup>13</sup>

**19:12: But his eyes are a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written on him which no one knows but he.**

Almost every part of this description of Jesus has been foreshadowed earlier in Revelation: the eyes like fire in Rev. 1:14 (*“His eyes were like a flame of fire”*), the name written on him which no one knows in Rev. 2:17 and 3:12 (*“To the one conquering, to him I*

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<sup>12</sup> 1 John 5:7 in the NAS.

<sup>13</sup> The language may be a hint to the famous messianic passage of Isaiah 11: *“Righteousness will be a waistband about his hips and faithfulness a waistband about his loins”* (Isa. 11:5).

*will give...a new name...which no one knows except the one receiving it"; "The one conquering.... I will write on him...my new name"*). The diadems, symbols of victory in battle, previously appeared on the heads of the Dragon and the horns of the Beast in Rev. 12:3, 13:1. But now they appear on their rightful owner, who has come to claim the victory.

**19:13: And he is clothed in a garment dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.**

The garment dipped in blood is a hint to Messianic passages about God's judgment, as in Isaiah 63: *"I trampled them in my wrath, and their blood is spattered on my garments"* (Isa. 63:3; The one coming in red garments from Edom >Isa. 63:1-6). We have seen this before in Revelation 14, which describes God's judgment as the trampling of grapes: *"The wine press was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the wine press"* (Rev. 14:20). The same idea appears in Isaiah 59:17, *"And he put on garments of vengeance as clothing, and wrapped himself with zeal as a cloak"* (Isa. 59:17; The redeemer will come to Zion <Isa. 59:15b-21).

**19:14: And the troops in heaven were following him on white horses, dressed in white, clean garments of fine linen.**

This is the bride of Christ, dressed in her priestly linen garments (*"And it was granted to her that she may clothe herself in a bright, clean garment of fine linen"* Rev. 19:8). The same image of riding a white horse is applied both to Jesus and the Church, to show our unity with him. Not only Jesus but we, too, will ride out as conquerors. As Zechariah prophesied: *"And the LORD my God will come, all the holy ones will be with you\* [Jerusalem]"* (Zech. 14:5 LXX; The coming of Messiah to the Mt. of Olives >Zech. 14:1-8).

**19:15: And from his mouth comes a sharp sword, that with it he may strike down the ethnic groups, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine press of the wine of the fury of the wrath of God the ruler over all.**

Here are more familiar images, all of them symbols of the destruction that Messiah brings with him. The sword coming out of his mouth, as we saw in Revelation 1, represents the Word of God ("Coming out of his mouth was a sharp, two-edged sword" Rev. 1:16). It strikes down the ethnic groups, just as Jesus said in John 12: "*The one rejecting me...has one that judges him; the word that I spoke, that [is what] will judge him on the last day*" (John 12:48). This is the word of God's judgment.

The image of the rod we saw in Revelation 2 and 12 ("He will shepherd them with a rod of iron as the vessels of the potter are shattered" Rev. 2:27, also 12:5). The rods used to shepherd sheep were usually made of wood. But this is a rod of iron: when it strikes, it destroys "*as the vessels of the potter are shattered.*"

The wine press is also a symbol of destruction. Just as the grapes are trodden underfoot and burst, and their juice, which the Bible calls the blood of the grape (Gen. 49:11, Deut. 32:14), comes out; so, too, will the Messiah judge the peoples ("*The wine press was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the wine press*" Rev. 14:20 also 19:13).

**19:16: And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords."**

If you didn't know before, you do now: This is Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords ("*The lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings*" Rev. 17:14; "*The one conquering.... I will write on him the name of my God*" Rev. 3:12).

**19:17,18: And I saw a lone messenger standing in front of the sun and he cried out in a loud voice saying to all the birds flying high overhead, "Come, gather to the great banquet of God [18] that you may eat *the flesh of kings and the flesh of military commanders and the flesh of the strong and the flesh of horses***

**and those sitting on them and *the* flesh of all, free as well as slaves and small and great."**

This is a hint to Ezekiel 39: *"Say to every kind of bird... 'Assemble and come, gather from all around to my sacrifice that I am slaughtering for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel; and you will eat flesh and drink blood. Flesh of the strong you will eat, and the blood of princes of the earth you will drink.... And you will be sated at my table'"* (Eze. 39:17,18,20; Prophecy against Gog >Eze. 39:17-20). This is the same section Jesus hints to in his teaching when talking about the coming of the Son of Man: *"Wherever the corpse may be, there the vultures will be gathered together"* (Matt. 24:28; The end time prophecy of Jesus >Matt. 24:1-31). This is the horrible slaughter of the wicked that will take place at the coming of Messiah. As Amos warned: *"Alas, you who desire the day of the LORD, what is this to you, the day of the LORD? It will be darkness and not light.... Will it not be...gloomy and no brightness in it?"* (Amos 5:18,20; The coming judgment day of the Lord >Amos 5:18-20).

Some teach that this slaughter will affect only the armies that come up against Jerusalem. But the verse itself clearly says otherwise: The birds will eat the *"flesh of all."* And if that weren't clear enough, it goes on to state exactly who *"all"* means: *"free as well as slaves and small and great."* That covers everyone doesn't it? If you're not free, then you're a slave. If you're not small, you're great. All who do not go up to meet Jesus at the resurrection of the righteous will be destroyed. Either you are harvested in the rapture or trampled in the judgment. There's no middle ground. There's no second chance. Either you get saved now, in this age — or you will not be saved at all. Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

Jesus said: *"And just as it happened in the days of Noah...the flood came and destroyed them all. In the same way, just as it happened in the days of Lot...it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like these on the day that the son of man is revealed"* (Luke 17:26-30; The Coming of the Son of Man >Luke 17:22-37). That's as clear as

it could possibly be. It's now or never. The idea of a second chance for salvation is a false hope. Paul says in 1 Thess. 5:3, in speaking of the Day of the Lord: "*When they say 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction is about to come to them...and they will certainly not escape.*"

That all the wicked will be destroyed was the clear understanding of the earliest church. Irenaus (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), said that "after the coming of Antichrist,<sup>14</sup> and the destruction of all nations under his rule...the righteous will reign on the earth" (*Against Heresies*, 5.35.1).<sup>15</sup> As Justin Martyr put it (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.): "If Christ's coming shall have anticipated you, in vain you will repent, in vain you will weep; for he will not hear you" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 28). Hippolytus (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) says that Jesus "will bring the conflagration [fire from heaven] and just judgment on all who have refused to believe on him" (*Christ and Antichrist* 64). Commodian (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) said, "In the flame of fire the Lord will judge the wicked. But the fire shall not touch the just, but shall by all means lick up the wicked. Such will be the heat that the stones themselves shall melt... Wherever the wicked man flees, he is seized upon by this fire..." (*Instructions* 43). These are all talking about a destruction that takes place before the millennium.<sup>16</sup>

Even the rabbis agreed: "Near to the days of the Messiah a great disaster will come upon the world in which the wicked will

<sup>14</sup> Whom he equates with the beast from the sea of Rev. 13 (*Against Heresies* 5.28.2).

<sup>15</sup> That this destruction is a literal destruction he supports by quoting Isa. 6:11 ("*Until cities have fallen into ruin from lack of inhabitant and houses from lack of people, and the ground is completely desolate*"), Isa. 13:9 ("*The day of the LORD is coming, cruel and with overflowing rage and burning anger, to make the earth a desolation; and her sinners he will exterminate from her*"), Isa. 26:10 LXX ("*Let the ungodly be taken away, that he see not the glory of the Lord*"), and Isa. 6:12. Quotes from the early church fathers are from The Ante-Nicene Fathers series, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, The Ages Digital Library Collections, Books for the Ages, Albany, OR, 1997.

<sup>16</sup> Also the Anonymous Treatise against Novatian 1.16, which interprets Jude 1:14,15 to mean that Jesus' coming is "to destroy all the wicked." The views of the earliest Church were strongly influenced by the Book of Enoch, quoted in Jude 1:14-15, which says, "For he comes with his ten thousands and his holy ones to bring about judgment against all; and he will destroy all the godless" (1 Enoch 1:9 from the Greek), also in 1 Enoch 1:1, "The word of blessing of Enoch, as he blessed the chosen righteous who will be alive in the day of distress in which all enemies will be removed and the righteous will be saved."

perish.”<sup>17</sup> This destruction will take place at the hand of the Messiah: “Israel will in the days of the Messiah destroy all the nations persecuting them; as it is said: ‘And one from Jacob [the Messiah] will rule and he will destroy the remnant from the city’ (Num. 24:19).”<sup>18</sup>

There will be no second rapture, or third rapture or fourth rapture. There will be no “tribulation saints” – people getting saved after the resurrection of the righteous.<sup>19</sup> That’s mythology, not Bible. Those who say there will be a second chance for salvation are preaching a dangerous doctrine that is not taught by the Bible. As I say to my pastor friends who are dispensationalists: Let’s say that I’m wrong, and there is a second chance for salvation after the rapture. Have I hurt anyone by saying you must get right with Jesus now? But what if you’re wrong, and there is no second chance for salvation, have you hurt anyone by giving them the false hope that they can get right with Jesus later, when in fact by then it will be too late?<sup>20</sup>

**19:19: And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their troops, gathered to make war with the *one* sitting on the horse and with his army.**

Here we find ourselves revisiting the same moment of time represented by the sixth bowl of wrath, with all the nations gathered at Armageddon to make war against Messiah and his

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<sup>17</sup> Song of Songs Rab. 2.33.

<sup>18</sup> Num. Rab. 2.13. We can only wonder what “city” this verse in Num. 24 would have been thought to refer to in the original context. But from a prophetic point of view, it clearly refers to the city of Babylon that Jesus will destroy at his coming. A similar thought is in Num. 24:17, also speaking of the Messiah, “*he will destroy all the sons of Seth [the son of Adam, also sometimes written as ‘Sheth’],*” in other words, he will destroy all humanity that remains at that time.

<sup>19</sup> The true “tribulation saints” are all the believers from all time, all of them saved during the great tribulation which is before the rapture, from the time of Jesus until his return (see Lecture 2).

<sup>20</sup> The dispensational teaching of a second chance to get right with God after the rapture is a Protestant form of the doctrine of purgatory, supposing that by suffering you can somehow make up in the future what you lack in faith now in this life.

army (*“And they gathered them together to the place which has been called...Armageddon”* Rev. 16:16). As Zechariah put it: *“And I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for battle.... And the LORD will go out and wage war against these nations”* (Zech. 14:2,3; The battle for Jerusalem <Zech. 14:1-8).

**19:20: And the beast was seized and with him the false prophet who did *miraculous* signs in his presence, with which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his likeness: the two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulfur.**

Here we find ourselves right back in the prophecy of Daniel 7: *“I was seeing [in the vision] until the beast was slain and its body was destroyed and was given to the burning fire”* (Dan. 7:11; The judgment of the beast). The two beasts destroyed here along with Satan who is taken in just a moment (Rev. 20:2) are also a hint to Isaiah’s three serpents (or three-fold serpent) of Isaiah 27: *“On that day, the LORD will use his harsh and great and mighty sword on [1] Leviathan the fleeing serpent, and on [2] Leviathan the crooked serpent, and he will kill [3] the dragon that is in the sea”* (Isa. 27:1; God’s punishment of the earth >Isa. 26:20-27:1).<sup>21</sup>

But it’s not only the beasts that are destroyed:

**19:21: And the rest were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the *one* sitting on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.**

Not only the beasts, but all the rest of those living on earth will also be destroyed. As it says in Isaiah 63: *“And I treaded on the peoples in my anger, and I made them drunk in my wrath, and I brought their blood down to the earth”* (Isa. 63:6; The one who comes in red garments from Edom >Isa. 63:1-6). Or as Psalm 110 puts it: *“The Lord...will*

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<sup>21</sup> Many translations give the impression that there is only one Leviathan in Isa. 27:1 (as NAS, NIV, NKJ, KJV). But in Hebrew there is a clear sequence of three, each connected to the next in a series by the word “and” (as YLT and JPS).

*smite through kings in the day of his wrath. He will judge among the nations, he will fill them with corpses”* (Psa. 110:5,6; God’s judgment of the earth >Psa. 110:2-6). Or as Isaiah 29 says, *“And it will be like a dream, a vision of the night, the multitude of all the nations waging war against Ariel [Jerusalem]”* (Isa. 29:7; The endtime battle for Jerusalem >Isa. 29:1-8; also Oba. 1:16). Why will it be like a dream? Because they will all be destroyed – suddenly and completely: *“And the multitude of your foreign enemies will be as fine dust, and the multitude of those terrifying you as the chaff that blows away; and it will happen suddenly, in an instant”* (Isa. 29:5). Not one will be left.

The protection of God’s people during this terrible destruction, who were removed from the earth in the rapture, is similar to the protection of Israel in Goshen during the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 8:22, 9:26). As Isaiah puts it: *“Go, my people, enter into your rooms, and shut your doors behind you; hide for a short moment until indignation passes over. For look!, the LORD is about to go out from his place to visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth on them”* (Isa. 26:20,21; God’s punishment of the earth >Isa. 26:20-27:1).<sup>22</sup>

**20:1-3: And I saw a messenger descending from heaven having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. [2] And he seized the dragon, the ancient snake, who is the Devil [the Slanderer] and Satan [the Accuser], and he bound him for 1,000 years [3] and threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the ethnic groups *any* longer until the 1,000 years are finished. After these *things*, it is necessary for him to be released for a short time.**

The key of the abyss we have seen before, in Revelation 9, when the army of demonic spirits was released from the abyss: *“The key of the*

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<sup>22</sup> This is part of the same prophetic passage that talks about the destruction of the three-fold Leviathan (Isa. 27:1). It follows the same prophetic sequence found in Revelation: (1) The resurrection of the righteous (“*your dead*” in Isa. 26:19, the same verse that parallels the resurrection of the witnesses in Rev. 11:11), (2) being hidden with God during the pouring out of his wrath (his “*indignation*,” in Isa. 26:20,21), and (3) the destruction of the beasts (in Isa. 27:1).

shaft leading to the abyss was given to him" (Rev. 9:1). This is the key of Hades mentioned in Revelation 1: "I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:18).

But now that key is back in the control of God's side. It's used to lock the dragon in the abyss for 1,000 years. This is a hint to Isaiah 14: "How you have fallen from the heavens, O light-bearer [Lucifer], son of the dawn.... Surely you will be brought down to Sheol, to the remote parts of the pit" (Isa. 14:12,15; Prophecy against the King of Babylon >Isa. 14:3-23). The binding of Satan is a hint to Matthew 12: "How is anyone able to enter into the house of the strong man and seize his goods unless he first binds the strong man?" (Matt. 12:29; The kingdom of Satan >Matt. 12:25-30). Satan is bound so God's people can reclaim the earth.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Many that reject a future millennium claim that the binding of Satan in Rev. 20:2 refers not to the future, but to the present age (by reference to Matt. 12:29, following the lead of Augustine in the 5<sup>th</sup> century). An earlier appearance of this same argument was refuted by Hippolytus (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) as follows: "If the Devil has been bound, how does he deceive the faithful and persecute and plunder men? And if you say that he has been bound as regards the faithful [as Augustine also argued], how did he draw near against Christ, him who had no sin? As it says in the verse, *The Prince [of the world] is coming and finds no sin in me* [John 14:30]. And if then he has been bound, why did the Lord teach us to pray that we should *be delivered from the evil one* [Matt. 6:13]? And why did he *desire to tempt Simon* and the apostles [Luke 22:31]? And how was one who had been bound able to *sift* and trouble the disciples [Luke 22:31]? And truly for us *the conflict is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world* [Eph. 6:12]. If he had been bound, he would not maintain *the conflict*, or *catch away the word which was sown*, as is said in the Parable of the Seed [Matt. 13:19].... Accordingly, in the end of times, *the Devil is to be bound and to be flung into the bottomless pit*, when the Lord comes; even as Isaiah said, *that the wicked shall be taken away in order that he see not the glory of the Lord* [Isa. 26:10 LXX; Hippolytus' comments are preserved in Dionysius Bar Salibi's *Commentary on the Apocalypse* on Rev. 20:2,3 in John Gwynn, *Hippolytus and His 'Heads against Caius'*, at [www.tertullian.org/fathers/dionysius\\_syrus\\_revelation\\_01.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/dionysius_syrus_revelation_01.htm)]."

In its original context, the binding of the strong man in Matt. 12:29 is a parable used to describe the casting out of demons from a single individual. There is no mention of Satan's universal activity being brought to an end. Revelation 20, on the other hand, describes a completely different situation, at the return of Jesus, when Satan's work will be stopped at the universal level. So while Matt. 12:29 does point forward prophetically to Jesus' victory at his return, Rev. 20 cannot be used as a description of the present age. The use of Matt. 12:29 to argue against a future millennium is an example of the

*REVIEW OF CHAPTER 19 THROUGH 20:3: After so much “bad news” about Babylon, we hear in this chapter the good news of the return of Jesus – not just of his appearing in the clouds as we have seen before, but his return to planet earth with all his holy ones from all time! At his return, he is confronted in Israel by the beast, the false prophet, and the armies of all the nations. But they are soon destroyed along with all the wicked of the earth: “all, free as well as slaves and small and great” will die. This ushers in the 1,000 year reign of Messiah, the time when the terrible beast with the seven heads “is not” (Rev. 17:8,11).*

### **The Earthly Kingdom of the Messiah (20:4-6)**

**20:4: And I saw thrones and they sat on them and *the authority to judge* was given to them – both the souls of those beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and whoever did not worship the beast or his image and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on *their* hand. And they lived<sup>24</sup> and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years.**

This is the 1,000 year earthly reign of the Messiah, during which the resurrected saints will reign with him. As Jesus said to his disciples, “*In my kingdom, you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Luke 22:30).<sup>25</sup> This 1,000 years is often called by the Latin word for 1,000 “the millennium.”

In Matt. 19:28, Jesus calls this same time “the regeneration,” in Greek *palingenesia*, which means literally “Genesis again.” It will be a time of renewal of the earth, when as it says in Isaiah 11:6: “*the*

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misunderstanding of Jewish parables as a literary form and their misinterpretation as Gentile-style allegories [for which Augustine is notorious].

<sup>24</sup> Not “came to life” as in the NIV, NAS, and NRSV, or “lived again” as in the Amplified, but simply “lived” as KJV—a simple past tense (aorist) in Greek. The saints were resurrected before the beginning of the 1,000 years, at the last trumpet, just before the outpouring of the bowls (1 Cor. 15:52, Rev. 11:11-12, 14:14-16). Now, in the 1,000 years, they live and reign with Messiah.

<sup>25</sup> In Biblical thinking, the one who rules is the one who judges.

*wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid... they will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain."* It will be a beautiful, peaceful time.

But this future earthly reign of the Messiah has been a stumbling block for many Christians over the years. Contradictory views about it date back to the second century – within a generation of Revelation’s writing – and still exist today. All this controversy boils down to the simple fact that a specifically 1,000 year reign of the Messiah is not mentioned in any other part of Scripture. And so Gentile Christians soon questioned it, especially after the Jews became war-time enemies, and the interpretation of Biblical prophecy became highly allegorical and anti-Semitic. The doctrine seemed to many to be “too Jewish,” and “too earthly.” Because of this, Gentile Christians began to interpret the millennium symbolically, or to redefine it as Christ’s present reign in the church. This **amillennial** position (which teaches that there is no future millennium) became the dominant belief of Christianity from about 500 AD until recent times.

But before that time, the majority accepted the idea of a future millennium.<sup>26</sup> This was based not just on the Book of Revelation, but on the many Old Testament prophecies about a literal, earthly reign of the Messiah from Jerusalem. As Ezekiel says, “*And my servant David [the Messiah] will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them...and they will live on the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your fathers lived*” (Eze. 37:24,25; The Messianic kingdom >Eze. 37:15-28). Or as Isaiah says, “*For the LORD of armies will reign on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders will be glory.... And the LORD of armies will hold for all the peoples on this mountain a feast of rich food.... And he will swallow up on this mountain the surface of the covering that covers all the peoples.... He will swallow up death forever...and he will remove the reproach of his people from all the earth” (Isa. 24:23; 25:6-8; God’s reign from Jerusalem*

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<sup>26</sup> As Lactantius put it in the early 4<sup>th</sup> cent: “restored again to life, they will reign a thousand years with God” (*Divine Institutes*, 7.22, in *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, trans. Bernard McGinn, p. 70).

after the judgment of the earth >Isa. 24:1-25:9).<sup>27</sup> It was once possible to ignore the implications of these and the many other passages like them. But the modern restoration of the Jewish people to Israel in fulfillment of prophecy shows that God has not rejected the Jewish people, and that he will fulfill his Word, in a very literal, physical way. If all these other prophecies about Israel are being fulfilled literally, why not these, too?

There can be no question, after our study of Revelation, that John, like Jesus himself, expected every Biblical prophecy to be fulfilled, down to the smallest word or phrase. As Jesus said, “*Until the heaven and the earth pass away, a single iota [the smallest letter] or a single stroke [of the pen] will certainly not pass away from the Law until all comes to pass*” (Matt. 5:18). Therefore there had to be a way to reconcile the Old Testament prophecies of a Messianic age in this earth with the eternal life in a new earth also taught in the Old Testament (Isa. 65:17, 66:22). The commonly accepted solution among the Jewish people was that there would be a future Messianic period followed by the world to come (*olam ha-ba*). This is still the expectation of most religious Jews today.<sup>28</sup>

There were many different opinions among the Jews as to the nature and extent of the Messianic kingdom. But Revelation’s description of a 1,000 year kingdom was not new: it echoes a theme found in several older apocalyptic writings. The Book of Jubilees was one such writing. It was popular in parts of the early

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<sup>27</sup> A similar line of argument used in support of the millennium in the early Church concerned the fulfillment of the promises given to the patriarchs that they did not receive in their lifetimes. So when would they receive these promises? In the millennium (Irenaus, *Against Heresies*, 5.32.2). This same argument was used by the rabbis in support of the resurrection (San. 90b).

<sup>28</sup> These two periods are kept quite distinct in the teachings of the rabbis, though there were disagreements as to which prophetic verses applied to one or the other (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol. 1, p. 268-9, note 4). The most important difference between later rabbinic teaching and Christianity is that for the rabbis, the Messianic age precedes the resurrection. But consensus on this position was established in opposition to Christian teaching. Views in the time of Jesus were more flexible, with some taking a more supernatural view of the Messiah and the age of the Messiah.

Church. The Book of Jubilees taught that in the Messianic age, people will live to the age of 1,000 years (Jub. 23.27).

The idea of long life in the Messianic age was based on Isa. 65:22, which says in the old Greek, *“For as the days of the tree of life, so will be the days of my people”* (Isa. 65:22 LXX; The reign of the Messiah). Which tree was that? The tree of life in the Garden of Eden. So what was the lifetime (*“the days”*) of the tree of life?

The lifetime of the tree of life was arrived at through a well-known interpretation of the book of Genesis that explained why Adam did not live to 1,000 years, but died when he was 930 years old. From a literal reading of Genesis, we might expect Adam to have died on the same day that he ate the forbidden fruit. Genesis says: *“And from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – you will not eat from it, for in the day of your eating from it you will surely die”* (Gen. 2:17). But he didn’t die for another 900 years. Why not? Psalm 90:4 says: *“For a thousand years in your eyes are as yesterday when it passes by”* (Psa. 90:4). Since a thousand years are as a single day to the Lord, and since Adam died before reaching 1000 (at 930 years old), from God’s point of view he did die the same day (Jub. 4.30)!<sup>29</sup> This explanation was repeated in the early Church, and is even taught sometimes today. In the millennium, we will live out the 1,000 years that Adam failed to achieve: the originally intended *“days of the tree of life.”*<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> As the rabbis put it: “Said the Holy One, blessed be he.... For thus spoke I to him [to Adam]: ‘For in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). Now you do not know whether that means one day of mine or one day of yours. But behold! I will grant him one day of mine, which is a thousand years, and he will live nine hundred and thirty years and leave seventy for his children, as it is written, ‘The days of our years are seventy years’ [Psa. 90:10]” (Gen. Rab. 19:8). Or as the Christian writer Lactantius (4th cent.) put it: Adam was “fashioned from the earth to live a thousand years” (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7.14, p. 56).

<sup>30</sup> In Second Enoch, another early apocalyptic writing, Psa. 90:4 is used to create a 7,000 year scheme of history (a “world week”), based on the seven days of the Creation, in which each day is 1,000 years. A 7,000-year world week was also taught by some in the early Church, and is still taught in some places today. The last day of this week is a Sabbath rest of 1,000 years, the Messianic age (2 Enoch 33.1,2). In Second Baruch, the amazing fertility of the Messianic age is described with the saying: “on one vine will be

But there's another, much simpler way to understand the 1,000 years; as a hint to 2 Peter, where it says (much like Psa. 90:4): *"One day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"* (2 Pet. 3:8). When the Lord returns, it will be a "day with the Lord." So therefore, according to this verse, that day will last for 1,000 years.

This "great day" is foreshadowed in Joshua, in the day that the sun stood still: *"And the sun stood still in the middle of the heavens and did not hurry to go, as a perfect [tamim] day"* (Jos. 10:13; Joshua's victory over the Gibeonites >Josh. 10:6-14). "Perfect day" here is often translated "a whole day."<sup>31</sup> But the Hebrew *tamim* is not used this way elsewhere in the Bible. *Tamim* is used either of sacrifices that are without defect or of people—or even of God—whose way is blameless. So a better translation is a "flawless" or "perfect" day. In other words, who could imagine a day better than this? They had victory over their enemies, they were helped by God from heaven, the sun and moon stood still. It doesn't get any better than that! It was a perfect day!

It will also be a "perfect day" when Jesus returns to defeat his enemies. That "day of the Lord" is also described as a day of supernatural length: *"It will be a single day<sup>32</sup> that is known to the LORD – not day and not night; and it will be that at evening there will be light. And it will be in that day that living waters will go out from Jerusalem...in summer and in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth, in that day..."* (Zech. 14:7; The day of God's reign as king over the earth >Zech. 14:1-11). In that day, light in the evening will remove the distinction of day and night, and turn it into one

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a thousand branches, and each branch will produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster will produce a thousand grapes" (2 Baruch 29.3-5). This saying was attributed to Christ himself by Papias (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.).

<sup>31</sup> NAS, NKJ, KJV, JPS, "a full day" NIV.

<sup>32</sup> Or "one day" as NKJ, KJV, and JPS.

long day. The book of Revelation tells us that this day of the Lord will last for a thousand years (Rev. 20:2-4).<sup>33</sup>

But will this be a literal 1,000 years? Since most of the other measures of time in Revelation are not literal, we have no way of knowing until it's fulfilled. But the impression given by the many passages in the Bible that talk about the Messianic age is that it will last a long time.

**20:5a: The rest of the dead did not live until the 1,000 years were finished.**

Who are the “*rest of the dead*”? These are all those that do not rise in the first resurrection: the unrighteous. Since the first resurrection includes all the righteous of all time (section 2 in the diagram below<sup>34</sup>), who are now raised from the dead and living on earth with Messiah (section 4), these other dead who are not yet raised are the wicked of all time – including all those who were killed at the coming of the Messiah (section 3). They will not be raised, as this verse says, until the end of the 1,000 years (section 5).

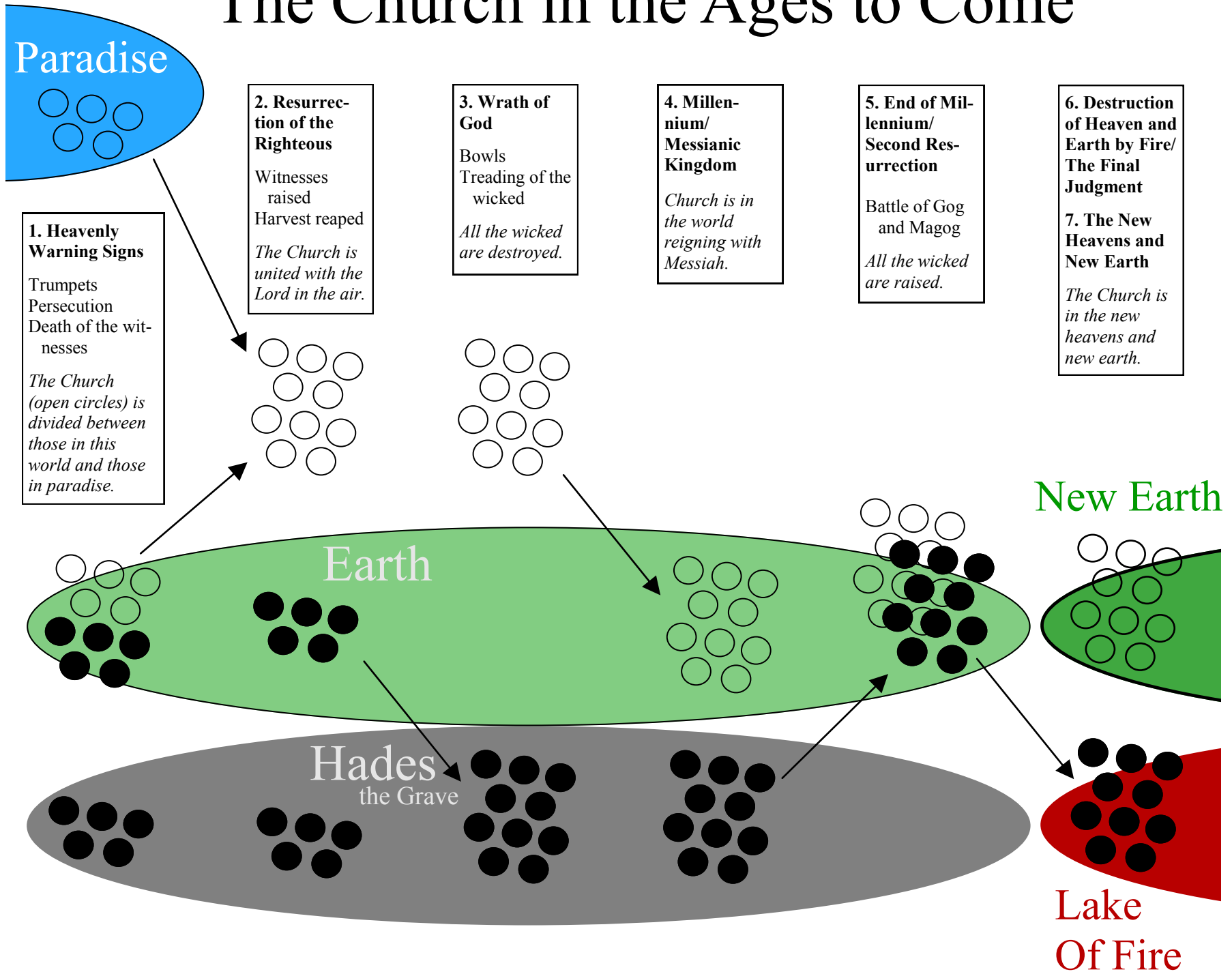
The punishment of the wicked long after God's judgment of the earth is taught in Isaiah 24: “*The earth will totter wildly like a drunkard and will shake violently as a hut.... And they will be gathered together like a prisoner in a pit, and they will be shut up in prison; and after many days they will be punished*” (Isa. 24:20,22; God's judgment of the earth >Isa. 24:1-23). This is also mentioned by Peter: “*The Lord*

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<sup>33</sup> This is how it was understood by Hippolytus (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.): “And the number of the years is not the number of days, but it represents the space of one day, glorious and perfect; in which, when the King comes in glory with his slain, the creation is to shine: according to the text, *The sun shall shine twofold* [marginal correction: *sevenfold*; Isa. 30:26]; while the righteous eat with him and drink of his vine. *This is the day which the Lord has made* [Psa. 118:24], which David spoke of. Accordingly, when with the eye of the spirit John saw the glory of that day, he likened it to the space of a thousand years; according to the saying, *One day in the world of the righteous is as a thousand years* [2 Pet. 3:8]. And by the number he shows that day to be perfect for those that are faithful.” (Preserved in Dionysius Bar Salibi's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, on Rev. 20:2,3.)

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed explanation of this diagram, please see the last section of this lecture below, “The Church in the Ages to Come.”

# The Church in the Ages to Come



knows how...to keep the unrighteous in punishment until a day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9).<sup>35</sup>

As Commodian (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) put it, "Amen<sup>36</sup> [the Messiah] flames on the nations, and the Medes and Parthians<sup>37</sup> burn for a thousand years, as the hidden words of John declare. For then after a thousand years they are delivered to Gehenna [the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14,15)]" (*Christian Discipline* 43).

**20:5b,6: This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one having 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 they will reign with him for the 1,000 years.**

Here is the priesthood of believers again: "*And made us into a kingdom, priests to his God and Father*" (Rev. 1:6, also 5:10, 15:5, 19:7).

That there will be two different resurrections — one of the saved and one of the unsaved — is taught in John 5:29: "*Those who did good to a resurrection of life, but those who practiced worthless things to a resurrection of judgment*" (John 5:29; Jesus' teaching on the resurrection >John 5:24-29). In Luke 14:14, Jesus mentions the "*resurrection of the righteous,*" by which he clearly means something different than a general resurrection of all. And as Hebrews says of the suffering of the righteous: "*Others were tortured, not accepting a*

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<sup>35</sup> Also in the LXX of Isa. 26:10: "*Let the ungodly be taken away that he see not the glory of God.*" According to Hippolytus, this refers to the 1,000 years. (Dionysius Bar Salibi, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, on Rev. 20:2,3.)

<sup>36</sup> A prophetic name of the Messiah mentioned in Rev. 3:14 that comes from Isa. 65:16 ("*That the one who blesses himself in the earth will bless himself by the God of Amen, and the one who swears in the earth will swear by the God of Amen, for the former troubles are forgotten...*"). Though most translate "Amen" here as "truth" it is clearly the Hebrew adverb (*Amen*) being used as a name (as recognized in the BDB Lexicon).

<sup>37</sup> The "Medes and Parthians" were a contemporary name for what had earlier been known as the "Medes and Persians" (Media and Persia; the area known today as Iran). These were among the "*rest of the beasts*" referred to by Daniel (Dan. 7:12) that would be given an extension of life (after the 1,000 years); in other words, they are among the unrighteous kept in punishment for the 1,000 years.

release, that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35; The sufferings of the righteous >Heb. 11:32-40).<sup>38</sup>

Even the idea of a second death is mentioned in Jeremiah 17: “Bring on them an evil day and break them with a double destruction” (Jer. 17:18; Jeremiah speaks against his persecutors >Jer. 17:14-18).<sup>39</sup>

But this 1,000 years is different than what many are teaching today. Many say that the millennium will be peopled with both saints and sinners, complete with marriage and babies.<sup>40</sup> But as we have seen, this view can't be right. All the unbelievers will be killed at the coming of Christ (section 3 in the diagram above), and don't return until the second resurrection (section 5). So there will be no one around in the millennium except resurrected believers (section 4). This is exactly what Jesus taught in Luke 20:35: that only those who are “worthy” and have been resurrected (“for neither can they die anymore”; 20:36) will participate in the age of the resurrection. And as Jesus also taught in that same place, there will be no marriage or giving in marriage among them (Luke 20:35; also in Matt. 22:30: “For in the resurrection, neither do they marry nor are they given in marriage...”).<sup>41</sup>

As it says at the beginning of Rev. 20:6: “Blessed and holy is the one having a part in the first resurrection.” If there were still unbelievers

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<sup>38</sup> “The resurrection from the dead” of “those considered worthy” (Luke 20:35) implies a resurrection “out from” (*ek* in Greek) the unworthy dead which are not raised, as can be seen by the use of this same expression to refer to Jesus’ (singular) resurrection “out from” (*ek*) the (plural) dead (Acts 26:23, Rom. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:3).

<sup>39</sup> The second death, as Revelation explains in a moment, is eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14).

<sup>40</sup> This is the same view that, when it became popular in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, convinced the Church to reject a future millennium altogether. Eusebius (4<sup>th</sup> cent.), quoting earlier authorities, attributed the idea of marriage in the millennium to the first-century heretic Cerinthus (*Church History* 3.28.2,5).

<sup>41</sup> Why no more marriage? Marriage involves several of the categories of uncleanness that bring ritual separation from God (including the physical marital relationship, Lev. 15:18; giving birth, Lev. 12:1-5; and menstruation, Lev. 15:19), perhaps through association with death (see our teaching [Clean and Unclean](#)). But in the resurrection, there will be no more death and no more separation from God, and therefore no more ritual uncleanness.

on earth, how would it be a time of blessing? It would be just like the present age of the earth, with sinners constantly grieving the believers and the heart of God.<sup>42</sup> Rather, as Commodian (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.) put it: “But from the thousand years God will destroy all those evils” (*Christian Discipline* 44).<sup>43</sup>

Some object, saying: if there are no unbelievers around, who will we reign over? But is God’s universal reign limited to people? He reigns over stars, planets, and galaxies, as well as angels and earthly creatures of every variety. The Bible teaches that we will judge angels, which from a Biblical point of view means that we will rule over them (1 Cor. 6:3, also Heb. 1,2).<sup>44</sup> There will also be millions of believers that will need some form of government. As Jesus taught, some will be ruling over five cities, some over ten cities (Luke 19:17,19). There is nothing in these verses or anywhere else in the Bible that requires there to be unbelievers in the millennium; in fact, just the contrary: it’s a time of millennial blessing and Sabbath rest.

Another objection to a millennium with no sinners is this: If there will only be believers in the millennium, why wait a thousand years? Why not go straight to the new heavens and the new earth? The early church had an interesting answer to this question: We will need a thousand years to get ready for life in the new heavens and the new earth.<sup>45</sup> It’s a time of preparation for meeting God the Father face to face. Isaiah says that in the new earth we will remember nothing (“*I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and the first things will not be remembered and they will not come up in the*

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<sup>42</sup> Dispensationalists claim that since believers will be ruling over sinners at that time, they will be able to limit or control their ability to sin. But this would be a revival of the nightmare of the Inquisition and would do little to stop sin.

<sup>43</sup> Though other views held by Commodian were incorrect, such as his acceptance of marriage among the righteous in the millennium (see Luke 20:35, Matt. 22:30).

<sup>44</sup> See Rev. 20:4 above.

<sup>45</sup> As Irenaus (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) put it: “The kingdom [of the millennium]...is the commencement of incorruption [eternal life], by means of which...those who shall be worthy are accustomed gradually to partake of the divine nature” (*Against Heresies* 5.32.1).

*heart*" Isa. 65:17). The millennium will be a time to "deprogram" after the traumas of this life, a time to prepare for a totally pure and perfect eternal life.<sup>46</sup>

But an even more compelling reason for the millennium offered by the early Church is divine justice: this earth is the place where the saints have been persecuted and killed, and so it will be in this same place that we will reign with Messiah. Again quoting Irenaus: "For it is just that in that very creation in which they toiled or were afflicted, being proved in every way by suffering, they should receive the reward of their suffering; and that in the creation in which they were slain because of their love of God, in that they should be revived again; and that in the creation in which they endured servitude, in that they should reign. For God is rich in all things, and all things are his. It is fitting, therefore, that the creation itself, being restored to its primeval condition, should without restraint be under the dominion of the righteous" (*Against Heresies* 5.32.1). He supports this by quoting from Romans 8: "For the creation itself will also be set free from the slavery of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

### **The Battle of Gog and Magog (20:7-10)**

**20:7-9a: And when the 1,000 years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and he will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them to the battle, of whom their number *will be* as the sand of**

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<sup>46</sup> As Paul puts it, there must be a particular order to the resurrection: "In Christ, all will be made alive. But each in his own division [tagma]: Christ the first-fruit, after that those who are Christ's at his coming, then the rest [telos] when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when he has done away with every ruler and every authority and power. For it is necessary for him to reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy, death, is passing away" (1 Cor. 15:22b-26). First Christ was raised, then the righteous will be raised when he comes, then the unrighteous ("the rest") will be raised at the end of the 1,000 years, when death will be completely defeated, since all will have been raised. In talking of Messiah's kingdom, Paul introduces the military term *tagma* (a division of an army). In this context, *telos* refers to the rest of a military formation, and not the "end" of time as this is usually translated. See the BAGD on *tagma* and *telos* (pp. 803, 812).

**the sea. [9] And they ascended to the surface of the earth and surrounded the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city,**

Who is this that “*ascended to the surface of the earth*”? “*They ascended*” refers back to the nations (Gog and Magog) of verse 8.<sup>47</sup> It’s not only Satan that ascends from the abyss, it’s all the wicked dead of all time, just as Rev. 20:5 promised, “*The rest of the dead did not live until the 1,000 years were finished.*”<sup>48</sup> The 1,000 years are now finished, and the unrighteous dead arise (section 5 in the diagram above). This is the second resurrection, the ascent of the beast from the abyss mentioned in Rev. 11:7 (“*...the beast ascending*<sup>49</sup> *out of the abyss*”), the eighth beast of Rev. 17:11.

The hint here is to Ezekiel 38: “*And it will be in that day, in the day that Gog comes against the land of Israel*” (Eze. 38:18; The battle of Gog and Magog >Eze. 38:1-39:24); also Eze. 38:2). This is the “*extension of life*” given to the nations mentioned in Daniel 7: “*And as for the rest*

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<sup>47</sup> Verse 9 doesn't say “they marched across” as in the NIV, or “they marched up over” as in the NRSV, or “they swarmed up over” as in the Amplified Bible, all of which take considerable liberty with the text. It simply says “they came up” or “they went up” as in the NASB, the NKJ, and the KJV. The Greek says “they ascended to the breadth [that is, the surface] of the earth”—as opposed to the confines of the abyss (of Hades). The clear sense of the verb is acknowledged by the BAGD (under *platos*, p. 666) as follows: “The ‘going up’ is better suited to Satan (vs. 7) who has recently been freed, and who comes up again fr. the abyss (vs. 3).” The verse itself, however, clearly states that it is the nations themselves that ascend from the pit, together with Satan.

<sup>48</sup> This is how Hippolytus understood it: “But as for what he [John] has said, that *after the thousand years he shall be loosed, and shall deceive the nations* [Rev. 20:7, 8], it is this: that justly he is to be loosed, and *to be cast into the burning, and to be judged* [Rev. 20:10, 12] with those who from old time were gathered together with him, when he *gathered* the strangers of the kingdom, and *Gog and Magog* [Rev. 20:8]” (Dionysius Bar Salibi, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, on Rev. 20:2,3). Notice that Hippolytus says that the wicked from all time (“those who from old time were gathered together with him”) are loosed with Satan from the pit at the end of the 1,000 years in Rev. 20:7,8.

<sup>49</sup> Using the same Greek verb, *anabaino*, that appears in Rev. 20:9. But why then is the ascension of verse 9 mentioned after Satan’s deception of the nations in verse 8? Verses 7 and 8, in the future tense, give a prophetic overview of the battle that is about to take place. Verse 9 switches suddenly to the past tense (the *aorist*), indicating completed action, a dramatic flourish that draws us into the action that has now begun. Similar use of a “heading” verse to describe an event in general, followed by a more detailed description can be seen in many other places in the Bible (Gen. 1:1, 2:4, 5:1, etc.)

*of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, and an extension of life was given to them for an appointed season and time” (Dan. 7:12).*

If, as many teach, the battle of Gog and Magog is between resurrected saints on one side and fleshly sinners on the other, how can this even be called a battle? The glorified saints in their resurrection bodies can no longer be killed. They can't even be injured: the Bible says their bodies will be imperishable (1 Cor. 15:42). Put just one or two individuals like that against an army of ordinary earthly men, and it's no contest. Nor would there be any need for God to help the saints (as in Rev. 20:9b): they could easily take care of it on their own.

But that's not the kind of battle Revelation is describing. The war of Gog and Magog is much more threatening. The saints are thrown back on the defensive as the massive army of Satan presses in on the holy city of Jerusalem. They seem helpless to resist the onslaught, until God intervenes. What kind of army could threaten them in this way? Only an army that was also made up of people in resurrected bodies.

Why are they brought back to earth? So God can show the justice of their condemnation. If the unrighteous went straight to the final judgment after death, just imagine all the disputes about God's fairness. "But God, I tried to be a good person. How can you condemn me?" There would be an eternity of griping against God, accusing him of unfairness. Who wants to live for eternity with that? But by allowing the endtime battle of Gog and Magog, the guilt of all sinners from all ages will be clearly established beyond any doubt. For after being raised from the dead, they will choose to fight against Jesus himself to his face and against his chosen people. After that, there will be no question that their judgment is just.

**20:9b: and fire descended from heaven and consumed them.**

This is another hint to Ezekiel's prophecy of the battle of Gog and Magog: *"And I will rain on him, and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire, and brimstone"* (Eze. 38:22; The battle of Gog and Magog >Eze. 38:1-39:24; also Eze. 39:6). Or as Isaiah puts it: *"Fire will consume your enemies"* (Isa. 26:11, God's judgment of the earth >Isa. 26:11-27:1; also Isa. 66:16). Peter explained it this way: *"The present heavens and the earth...are reserved for fire, being kept for a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.... The heavens will pass away with a roar, but the elements, consumed by intense heat, will be destroyed and earth and the deeds done in it will be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:7,10).

But before we say more about that last part of Peter's prophecy, there's one small matter to be taken care of:

**20:10: And the devil, the *one* deceiving them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where both the beast and the false prophet *were*, and they will be tormented day and night for *all* the ages to come.**

This is a hint to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25: *"Go away from me...into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his messengers"* (Matt. 25:41).

**The Final Judgment of the Father (20:11-15)**

**20:11: And I saw a large, white throne and the *one* sitting on it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled and no place was found for them.**

Now we get back to what Peter described as the heavens passing away *"with a roar."* Even the elements are destroyed by intense heat (2 Pet. 3:7,10; also Psa. 46:6). The fire from heaven not only stops Satan's army, it destroys the entire earth. Or as Jesus himself put it, simply: *"Heaven and earth will pass away"* (Matt. 24:35). Of all

the miracles we have seen in the book of Revelation, this is without any question the greatest so far. This is not simply a purging or renewal of the earth, as many cults and even some Christian groups teach. The earth is gone! The heavens above are gone! Why? They have fled from the presence of the one sitting on the throne. This is the high point, the climax of the Book of Revelation. Why? Who is seated on the throne? The Father God himself.<sup>50</sup>

The awesomeness of this moment is not understood by most people who read Revelation today. Christian teaching has often confused the Father and the Son so much that people don't understand the distinction between them. But the revelation of the Father has been a desire of God's people for generations — ever since he was hidden from mankind after man's sin in the Garden of Eden. But once man sinned, the Father could no longer reveal himself. If he did, his absolute purity would completely destroy mankind. As it says in Exo. 33:20: *"Man cannot see me and live."* Because of this, as Jesus said, no man has seen the Father (John 1:18). That's why Jesus had to come, the righteous right arm of God. Jesus was God in the flesh, in a hidden form. He humbled himself, being found in the form of a man (Phil. 2:8). His true glorious nature was concealed, or we wouldn't even be able to look at him. In this way, God could talk to us without destroying us with his glory. And he could die for us, to make a way for us to be led back to the Father. Because this is God's goal: for us to be restored to full fellowship with God in all his glory!

But this doesn't take place all at once. First we must be saved. Then we must be cleansed and remove every spot and wrinkle so we'll be ready for the return of Messiah (Eph. 5:27). Then, when he

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<sup>50</sup> This is the moment foreshadowed in Rev. 11:19 when it mentions the ark of the covenant being revealed: *"And the sanctuary of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen in his sanctuary."* To the Jews of John's day, such an event would be awesome and terrifying. The ark of the covenant, a symbol of the real presence of God, was always kept hidden away in the holiest part of the Temple. It could not be seen by anyone but the high priest once a year. The reason it was hidden was because of God's mercy. If the ark were revealed in the presence of sinful men, they would immediately be destroyed (1 Sam. 6:19).

comes, we'll spend a thousand years getting ready for the appearance of the Father. And when the Father reveals himself, not even heaven and earth will remain, because of the sinful things that have taken place in them. But we will remain, both the righteous and the unrighteous: one for judgment, and the other for eternal life with the Father and the Son. This will be the final and complete restoration of man to fellowship with God!

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

These are the unrighteous dead of all time, who were raised with Satan at the end of the millennium, and defeated with him in their final attack against the Messiah and his people. They are described as "*the dead*," even though they are resurrected, because they are spiritually dead. Only the spiritually dead will be judged by the Father in this, the final judgment.<sup>51</sup>

This is a hint to Daniel 7: "*The Ancient of Days sat.... his throne was flames of fire.... The court sat and the scrolls were opened*" (Dan. 7:9,10).<sup>52</sup> Their judgment is according to what they have done, as it says in Isaiah 59: "*According to their deeds, so he will repay; rage to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies*" (Isa. 59:18; God's endtime judgment). This is the moment foreshadowed by Rev. 11:18: "*And the appointed time for the dead to be judged.*"<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> We, the believers, will have already been judged at the time of Messiah's coming in the cloud, when he decides who will be caught up in the resurrection of the righteous and who will not. This earlier judgment is what, by comparison, makes the one in Rev. 20:12 the final judgment. (For those who die before Jesus comes, there is an even earlier judgment, immediately after death, that determines whether we await the resurrection in Hades [known in Hebrew as *Sheol*] or in Paradise [also known as the "bosom of Abraham"]). See Heb. 9:27, Luke 23:43, Luke 16:19-31.)

<sup>52</sup> The judgment in Rev. 20:12 is the final stage in the fulfillment of the decision of the heavenly court in Rev. 4 and 5, to which Dan. 7 is also a parallel.

<sup>53</sup> The "*scroll of life*" is also mentioned in Rev. 3:5, 13:8, and 17:8.

**20:13: And the sea gave back the dead that *were* in it, and death and Hades [the grave] gave back the dead that *were* in them, and they were each judged according to their deeds.**

This is a hint to Psalm 68: *"I will bring them back from the depths of the sea"* (Psa. 68:22; God will destroy his enemies >Psa. 68:19-23). This is not an additional resurrection, as some interpret it. It's too late for that: the heavens and the earth have already disappeared. Where would they resurrect from? No, the unrighteous dead were already raised at the end of the 1,000 years.<sup>54</sup> This is simply a review of those who stand before the throne, and an assurance of the all-inclusive nature of God's final judgment. Not one will be missing: every one of the unrighteous dead is accounted for. And they will be judged individually, *"according to their deeds."*

**20:14,15: And death and Hades [the grave] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone was not found written in the scroll of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

This verse is confusing to some: how can death be swallowed by death? To understand it, we must remember the difference between the first death (*"death and Hades"*) and the second death (*"the lake of fire"*). The first death is the separation of our souls or spirits from our bodies, which are left behind. It leads to a purely spiritual condition: either in heaven (or more accurately, in paradise) for the believers (Luke 23:43), or in Hades (or *Sheol*) for the unbelievers (Luke 16:23). Both are temporary holding places where disembodied souls wait for resurrection.

But the second death is not merely spiritual. It is also physical; a real, physical existence in real, resurrection bodies in a real,

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<sup>54</sup> Some assume that another resurrection is required for the army of Satan defeated in Rev. 20:9b. But that army had already been resurrected in incorruptible bodies (Rev. 20:9a). They will survive the fire of God and the destruction of the present heavens and earth in just the same way that the righteous will survive it, without any need of an additional resurrection.

physical place: the lake of fire—a horrible place of burning and torment. As Isaiah says, “*And they will go out and look at the corpses of the people sinning against me, for their worm does not die<sup>55</sup> and their fire is not quenched*” (Isa. 66:24; Eternal punishment in the time of the new heavens and new earth >Isa. 66:22-24; also Jude 1:7). Or again in chapter 33: “*Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the ungodly. Who among us will live with a consuming fire? Who among us will live with eternal burning?*” (Isa. 33:14; God will judge the destroyer >Isa. 33:1-14). Or in Psalm 11:6: “*Fire and sulfur and a wind of raging heat will be the portion of their cup.*” This is the place of punishment that Jesus and the rabbis called *Gehenna*--a place of eternal, physical torment (Matt. 5:22,29,30, etc. in Greek).<sup>56</sup>

From this torment there will be no escape forever, since physical death—the first death—will no longer be possible: it will have been destroyed, and it will be impossible to die. Therefore this punishment will be eternal—not, as some teach, a temporary cleansing or purgatory. Nor will there be an annihilation of the wicked in the lake of fire, as others teach. That would be a kind of death: but there can no longer be any death—death will have been defeated. As Paul says, “*But when this corruptible will put on incorruptibility, and this mortal will put on immortality, then the word that is written will take place, ‘Death has been swallowed up’ in victory [Isa. 25:8]. ‘Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?’ [Hos. 13:14]” (1 Cor. 15:54; The resurrection >1 Cor. 15:51-57).<sup>57</sup> Their punishment, therefore, will never end.*

*REVIEW OF CHAPTER 20: After the “touchdown” of Messiah Jesus in Jerusalem and the destruction of all the wicked living on earth in the previous chapter, Jesus’ Messianic kingdom is established in a renewed earth for a thousand years. This is a time of blessing and of Sabbath rest in which his followers reign with him and receive*

<sup>55</sup> The worms gnawing on their decaying bodies will do so forever.

<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, both Hades and Gehenna are often translated “hell” in English, though they are never confused with one another in the original.

<sup>57</sup> This is the moment foreshadowed in Rev. 11:18: “*And the appointed time...to destroy those destroying the earth.*”

*rewards for their suffering and faithful service in this life. Then, at the end of the thousand years, the second resurrection takes place, in which the wicked of all time arise. They attack Messiah and his people in a truly awesome endtime confrontation that seals the justice of their doom forever. The fire that God sends from heaven not only stops this evil army, but destroys the heavens and earth themselves, revealing the Father God in all his awesome majesty and splendor. Before his throne the wicked are judged according to their deeds and sent to the lake of fire (Gehenna).*

### **The New Heaven and the New Earth (21:1-8)**

**21:1: And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have gone away and the sea is no longer.**

This is a hint to Isaiah 65: *“For – look! – I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and the first things will not be remembered and they will not come up in the heart”* (Isa. 65:17; also Isa. 66:22, Psa. 102:25,26). Or as Peter puts it: *“But we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, according to his promise, in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Pet. 3:13). Unlike the millennium, which is a continuation of the present earth, this is something completely new: a new creation, a new start, like in the original Creation. It’s not just a new earth, it’s a new universe: everything is new, even the heavens above will be different. How different it will be, we don’t know. There may be new laws of physics, new possibilities that we can’t even imagine in this life.

The sea, which in Revelation is a symbol of the multitude of threatening pagan nations, is gone: *“The waters that you saw...are peoples and multitudes and ethnic groups and language groups”* (Rev. 17:15, also Rev. 17:1, 13:1, 12:15). As Isaiah says in Isaiah 17: *“The uproar of many peoples who roar like the roaring of the seas.... He will rebuke it and it will flee.... Before morning it is no more. This will be the portion of those plundering us”* (Isa. 17:12-14; God will remove the pagan nations >Isa. 17:12-14).

**21:2a: And I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,**

This new Jerusalem was mentioned back in Rev. 3:12: *“The one conquering.... I will write on him...the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, the one descending out of heaven from my God.”* This is a hint to Isaiah 65, which is also a description of the new heavens and new earth: *“For – look! – I am creating a Jerusalem of rejoicing”* (Isa. 65:18; The new heavens and new earth >Isa. 65:17-18). Or as is written in Hebrews: *“Rather you have come to Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, to a heavenly Jerusalem”* (Heb. 12:22; The difference between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion >Heb. 12:18-24). This new Jerusalem is mentioned in several other places in Hebrews. Hebrews 11 says: *“He [Abraham] was awaiting the city which has foundations, of which God is the architect and builder.... For he has prepared a city for them”* (Heb. 11:10,16; The faith chapter >Heb. 11:1-40; also Heb. 13:14). This is not a Jerusalem of human construction. It’s part of the new universe, built, or as Isaiah puts it, created, by God.

**21:2b: prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

This is a hint to Isaiah 62: *“As the rejoicing of a bridegroom over a bride, so your\* God will rejoice over you\* [Jerusalem]”* (Isa. 62:5; The new Jerusalem >Isa. 62:1-12). Here Isaiah is talking about the new Jerusalem. Or as it says in Isaiah 49: *“Lift up your\* eyes [Jerusalem]...all of them [your children]...come to you\*.... You will put all of them on as an ornament, and you will bind them on as a bride”* (Isa. 49:18; The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 49:14-23; also Isa. 52:1). Here the jewels of the bride, Jerusalem, are the people living in her.

So who is this city, like a bride, descending from heaven? Who is the bride of Messiah? The Church. These are the believers and their eternal dwelling descending from heaven. Just as Babylon, both the city and its residents, are represented as a woman, here the new Jerusalem, both the city and its residents, are described as a

woman.<sup>58</sup> Here is that idea of corporate personality again, which is important to understanding the whole next section.

**21:3: And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look!—the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them, and they will be his peoples,<sup>59</sup> and God himself will be with them,<sup>60</sup>**

This is the same mysterious voice from the throne that we saw in Revelation 19, speaking as God, but speaking of God as someone else: “*And a voice went out from the throne*” (Rev. 19:5). This is the voice of Jesus. The words he speaks are a hint to Leviticus 26: “*And I will put my tabernacle among you# . . . . And I will walk among you# and I will be your# God and you# will be my people*” (Lev. 26:11,12; The blessings of obedience to the covenant >Lev. 26:3-12; also Eze. 37:26,27; 2 Cor. 6:16). This is the same verse to which John is hinting when he says in John 1: “*And the word became flesh and tabernacled among us*” (John 1:14; also Isa. 7:14).

This is now the fulfillment of the reality to which the tabernacle of Moses and the incarnation of Jesus were pointing: God with us, no longer in a hidden form, but in all his glory. With the tabernacle of Moses, it was a promise and a prophecy. With Jesus, it was a foretaste—although hidden in the humility of his humanity.<sup>61</sup> But

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<sup>58</sup> As we saw earlier, this was a common artistic theme in Roman times.

<sup>59</sup> Not “people” as in the NASB, the NIV, the KJV and the Amplified, but “peoples” as in the NRSV, in agreement with the earliest Greek manuscripts.

<sup>60</sup> Or, according to some manuscripts, “God himself, their God, will be with them.” Both allude to the Messianic name *Emmanuel* (“God with us”; Isa. 7:14, Mat. 1:23), though in this case it refers to the Father God living with us. The idea of God living with man on earth was popular among the rabbis, who presented it as God’s original desire (Num. Rab. 13:6, Gen. Rab. 3:9), the experience of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8, Num. Rab. 12:6), which was then frustrated by man’s sin, which caused the presence of God to withdraw from the earth into heaven. But by the obedience of the righteous (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others), the presence of God was returned by stages to the earth until it rested in the Tabernacle (Num. Rab. 13:2, Gen. Rab. 19:7). Revelation takes this theme and expands it into a cosmic drama that goes far beyond the teaching of the rabbis.

<sup>61</sup> As Paul says in Philippians, Jesus “emptied himself” in order to appear as a man (Phil. 2:7). His true nature was hidden from us, except perhaps at the Transfiguration.

now, God the Father himself, in all his splendor and majesty, will be revealed to us. No longer will God be a distant God, living in the heavens, but his tabernacle, his dwelling place, will be with us: not only through his “arm” the Messiah, as in the Millennium, or through the Spirit, as in the present age, but the Father himself will live with us and be with us forever.

According to the earliest manuscripts, John makes one important change here from the verse in Leviticus he is hinting to (Lev. 26:12): instead of saying, “*you will be my people*,” he says, “*they will be his peoples*.” In the new heavens and new earth, it is no longer just a matter of the one holy people, the Jews, but of all the different peoples that have joined themselves to the God of Israel: from every tribe and people and nation.

**21:4: and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will be no longer, nor will sorrow or clamor or distress be any longer; the first things have gone away.**

The first of these beautiful promises was already mentioned in Revelation 7: “And God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17). It’s a hint to Isaiah 25: “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe the tear from every face” (Isa. 25:8; God’s victory feast in Jerusalem >Isa. 25:6-9). The third promise is from Isaiah 35: “Sorrow and sighing will flee” (Isa. 35:10; The redeemed of the Lord will come to Zion >Isa. 35:8-10). This is similar to Isaiah 65: “And the sound of weeping and the sound of crying will not be heard in her [Jerusalem] anymore” (Isa. 65:19; The new heavens and new earth >Isa. 65:17-19).<sup>62</sup>

**21:5,6a: And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look! – I am making all things new,” and he says, “Write, “These words are faithful and true.”” And he said to me, “They are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.**

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<sup>62</sup> “*The first things have gone away*” refers back to Rev. 21:1: “*The first heaven and the first earth have gone away.*”

Who is the “*one sitting on the throne*”? The Father himself, as we have seen over and over again in Revelation. He is the one doing all these things. He is the one making everything new: a new start, a new creation. As it says in Isaiah: “Look! – I am creating<sup>63</sup> new heavens and a new earth” (Isa. 65:17).

The one on the throne then speaks directly to John, telling him to write. This is the first time the Father has spoken directly to John. It’s an example of the direct access we will have to the Father in the new heavens and new earth, a restoration of the intimacy with God that existed in the Garden of Eden.

The Father’s words put his own stamp of approval on the message John is sharing with us, using the same words used earlier to describe Jesus: “faithful and true” (“*The faithful and true witness”* Rev. 3:14, also 1:5, 19:11).

And then he says, “*They are done*”: the new heavens and new earth are completed.<sup>64</sup> Although they are still future to us, these events are already completed to God.<sup>65</sup> This echoes the words he spoke at the completion of the outpouring of his wrath in Revelation 16: “*And a great voice came out of the sanctuary from the throne, saying, ‘It is done’”* (Rev. 16:17). Or as Jesus spoke from the cross at the completion of his atoning work, “*It is finished”* (John 19:30; The crucifixion).<sup>66</sup>

**21:6b: To the *one who is thirsty* I will give out of the spring of the water of life as a *free gift*.**

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<sup>63</sup> Notice the parallel between Isaiah’s present tense “*am creating*” and Revelation’s “*am making*.”

<sup>64</sup> Many translations have “it is done” despite the clear plural form of the verb, as recognized in the NASB notes and the BAGD.

<sup>65</sup> This reflects the structure of Hebrew prophecy, which is often written in the *perfect* verb tense usually associated with *past* (completed) action. This is to show the definite (or completed) nature of God’s actions which are to us still future.

<sup>66</sup> The words, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega*,” are a hint back to the words of the Father in Rev. 1:8: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega*.”

This is a hint to Isaiah 55: *“Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water”* (Isa. 55:1, The eternal covenant >Isa. 55:1-4; also Isa. 12:3, Jer. 2:13, Psa. 36:9). This is one of many Messianic passages in Isaiah, and one of the many places he uses the outpouring of water as a symbol of salvation and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It’s a call to join in the eternal covenant of the Messiah: *“I will make the faithful lovingkindnesses of David an eternal covenant for you#”* (Isa. 55:3; The eternal covenant).

Jesus hinted to this same section of Isaiah in John 7 when he said, *“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink”* (John 7:37, Rivers of living water >John 7:37-39), and in John 4 when he spoke to the woman at the well: *“But whoever drinks from the water that I give him will never thirst; on the contrary, the water that I give him will be in him a spring of water bubbling up with eternal life”* (John 4:14; The woman at the well >John 4:7-30).

**21:7: The one conquering will inherit these things and I will be God to him and he will be a son to me.**

*“The one conquering”* is a hint back to the many times this phrase was used earlier in Revelation, in the messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3): *“The one conquering”* (Rev. 2:7,11,17, etc.). This is the one who has been victorious over the world and the things of the world, over the beast and the harlot and all the many other obstacles we have seen.

But the emphasis here is on the word *“inherit.”* The new heavens and new earth are not a place we will live as boarders with no rights or privileges. No, we will inherit them as the rightful children of God.

This is followed by a hint to 2 Samuel 7: *“I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me”* (2 Sam. 7:14; The prophecy of the seed of David >2 Sam. 7:12-16). In Samuel, this passage is a prophetic type pointing to the Messiah. By quoting it here, Revelation again

applies Messianic promises to the body of Messiah. By being part of the body of Messiah, we participate in all that Messiah himself is, including his relationship as a son to the Father.

**21:8: But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and for all liars, their share *will be* in the lake burning with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.**

Here is a list of those excluded from the new earth, similar to lists given by Paul, as in Galatians 5: *“The deeds of the flesh...are: sexual immorality, impurity, lack of moral restraint, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, contention, jealousy, outbursts of anger...those doing such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Gal. 5:19-21). But unlike those other lists, the emphasis of priority in Revelation is given to what must be seen as the sin of timidity. Cowards are not going to make it past all the difficulties that lie ahead. Faith is not something to hide behind. There must be a spirit of boldness in our faith if we are going to succeed. As Paul told Timothy: *“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of power...”* (2 Tim. 1:7). If you don't have that spirit of power, now's the time to ask God for it.

### **The New Jerusalem (21:10-22:5)**

**21:9,10: And one of the seven messengers having the seven bowls that were full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.”**  
**[10] And he carried me away by the Spirit to a large and lofty mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,**

Now we begin to learn more about the new Jerusalem mentioned in Rev. 21:2: *“I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride”* (also Rev. 3:12). The messenger

that is our guide to the city is another of the resurrected saints that poured out the seven bowls of God's wrath.<sup>67</sup>

The vision of the city is a hint to Ezekiel 40: *"In the visions of God he...put me on a very high mountain; and on it there was what looked like the structure of a city"* (Eze. 40:2; A vision of the restored Jerusalem >Eze. 40-48).<sup>68</sup>

**21:11: having the glory of God, her brilliance like a precious stone, like a stone of crystal-clear jasper.**

The glory of God was a promise in Isaiah for the restored Jerusalem: *"The LORD will rise on you\* [Jerusalem], and his glory will be seen on you.\* And nations will go to your\* light, and kings to the brightness of your\* shining"* (Isa. 60:2,3; The restored Jerusalem >Isa. 60:1-22).

The nature of this glory is described with the same words used to describe the Father in Revelation 4: *"The one sitting [on the throne] was similar in appearance to a precious stone, to jasper"* (Rev. 4:3). Here again the saints, who make up the holy city, are described with imagery used of God himself—to show our unity with the Father! As Peter describes it: *"[God] has called us to his own glory and moral excellence...that...you<sup>#</sup> may become sharers in a divine nature"* (2 Peter 1:3,4). Wow! We will share the divine nature of God himself! Did

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<sup>67</sup> This is a hint back to Rev. 17:1: *"And one of the seven messengers who have the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot.'"* In Rev. 17, the first bowl messenger showed John the harlot, the false bride, an image of total depravity. This one shows him the true bride, an image of total purity.

<sup>68</sup> In the parallel in Ezekiel, the focus of the vision as it continues through the next few chapters is on the renewed Temple in Jerusalem (Eze. 40-44). In Revelation, in agreement with the rest of the New Testament, the spiritual fulfillment of the Temple is understood to be the Body of Messiah (the true Church; *"and you yourselves as living stones, a spiritual house [Temple] that is being built up to become a holy priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* 1 Pet. 2:5; also 1 Cor. 3:16,17; Rev. 11:1, 15:5-8; in the original languages of the Bible, the Temple of God is commonly referred to as the House of God). The righteous are the true spiritual Temple that will dwell in the New Jerusalem. The parallel is therefore maintained with Ezekiel, in spite of the shift in focus in Revelation to the city itself.

you ever realize that before? That's the whole meaning of being the bride of Messiah: that we will become one with God forever! This doesn't mean we will become God, but that we will be united with him as a husband and wife are united in marriage. And we will be like he is, reflecting his glory. As Jesus put it in John 17: "*Just as you, Father, with me and I with you are one, that they, too, may be one with us*" (John 17:21; Jesus' prayer for unity >John 17:20-23).

**21:12,13:** *The city had a broad and high wall with twelve gates and at the gates twelve messengers. And names were written on them which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. [13] From the east there were three gates to enter the city and from the north there were three gates, and from the south three gates, and from the west three gates.*

Here is another hint to the vision of Ezekiel: "*These...will be the gates of the city, according to the names of the tribes of Israel, three gates on the north... and on the east side...three gates... and on the south side...three gates.... and on the west side...their gates are three*" (Eze. 48:30-34; A vision of the restored Jerusalem >Eze. 40-48). This is like the layout of the tribes around the tabernacle in the desert, with three on each side (Num. 2:2-29).<sup>69</sup>

Why are the entrances of the new Jerusalem named for the tribes of Israel? As Jesus put it, "*Salvation is from the Jews*" (John 4:22; The woman at the well >John 4:5-30). Israel is the root of God's holy people; we who follow in faith are its branches. For Gentiles, this means a spiritual transplant that Paul describes as being grafted into this rich root (Rom. 11:16,17). Or as he says in Ephesians to Gentile believers, by faith and God's grace "*you<sup>#</sup> are no longer foreigners and strangers [to Israel], but you are fellow-citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God*" (Eph. 2:19; see Eph. 2:12). For hundreds of years, the church rejected the importance of Israel in God's plan, teaching that the Church has replaced Israel.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Although the tribes have been rearranged.

<sup>70</sup> A teaching known as Replacement Theology. While Jesus did preach a 'replacement' of the leadership over God's vineyard (Israel), the Bible specifically tells us that this

But the Bible says that this truth will survive into the new heavens and new earth. If you don't go "through" Israel, you won't get into the new Jerusalem!

**21:14: And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *the* twelve names of the twelve apostles of the lamb.**

The foundation stones are the first layer of stones in a wall, at the bottom, holding the wall up.<sup>71</sup> This is a hint to Ephesians 2, which describes the church as "*Having been built up on the foundation of the apostles*" (Eph. 2:20; see also 1 Cor. 12:28).

**21:15: And the *one* speaking with me was holding a golden reed of measurement that he might measure the city and her gates and her wall.**

This is another hint to Ezekiel's vision: "*Look! – a man...and a linen thread was in his hand, and the reed of measurement*" (Eze. 40:3; A vision of the restored Jerusalem >Eze. 40-48).

This is not the first time we've seen a measuring reed: in Revelation 11 it was used to measure the sanctuary of the Temple, a symbol of the Church on earth: "A reed [a measuring stick] similar to

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concerned the priests and Pharisees (Matt. 21:45, in conclusion to the parable of the unrighteous vinegrowers), not a removal of Israel from its role as God's chosen people. According to the New Testament, this administration has now been transferred to Jesus, the Jewish Messiah (Eph. 1:10). However, as the New Testament also teaches, saving membership in this chosen people is not by birth but by faith (Matt. 3:9; Rom. 2:29; 11:19,20), resulting in a mere remnant of physical Israel remaining within the true, spiritual Israel at the present time (Rom. 1:5). Yet the fact that only a remnant of physical Israel remains does not change Israel's identity or its destiny, any more than at other times of widespread apostasy (Rom. 11:1-7). While some would label this Replacement Theology nonetheless, the distinction is that in traditional Replacement Theology, all the prophecies and blessings promised to Israel are appropriated by the Church, with no future role or hope for physical Israel; in the Biblical view, Israel retains its central role (including its gifts and calling), and will one day be restored by faith (Rom. 11:23-29). In this view, the Church does not properly have any role independent of its participation in Israel.

<sup>71</sup> This implies that there are three of these stones laid next to one another on each of the four sides of the city, which mirrors the arrangement of the twelve gates.

a rod was given to me, saying ‘Get up and measure the sanctuary of God’” (Rev. 11:1). Now it is used to measure the new Jerusalem, a symbol of the Church in the new earth, as in Zechariah’s prophecy:

“Look! – a man with a measuring line in his hand. And I said, ‘Where are you going?’ And he said to me, ‘To measure Jerusalem, to see how much her width is and how much her length’” (Zech. 2:1,2; The measurement of Jerusalem >Zech. 2:1-5).

**21:16a: And the city is laid out as a square and her length is as great as her width.**

This is another hint to Ezekiel’s vision: “And these will be her measurements: the north side 4,500 [cubits], and the south side 4,500, and on the east side 4,500, and the west side 4,500” (Eze. 48:16; A vision of the restored Jerusalem >Eze. 40-48). The city, in other words, will be laid out as a perfect square. Ezekiel’s city is a mile and a quarter on each side (2 km).<sup>72</sup> This is about sixteen times larger than the old, walled city of Jerusalem as it exists today,<sup>73</sup> about the size of the downtown area of modern Jerusalem. But the new Jerusalem is much larger:

**21:16b: And he measured the city with the stick at 12,000 stadia, her length and width and height are equal.**

A *stadium* was originally the length of a running race, around which seats were later put for spectators.<sup>74</sup> It measured 607 feet in length (185 m). That makes 12,000 stadia about 1,380 miles (2,220 km). At 12,000 stadia square, this makes the new Jerusalem a huge city, vastly larger than even the largest cities on earth today. In fact, it’s larger than most countries: about halfway between the size of India and Australia.

<sup>72</sup> One cubit was about 18 inches (46 cm). So 4,500 cubits is about 1.25 miles or 2 km.

<sup>73</sup> The old, walled city of Jerusalem is today about the same size as the walled city in the time of Jesus, though its location has shifted northward. In Jesus’ day it included what is today called Mt. Zion and the City of David inside the walls, though not the northern parts of the Christian and Muslim Quarters that are within the present walls.

<sup>74</sup> This was an event in the original Greek olympics.

But not only is it huge in terms of its length and width, its height is the same measure: 1,380 miles (2,220 km) tall! This is far beyond the height of the present earth's atmosphere, beyond the orbits of most satellites and spacecraft!<sup>75</sup>

The amount of space in this huge cube is incredible. If you were to cover the entire surface of the present earth, both land and sea, with apartment buildings the size of the tallest buildings on earth (we'll use the Empire State Building in New York City for size) – just set these buildings side by side all over the planet – the amount of space they would take up added all



together would fit in just the first twenty-five miles of the height of this city. That's less than two percent of the space in the city. In just that two percent there would be fifty-three apartment buildings the size of the Empire State Building for each person alive on earth today – and that's only a fraction of the size of the city! No wonder Jesus said, "*In my Father's house are many rooms*" (John 14:2) – he wasn't kidding! This city can easily accommodate 500,000 times the earth's present population. God's not worried about a population explosion – there's still plenty of room in God's kingdom!

There's also a symbolic meaning in the shape of the city. It's a perfect cube, just like the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple. As 1 Kings says, "*The inner sanctuary [the Holy of Holies] was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height*" (1 Kings 6:20, Construction of the Temple >1 Kings 6:1-38; also Eze. 41:4). In other words, the new Jerusalem is a much,

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<sup>75</sup> The atmosphere stops at about 435 miles (700 km), the outer limits of the Thermosphere.

much larger version of the Holy of Holies, where not only God will live, but all his holy ones with him! Here again the people of God are described with imagery that is used of God himself: we will be united with him, living in perfect holiness – in the Holy of Holies – forever.

**21:17: And he measured *the width of her wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, the measurement of a man, which is the measurement of a messenger.***

One hundred and forth-four cubits is about 216 feet (66 m) – an incredibly thin wall for such a huge structure. Together with the dimensions of the city, the numbers 144 and 12,000 (from Rev. 21:16b) are a hint back to Revelation 7 and the sealing of the remnant of Israel, the 144,000: “*And I heard the number of those sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: from the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed...*” (Rev. 7:4,5). But this time, instead of 12 times 12,000, the number is vastly larger: 12,000 × 12,000 × 12,000 (12,000 cubed), which equals 1,728,000,000,000 (1.7 trillion). This is no longer a remnant!<sup>76</sup>

The measurements of the city are called both the measurement of a man and the measurement of a messenger. This calls our attention back to the fact that the messenger doing the measurement is a human being, one of the resurrected saints. This is a hint to the prophecy of Zechariah we saw a moment ago: “*Look! – a man with a measuring line in his hand...*” (Zech. 2:1,2; The measurement of Jerusalem >Zech. 2:1-5).

**21:18a: And the *building material of her wall was jasper,***

Here is another mention of jasper, the precious stone identified with the Father in Revelation 4, and here with the bride of Messiah: “*Like a stone of crystal-clear jasper*” (Rev. 21:11 also 4:3).

<sup>76</sup> It’s also a hint to the measurement of the wall in Ezekiel’s vision, “*And he measured the width of the structure [of the wall], one reed [7 cubits]*” (Eze. 40:5, A vision of the restored Jerusalem >Eze. 40-48). But here again, the new Jerusalem is much larger.

**21:18b: and the city was pure gold, similar to clear glass.**

Inside the huge outer wall of jasper, the city is made of gold. This, too, is similar to the Holy of Holies in the Jewish Temple, which was covered all over on the inside with gold: *“And he [Solomon] overlaid it [the Holy of Holies] with pure gold”* (1 Kings 6:20; Construction of the Temple >1 Kings 6:1-38).

**21:19,20: The foundation stones of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation stone with jasper, the second with sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh hyacinth, the twelfth amethyst;**

In the time of the Roman Empire, ordinary building stones would sometimes be given a thin facing of semi-precious stone. This was only an option for the super-rich; it was very, very expensive. But in the new Jerusalem, this technique is used not just in a small room or two, but for the entire 12,000 by 12,000 stadia course of the twelve foundation stones of the city, a circuit of more than 5,000 miles (almost 9,000 km)!

This is a hint to the beautiful prophecy of the restoration of Jerusalem in Isaiah 54: *“I will lay your\* stones in antimony and establish your\* foundations in sapphires. And I will set ruby on your\* pinnacles, and set your\* gates with sparkling stones, and all your\* boundary wall with precious stones”* (Isa. 54:11,12; The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 54:11-17). The twelve precious stones mentioned in Revelation are also a hint to the twelve gems in the breastplate of the High Priest: *“A row of a carnelian, a topaz, and an emerald...and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row, a*

*jasinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper” (Ex. 39:10-13, Garments of the Priests >Exo. 39:1-31).<sup>77</sup>*

**21:21: and the twelve gates with twelve pearls: each and every one of the gates was from a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass.**

Why is each gate made from a single pearl? This is a hint to Jesus’ parable about the pearl of great value: *“The kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a merchant, seeking good pearls, but when he found one very precious pearl, he went away and sold everything, all that he had, and bought it”* (Matt. 13:45,46). In the parable, discovering the one valuable pearl is a picture of salvation — just as here, a pearl is the entrance to the city.

The street of the city, like the rest of the city, is made from the same transparent (or possibly translucent or radiant) gold. This, too, is like the Holy of Holies of the Temple: *“And the floor of the house [the Temple] he overlaid with gold in the inner and outer [sanctuaries]”* (1 Kings 6:30, Construction of the Temple >1 Kings 6:1-38). Why is it transparent? So there will be nothing to block the light, as we will see below.

**21:22: And I did not see a sanctuary in her, for the Lord God, ruler over all, is her sanctuary, and the lamb.**

This is a hint to Isaiah 8: *“And he [the LORD] will be a sanctuary”* (Isa. 8:14, The stumbling stone >Isa. 8:11-15; also Zech. 2:5,10,11). Here is stated clearly what was hinted before: There is no Temple building in the new Jerusalem. Why? The Father is no longer hidden from his people. There is no more curtain, there is no more barrier to stop us from interacting directly with the Father. The barrier of sin, which keeps us from the Father now, will be gone.

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<sup>77</sup> Eight of the gem names in Revelation match the old Greek (the LXX) of Exodus 39 (located at Exo. 36:17-20 in the LXX). The identification of some of these names is uncertain both in Greek and Hebrew.

**21:23: And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to give light to her, for the glory of God gives her light, and her lamp is the lamb.**

This is a hint to Isaiah 60: *“No longer will the sun be a light for you\* [Jerusalem] by day, nor will the moon shine for you\* for brightness, but the LORD will be an eternal light for you, and your\* God will be your\* beauty”* (Isa. 60:19, The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 60:1-22; also Isa. 60:20).

The last part of this verse in Revelation is a beautiful description of the relationship of the Father and the Son. The Father’s glory is the source of light for the city, but the lamb is the lamp from which that light shines out. This is a hint to 1 Kings 11: *“That there will always be a lamp for David my servant before me in Jerusalem”* (1 Kings 11:36; Ahijah’s prophesy to Jeroboam >1 Kings 11:29-39).

There’s also 2 Sam. 22:29: *“For you\*, my lamp, are the LORD; and the LORD enlightens my darkness”* (2 Sam. 22:29; David’s song of deliverance >2 Sam. 22:1-51). This is one of those fascinating verses that hints to the multi-personality of God: David addresses one, whom he calls “you, my lamp” as LORD, and then refers to another (in the third person), who gives the light, also as LORD (“the LORD enlightens my darkness”).<sup>78</sup> This is exactly the same picture that appears in Revelation. One, the Father, gives the light; the other, the Son, shines it out.

**21:24: And the ethnic groups will walk by her light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory into her;**

This is another hint to Isaiah 60: *“Nations will go to your\* light, and kings to the brightness of your\* shining”* (Isa. 60:3; The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 60:1-22; also Isa. 60:10,11).

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<sup>78</sup> LORD (YHWH in Hebrew) is “the name [singular] of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” mentioned in Matt. 28:19. Even today, “The Name” is used as a respectful substitute for YHWH among the Jewish people.

Together with verse 23, this completes a beautiful picture: the light, which comes from the brilliant glory of the Father, is revealed through the lamp of the Son, which then illumines this whole huge city of reflective or transparent gold and beyond, providing light for all who live there. This is also a hint to the ancient Temple, in which the light of the lampstand was the only source of light in the sanctuary (the Holy Place). But it reflected off of the gold-covered walls and floor to provide all the light needed by the priests ministering there.

What's the message of this beautiful description of the new Jerusalem? As it says in Psa. 23:6: *"And I will live in the house [the Temple] of the LORD forever."* The new Jerusalem is a new Temple, a huge Holy of Holies; but not a symbol of exclusion, as was the old sanctuary,<sup>79</sup> but of inclusion: it's the eternal dwelling place of God together with his people.

**21:25,26: and her gates will never be shut during the day, for there will not be *any* night there; [26] and they will bring the glory and the honor of the ethnic groups into her.**

Here we are still following along with Isaiah 60: *"And your\* gates [Jerusalem] will be open continually, by day and night they will not be shut, to bring in to you\* the wealth of the nations"* (Isa. 60:11, The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 60:1-22; also Isa. 66:12). The New Jerusalem is open to people of every nation who accept God's truth. In ancient times, the gates of cities were closed at night, to protect the city from danger. But the gates of the new Jerusalem will never be closed because there will no longer be any night, and there will be no more danger. This may also be a hint to 1 Thessalonians 5: *"For you# all are sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night or of darkness"* (1 Thess. 5:5).

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<sup>79</sup> No one was allowed into the Holy of Holies of the ancient Temple except the High Priest, and that only once a year in a state of strict ritual purity. The Holy of Holies could not even be seen by other priests, as it was hidden behind a thick curtain, a symbol of the sin that separates us from God.

**21:27: And nothing *that* is impure and practicing an abomination and a lie will ever enter into her, only those written in the scroll of life of the lamb.**

This is a hint to Isaiah 52: “*The uncircumcised and impure will not enter into you\* [Jerusalem] again any more*” (Isa. 52:1; The restoration of Jerusalem >Isa. 52:1-3). The new Jerusalem is a place of perfect holiness and purity.<sup>80</sup>

**22:1: And he showed me a river of *the* water of life, clear as crystal, coming out from the throne of God and of the lamb.**

This is the river flowing from “*the spring of the water of life*” mentioned in Rev. 21:6 and 7:17. It’s a hint to Zechariah 14, which also includes the day that has no night (as in Rev. 21:25 above): “*And it will be a single day that is known to the LORD, not day and not night.... And it will be in that day that living waters will go out from Jerusalem*” (Zech. 14:7,8; The day that is neither day or night >Zech. 14:6-8).

This river can also be found in Psalm 46:4: “*A river – its channels make glad the city of God – the holy river of the dwelling places of the Most High*” (Psa. 46:4, The city of God after the destruction of the earth >Psa. 46:1-11; also Eze. 47:1, Joel 3:18). This cannot be the present Jerusalem, since there is no river today anywhere near Jerusalem.<sup>81</sup> This river is also a hint back to the Garden of Eden: “*A river went out from Eden to water the garden*” (Gen. 2:10, The Garden of Eden >Gen. 2:8-17).

What is “*the water of life*” a symbol of? The Holy Spirit. Now we get times of refreshing (Acts 3:19). Then we will have a continual,

<sup>80</sup> The “scroll of life” is also mentioned in Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15.

<sup>81</sup> The mention of this river in Psa. 46 follows tremendous turmoil on the earth that sounds like God’s judgment in Revelation (Psa. 46:2-3), and is associated with the time “*at the approach of morning*” (Psa. 46:5; morning is used prophetically in Psalms to refer to the resurrection), after God “*uttered his voice*” and “*the earth melted*” (Psa. 46:6). Again, it’s not only one verse, but the whole section that’s parallel to Revelation—in this case the whole Psalm.

overflowing abundance. Now we have the promise (or pledge or down payment) of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:14) – then that promise will be fulfilled.<sup>82</sup>

Here, too, is clearly stated what we saw hinted before: the lamb is the one seated on the throne with the Father.

**22:2: In the middle, by the street of the city and by the river on one side and on the other, was a tree of life producing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each and every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the ethnic groups.**

This is a hint back to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden: “And the tree of life in the middle of the garden” (Gen. 2:9; The Garden of Eden >Gen. 2:8-17).<sup>83</sup> But it’s combined with elements of Ezekiel 47: “And beside the stream, on its bank on one side and on the other, every kind of fruit tree will grow.... Every month it will bear new fruit, for its waters come out from the sanctuary...and its leaf will be for healing” (Eze. 47:12; The stream from the Temple >Eze. 47:1-12).<sup>84</sup> What we’ve got here is a new Garden of Eden – complete with its river, trees, and an enclosed garden area – inside the new Jerusalem.

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<sup>82</sup> This should not be taken to imply any limitation on our present experience of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of believers experiencing “*rivers of living water*” after the outpouring of the Spirit (John 7:38,39). Paul encouraged believers to realize the “*greatness of [God’s] power in us who believe, that matches the action of the intensity of his might...when he raised [Messiah] from the dead, and seated him on his right in the heavenlies above every ruler and authority...and put all things in subjection under his feet...*” (Eph. 1:19-22). Yet whatever we experience now, it will be greater then.

<sup>83</sup> The “*tree of life*” was mentioned earlier in Rev. 2:7.

<sup>84</sup> Ezekiel’s stream, like the river in Revelation, also comes out from the presence of the Father: in Ezekiel from the Temple in Jerusalem, in Revelation from the throne of God in the New Jerusalem. Since so much of the imagery in the final chapters of Ezekiel is paralleled in Revelation, yet the prophecies remain distinct (Ezekiel’s restored Jerusalem is much smaller than the New Jerusalem, Ezekiel’s restored Jerusalem has a Temple building in it while the New Jerusalem does not, etc.), it raises the question as to when Ezekiel’s prophecy will be fulfilled. The references throughout this latter part of Ezekiel to the rule of the Messiah (the Messianic “prince”) seem to indicate a fulfillment in the millennial period (Eze. 37:25, 44:3, 46:2, 48:21).

From a Jewish point of view, this makes perfect sense. *Gan Eden*, the Hebrew name of the Garden of Eden, is also the Jewish name for paradise, the place to which the souls of the righteous go after death.<sup>85</sup> Our English word “paradise,” in fact, comes from the old Greek translation of the word “garden” in the “Garden of Eden.”<sup>86</sup> In Greek, the “Garden of Eden” is the “Paradise of Eden.” The message of Revelation is that the Garden of Eden—paradise (*Gan Eden*, the new Jerusalem)—will descend from heaven and will be our eternal dwelling in the new earth (Rev. 21:2,10).<sup>87</sup> As it says in Rev. 2:7: *“To the one conquering, I will grant him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise [the garden] of God.”*



Jonah relaxing under the vine was a secret symbol of Paradise and the Tree of Life at a time when Christianity was persecuted by the Roman government.

I’m sometimes asked why the leaves of the tree of life will be needed for healing if we are in our resurrection bodies. But that’s

<sup>85</sup> Paradise is mentioned in Luke 23:24, 2 Cor. 12:4, and Rev. 2:7.

<sup>86</sup> *Paradeisos*, Gen. 2:8,9,10,15, etc. in the LXX.

<sup>87</sup> Comparative studies with other Ancient Near Eastern religions indicate that the Garden of Eden was, as Ezekiel puts it, the “Garden of God,” that is, the dwelling place of God on earth (Eze. 28:13, Gen. 3:8, Song of Songs Rab. 5.1). Man’s sin and expulsion from Eden therefore represents a rupture in man’s fellowship with God. The subsequent history of God’s interaction with man is an attempt to restore this broken fellowship on earth: initially through the Tabernacle, then the Incarnation of Jesus, and one day in the Millennium and the new Jerusalem. Given this history, it was only natural for the rabbis to speak of human sin resulting in the exile of God’s Presence from the earth (Song of Songs Rab. 5.1; Gen. Rab. 19.7; prior to the Tabernacle), as does the New Testament in its description of Satan as the ruler of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). It was also only natural that the presence of God in heaven would be understood in the same terms as the Garden of Eden, resulting in the idea of a heavenly Garden of Eden (paradise) where the souls of the righteous await the resurrection. Yet man’s full restoration with God requires an earthly solution, which Revelation provides in the descent of the new Jerusalem (paradise, *Gan Eden*) from heaven to the new earth. The many attempts to spiritualize the New Jerusalem and make it a heavenly rather than an earthly reality completely miss the point of salvation history: that complete restoration with God requires a physical as well as a spiritual solution.

just the point. The presence of the tree of life means that there will be no more sickness and no more death. We will live forever.

And notice that those who benefit from the tree of life are not just Israel, but the “ethnic groups,” those from every language and nation that come to God through Messiah Jesus.<sup>88</sup>

**22:3a: And every accursed thing will be no longer.**

This is a hint to Zechariah’s prophecy of the day that is neither day or night: “And an accursed thing will be no more” (Zech. 14:11; The day that is neither day or night >Zech. 14:6-8). Everything that has fallen under the curse of God will be gone. This itself is a hint back to the curses pronounced in the Garden of Eden: “*And the LORD God said to the serpent... ‘Cursed are you’ ... Then to Adam he said... ‘Cursed is the ground because of you’*” (Gen. 3:14,17; The fall of man in the Garden of Eden >Gen. 3:1-24). What’s the message? The curse will be gone: Eden will be restored.

**22:3b: And the throne of God and of the lamb will be in her, and his servants will serve him.**

Here again we see the throne of God, instead of the Temple of God, in the new Jerusalem, as in Rev. 22:1: “The throne of God and of the lamb.” This is a hint to Jeremiah 3: “*At that time, they will call Jerusalem ‘The throne of the LORD’*” (Jer. 3:17, The future of Jerusalem >Jer. 3:14-18). This verse is part of a prophecy in which Jeremiah says that the ark of the covenant will one day be unnecessary – implying that the Temple, too, which was built to hold the ark, will no longer be needed: “*And it will be...in those days...they will not say any more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD,’*”

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<sup>88</sup> This is strong evidence against those who teach that Gentile Christians are “really” Israelites, in the attempt to bring them under the Law of Moses. By contrast, the Bible teaches that we who are Gentiles are acceptable to God as Gentiles (the Greek word used here can be translated “ethnic groups,” “nations,” or “Gentiles”), and that we will retain our identity as Gentiles even in the new heavens and new earth.

*and it will not come up in their heart, and they will not remember it, and they will not miss it, and it will not be made again" (Jer. 3:16).*

## **22:4a: And they will see his face**

The reason the Temple will be unnecessary is that the Temple is a reminder of our separation from God. But we will be separated from the Father no longer, and will see him face to face.

Many teach that when the veil ripped in the Temple (Matt. 27:51), at the crucifixion of Jesus, God the Father gave us direct access to himself. But is this true? Can you see the Father? Jesus said that no man has seen the Father (John 1:18). The Father is still separated from us in heaven, because of our sin. That was the meaning of the veil or curtain in the earthly Temple: it showed that we don't yet have direct access to the Father.

But this lesson was not unique to the earthly Temple. The same message is given by the heavenly Temple, in which there remains a veil between us and the Father. What is the veil in the heavenly Temple? The flesh of Jesus, which separates us from the Father God (*"the veil of his flesh"* in Heb. 10:20).<sup>89</sup> Yes, spiritually we have access to the Father; yes, spiritually we have access to the Holy of Holies: the Father hears our prayers, he hears the cry of our heart. But this is indirect access, as in the Temple, through a mediator.

And who is that mediator? Jesus, who ministers on our behalf within the veil, entering as a high priest into the Holy of Holies. As the book of Hebrews puts it: *"Therefore, brothers, having confidence concerning access to the holy place<sup>90</sup> by the blood of Jesus, which he put into effect for us, a new and living way through the veil (that is, the veil of*

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<sup>89</sup> Jesus is God with us ("Emmanuel"), but in a hidden way. In order to come and talk with us, he had to lay aside his heavenly glory and appear as an ordinary man (Phil. 2:7,8).

<sup>90</sup> Literally, "the holies," referring to the Sanctuary of the heavenly Temple. Compare Heb. 8:2 and 9:2,8, which also use the plural *hagion* to refer to the Sanctuary.

*his flesh*),<sup>91</sup> and having a great priest over the house of God,<sup>92</sup> let us come before him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith...” (Heb. 10:19-22).<sup>93</sup>

Today, Jesus intercedes for us with the Father, as our high priest. As it says in Hebrews 7, “Which is why he [Jesus] is also able to save forever those coming to God through him, since he is always living to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25, Jesus our high priest >Heb. 7:22-8:6). But in the new Jerusalem, there will be no more need of a mediator. Finally – after a millennium of preparation – we will see the Father face to face.

As Paul put it, “For now we see in a mirror [of polished metal] dimly, but then face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12; The necessity of love >1 Cor. 13:1-13).<sup>94</sup> Or as David put it: “I, in righteousness, will see your face; I will be satisfied, when I awake [in the resurrection], with your likeness” (Psa. 17:15; A prayer for deliverance from enemies >Psa. 17:1-15).

## **22:4b: and his name will be on their foreheads.**

This is a hint back to the sealing of the remnant of Israel on their foreheads in Revelation 7:3 (as in Rev. 3:12: “I will write on him the name of my God”; also Rev. 14:1). It's also a hint to the ornament of gold on the forehead of the High Priest: “You\* will make a flower<sup>95</sup> of pure gold and you\* will engrave on it... ‘Holy to the LORD....’ And it will be on Aaron’s forehead” (Ex. 28:36,38; The clothing of the high priest >Ex. 28:2-39).

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<sup>91</sup> Just as the blood of animals provided access to the Holy Place of the earthly Temple, so the blood of Jesus provides access to the Holy Place of the heavenly Temple.

<sup>92</sup> A reference to the high priesthood. The high priest was the only one allowed to go through the veil into the Holy of Holies.

<sup>93</sup> If the veil was removed at the death of Jesus, there would be no reason for the book of Hebrews to describe Jesus as a high priest, since access to the Holy of Holies would now be available to all. But the high priesthood of Jesus is one of the major themes of the book of Hebrews. For more on the meaning of the tearing of the veil at the time of Jesus’ death, see Lecture 5 of our [Jesus of Nazareth Seminar](#).

<sup>94</sup> Glass mirrors had not yet been invented. Instead they used mirrors of polished bronze in which you could see yourself, but not nearly as well as we do today.

<sup>95</sup> Possibly referring to a thin “leaf” (LXX) or “plate” of metal.

We will be like a high priest, with the right of entry into the direct presence of the Father. But unlike the earthly high priest, who could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year, we will live in the Holy of Holies, with right of access to the Father forever! As David put it, *“I will live in the house of the LORD forever”* (Psa. 23:6).

**22:5a: And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give light to them;**

Here the light of God is mentioned again, as in the last chapter, and that there will be no more night: *“The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to give light to her, for the glory of God gives her light”* (Rev. 21:23); *“For there will not be any night there”* (Rev. 21:25).

**22:5b: and they will reign for all the ages to come.**

This is our eternal reign with God, as in Daniel 7: *“And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under all the heavens will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High; his kingdom will be an eternal kingdom, and all dominions will serve him and obey him”* (Dan. 7:27; The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man >Dan. 7:9-28). This is talking about us: we will be priests and kings, even as Jesus himself is.

*REVIEW OF CHAPTER 21 THROUGH 22:5: After the millennium and the final judgment, a new heaven and a new earth appear. In them a huge new Jerusalem, a massive Holy of Holies, descends out of heaven to be our home with God forever. This new Jerusalem is a paradise on earth, a new Garden of Eden. It has no need of a sanctuary building, because there we will see God face to face.*

**Attestation (22:6-17)**

**22:6:** And he said to me, “These words *are faithful and true*, and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent forth his messenger to show to his servants the things that must happen soon.

The one speaking is the same messenger that has been showing John the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9,15,17; 22:1). His words are a hint back to the first verse of Revelation, which describes the way these visions have been revealed: “*This is a revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to make known to his servants the things that must happen soon; and which he imparted, sending it by means of his messenger*” (Rev. 1:1).

The messenger repeats the words of the Father in Rev. 21:5 that “*these words,*” in other words, the words of the book of Revelation, “*are faithful and true.*” This is the same description given earlier to Jesus himself: “*faithful and true*” (in Rev. 3:14 and 19:11).

But of most interest here is the description of God as the “*God of the spirits of the prophets.*” In other words, the same God that spoke through the prophets of old sent these visions to John. That’s why there’s such incredible harmony between Revelation and all the other prophecies of the Bible: the same God has revealed them all. This is also why the method we’ve been using works: comparing Bible with Bible. Why can we interpret Revelation this way? Because the same God that spoke to the prophets revealed the Revelation to John.

And why was it revealed? To show us what “*must happen soon.*”

**22:7:** ‘And look! – I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one paying attention to the words of the prophecy of this scroll.’”

This is a message to us, today. It's a hint to Jesus' repeated warning that he is coming to judge Christians that don't obey him: “*I am*

*coming to you\* quickly and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth*" (Rev. 2:16). But his blessing is for those who obey, who pay attention to the warnings in the prophecies of Revelation. This is a hint back to the first chapter of Revelation: "Blessed is the one...paying attention to the things written in it" (Rev. 1:3).

**22:8,9: And I, John, am the one hearing and seeing these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the messenger showing me these things. [9] And he says<sup>96</sup> to me, "Don't do that. I am a fellow-servant *with* you and your brothers the prophets and those paying attention to the words of this scroll. Worship God!"**

This is almost an exact quote of Rev. 19:10: "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he says to me, "Don't do that. I am a fellow-servant with you and your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!""

The messenger is a fellow-servant since he is a human messenger--just like us. Here, as in Revelation 19, it is a reminder not to worship the messenger, but the one the message is from. The only difference is that John's "brothers" are described here as the prophets as well as those who obey the warnings of Revelation. Here again John is identified with the prophets of old, but so are all those believers that pay attention to his prophetic writing. This is a confirmation of Rev. 19:10: "For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." The Christian message is at its heart a prophetic message.<sup>97</sup>

**22:10: And he says to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this scroll, for the time is near.**

This is a hint to Daniel 12: "Conceal the words and seal the scroll until the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4). The fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies was still distant, so his scroll was to be sealed until the

<sup>96</sup> The present tense reflects the Greek original.

<sup>97</sup> This is the fourth time that John's name is mentioned in Revelation (Rev. 1:1,4,9).

end. But John's prophecies started to be fulfilled in his own lifetime, so his scroll was to remain unsealed, a sign that the endtimes have begun.

If the futurists were right, and most of Revelation was still in the future, thousands of years after the time of John, we would expect that he too, would have been told to seal his scroll. But he wasn't! This is a confirmation that the prophecies in the book of Revelation are not only for the future, but also concern the times we're living in right now.

**22:11: Let the *one* doing wrong continue to do wrong, and let the *one who is* unclean continue to be unclean, and let the *one who is* righteous continue to do righteous deeds, and let the *one who is* holy continue to keep himself holy."**

This is a hint to Ezekiel 3: "*The one who hears, let him hear; and the one who refuses, let him refuse*" (Eze. 3:27, Ezekiel is called by God >Eze. 2:1-3:27). At first, this may seem strangely contradictory to the rest of Revelation. Surely the disasters and punishments coming on the world are so great, we must use every possible means to compel people to come to the truth, to turn them away from the eternal punishment to come! Yet the Bible itself has a more relaxed attitude. Yes, it tells us to share the good news, but what people do with that good news is up to them. If they listen, they listen, and if they don't, they don't.

You can't force someone to get saved. And the many attempts to do so in the past led only to tragedy.<sup>98</sup> Jesus said the sower sows his seed (Luke 8:5). Where it falls, and whether it grows or not – that's not up to us. Only God can prepare the human heart to accept him.

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<sup>98</sup> Forced conversions and forced baptisms of Jews and others in the Middle Ages mark a low point in the history of Christianity. Rather than advancing the gospel, they embittered many against the Christian message.

Those who refuse the gospel, God allows to continue in their unbelief, as Jesus taught in the parable of the wheat and the tares: *“Let both grow together until the harvest”* (Matt. 13:30). Paul taught by example that we should send the hardened heart out into the world, so he will see his need for God and perhaps repent and turn back to him (*“I have decided...to deliver such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord,”* 1 Cor. 5:3,5; Paul responds to immorality in the church >1 Cor. 5:1-5).

This doesn't mean God condones evil. But he gives every person the right, in their lifetime, to choose for themselves between good and evil. And in the end, each of us will be responsible for what we choose.

**22:12: “Look! – I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to each according to his work.**

This, as in verse 7 above, is a message to us: *“Look! – I am coming quickly”* (Rev. 22:7; also 2:16, 3:11). It's a hint to Matthew 16: *“For the Son of Man is about to come...and then he will give to each according to his work”* (Matt. 16:27; also Rom. 2:6). As Isaiah put it, *“Look! – the Lord GOD is coming with strength.... His reward is with him”* (Isa. 40:10; also Isa. 62:11, Psa. 62:12). Works cannot get you into the kingdom of heaven, but for those in the kingdom, they determine the reward we receive when the Lord returns. As Jesus taught in the parable of the talents, when the master returns, the servants that remain faithful will be rewarded: *“Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge over many. Enter into the joy of your master!”* (Matt. 25:21).

**22:13: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**

Together with the previous verse, this is the beginning of a Trinitarian closing that matches the Trinitarian opening of the book in Rev. 1:4,5.

The speaker here is the Father, whom Revelation has previously identified as the Alpha and the Omega: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega...the one...who is coming*" (Rev. 1:8; also in 21:6 together with "*the beginning and the end*"). The message of Revelation, it must be remembered, is not only that the Son, but also the Father is coming, whose appearance, together with the appearance of the new heavens and new earth, is the great climax of the book. Yet the unity of the Father and the Son is also shown by the phrase "*the first and the last*," which until now has only been used of Jesus: "*I am the first and the last*" (Rev. 1:17, 2:8).

**22:14: Blessed are those washing their robes<sup>99</sup> so that *they* will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the gates of the city.**

This is the reverse of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. Those who are prepared will be able to enter the city – the new Eden or Paradise – and have access to the tree of life forever.

The Bible nowhere presents faith as something static. It's a process of drawing closer and closer to God. Accepting Jesus is just the start. Now that you're a Christian, now that you're accepted into a covenant relationship with God by faith and grace, it's time to live that way. And that means to wash your robe, to remove every spot and wrinkle, that you might be ready for the things that are coming: "*That he might present the church to himself as glorious, not having a stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and blameless*" (Eph. 5:27). As Revelation describes those who are victorious: "*They have washed their robes*" (Rev. 7:14; also 6:11; 7:9,13; 19:8,14).

It's not only those who enter the race, but those who finish the race, the overcomers, that will have the right to the tree of life – that is, to eternal life – and will enter the city.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Alternate reading: "those obeying his commands" as NKJ, KJV.

**22:15: Outside *will be the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices a lie.***"

Here is another list of those prohibited from entering the new Jerusalem (as in Rev. 21:27: "*And nothing that is impure and practicing an abomination and a lie will ever enter into her*"). Dogs, in the Middle East, are even today often considered unclean scavengers because they eat dead things. To call someone a dog was an expression of contempt. In the New Testament it seems most often to refer to those that are outside the faith, as in Jesus' saying: "*Do not give what is holy to dogs*" (Matt. 7:6; also Phil. 3:2).

And where will these be that are not allowed into the city? As it said back in 21:8: "*But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and for all liars, their share will be in the lake burning with fire and sulfur.*"

**22:16: "I, Jesus, sent my messenger to testify to you# these things concerning the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."**

Here is the second part of the Trinitarian closing, a hint back to the first verse of Revelation: "*This is a revelation of Jesus Christ...which he imparted, sending it by means of his messenger*" (Rev. 1:1). Here Jesus adds his approval to the message of this book.

It's interesting that Jesus should characterize the visions of Revelation as "*concerning the churches.*" This is a difficult verse for the futurists, who believe that most of the events in this book do not concern the churches, but rather a period of time when the church has been removed from the earth. As we have seen, that view is clearly wrong. Revelation is an end-time manual for the

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<sup>100</sup> "*The tree of life*" is also mentioned in Rev. 2:7 and 22:2. The gates of the city are mentioned in Rev. 21:12,13,15,21,25.

Church, to teach us how to live and how to overcome the challenges we face in these endtimes.

The reference to Jesus as the root of David is a hint back to Revelation 5: "The root of David" (Rev. 5:5). But how can Jesus be both the root, that is to say, the source or ancestor, and "the descendant of David"? This is a hint to Isaiah 11: "A branch [an offspring, descendant] will come out of the stump of Jesse [the father of David].... And in that day, there will be a root of Jesse that will be standing like a banner for the peoples; the nations will seek him" (Isa. 11:1,10; The reign of the Messiah >Isa. 11:1-10). The Messiah is both the branch, the descendant of David (and Jesse), as well as the root from which David (as Jesse) received his life.<sup>101</sup>

The "morning star" is a hint back to one of the promises given to overcomers in the letters to the churches: "I will give him the morning star" (Rev. 2:28). Here Revelation tells us clearly that the morning star is Jesus himself. This is a hint back to the Messianic star of Numbers 24: "A star will march out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17, The prophecies of Balaam >Num. 23:1-24:25).

**22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one hearing say, "Come." And let the one thirsting come, let the one who wants take the water of life as a free gift.**

This is the third part of the Trinitarian closing, with the Holy Spirit saying along with the Church, "Come," an invitation to salvation. This same invitation is to be extended by every believer, the one who has "ears to hear." All are welcome, all who are thirsty for Spiritual life. This is a hint to Isaiah 55: "Everyone who is thirsty, come to the water" (Isa. 55:1, Invitation to enter the Messianic covenant >Isa. 55:1-5). Or as it says in John 7: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37, Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit >John 7:37-39).

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<sup>101</sup> As Jesus said, why did David call the Messiah Lord if the Messiah is his descendant? (Matt. 22:42,43)

**Postscript (22:18-21)**

**22:18,19:** I testify to everyone hearing the words of the prophecy of this scroll: if anyone adds to these *words*, God will add to him the plagues written in this scroll, [19] and if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city written *about* in this scroll.

This appears to be John himself speaking, as at the beginning of the book: “John, who has testified to everything he saw of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1,2).

His words are a hint to Deuteronomy 4: “You<sup>#</sup> will not add to the word that I am commanding you<sup>#</sup>, and you<sup>#</sup> will not take away from it” (Deut. 4:2, Moses encourages Israel to obey God’s Word >Deut. 4:1-8; also Deut. 12:32).

**22:20:** The *one* testifying to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen, come Lord Jesus.

Here is a reminder that Jesus himself is a witness to the truth of this prophecy: “I, Jesus, sent my messenger to testify to you” (Rev. 22:16; also 1:1).<sup>102</sup>

**22:21:** The grace of the Lord Jesus *be* with you all. Amen.

And with this final blessing, John closes the book.

*REVIEW OF CHAPTER 22: The description of the new Jerusalem in the previous section is followed by some final words of encouragement and instruction, including statements confirming the authenticity of the prophecy. In a final section, John warns not to add or subtract from its words, after which he closes the book.*

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<sup>102</sup> “I am coming to you quickly” appears in Rev. 2:16; also 3:11 and 22:7,12.

*REVIEW OF THE SECOND PROPHECY: Before we close, let's briefly review the second prophecy to organize our thoughts about the many things we've learned. To help us with our review, we'll use the timeline at the end of this section, which now includes all the chapters of Revelation.*

*As we saw with the First Prophecy, the timeline begins on the left with the Ascension of Jesus in AD 30 and continues through to the New Heavens and the New Earth (the "New World") on the right. The Second Prophecy begins halfway down the page with Rev. 12 and continues to Rev. 22.*

*The first part of the Second Prophecy is the Third Vision Sequence (Rev. 12-14), which begins with the woman confronted by the dragon, a symbol of the spiritual opposition between Israel and ancient Rome (Rev. 12). The child of the woman, Jesus, is caught up to God at the time of his ascension, leaving first Israel and then the Church to be subject to the dragon's wrath. Israel then flees into exile in the dispersion, where she has remained until modern times and the restoration of the State of Israel.*

*The dragon then gives his authority to another horrible beast, which matches everything we know about the Byzantine Empire and its many descendants, including the Holy Roman Empire in the west and the currently uniting Europe (Rev. 13:1-10). Claiming to represent God, it actually blasphemed God through its words and its actions, including the persecution both of Jews and Bible-believing Christians.*

*This terrible beast is soon joined by another (Rev. 13:11-18). This new beastly empire, arising from the earth, performs tremendous miracles to deceive mankind and bring it under totalitarian financial control. The characteristics of this beast point strongly toward its identification with the United States, though time will tell if this is correct or not.*

*Then, in Rev. 14, we see the remnant of Israel, the 144,000, sealed and standing with Jesus on Mt. Zion, a sign that the time for judgment has come. After three angelic warnings, the earth is reaped and the wicked are destroyed.*

*The Fourth Vision Sequence (Rev. 15-18) cycles back to reconsider the destruction of the wicked as the pouring out of the bowls of God's wrath (Rev. 15-16). The final outpouring, in the seventh bowl, destroys Babylon the Great, the harlot that committed spiritual immorality with the rulers of the earth.*

*In Rev. 17-18, we cycle back to learn more about the harlot that rides (controls) the beastly empire from the sea. She is the opposite of the pure, virginal bride of Messiah, a worldly church that prostitutes the word of God for the sake of advantage and power. In the process, we also learn more about the beast itself, which after being divided up into the different nations of Europe turns against the harlot and makes her desolate.*

*In the Fifth Vision Sequence (Rev. 19-22), the sound of rejoicing in heaven prepares the way for the return of Jesus to the earth. Coming with the armies of heaven, he defeats the beast and destroys all the wicked from the face of the earth. In Jerusalem, he establishes his Messianic kingdom for a thousand years, a time of peace and Sabbath rest.*

*At the conclusion of the thousand years, the wicked of all time rise from the dead to attack the Messiah and his people. But God the Father intervenes with fire from heaven, defeating the invading army (Gog and Magog) and causing both the heavens and the earth to pass away. In their place, the Father God is revealed in all his glory.*

*Before his throne, the wicked are judged and sent to the lake of fire to be punished forever, after which a new heavens and a new earth appear, together with a new Jerusalem – a new paradise or Garden of Eden – where we will live with the Lord forever.*

## Traditional Dispensationalism vs. the Parallel Method

This section is intended primarily for those who have been taught the dispensational interpretation of prophecy. This is currently the most popular method of interpretation, the one commonly found in prophecy books in Christian bookstores. I know that familiarity with dispensationalism makes it harder to remember the insights of the parallel method and to sort out the differences between the two systems. So to help you, I've included one final chart to highlight the most important differences. If you're not familiar with dispensational teaching, this section might only confuse you, so feel free to skip it.

The chart below compares the parallel method at the top of the page, the view we've been teaching in this seminar, with traditional dispensationalism at the bottom. By traditional dispensationalism, I mean the original system when it first became widely known. Today, there are many varieties of dispensational teaching. But I have included the original views because they are a natural outgrowth of the core beliefs of this system. The test of a prophet, after all, is not if he can chance his prophecies to suit the times, but if his original prophecies come true.

In spite of the many differences between these two methods of interpretation, they can be diagrammed in a similar way. Line #1 is the parallel method; line #2 is traditional dispensationalism. The far left of both lines represents the present time, the far right represents the distant future. On the right, the two lines are essentially the same. But on the left there are some differences. Where the "Great Tribulation" and the "Warning" periods appear in the parallel method (line #1), "The Church Age" appears in dispensationalism (line #2). This is because dispensationalism associates none of the troubles of the present "Church Age" with the prophecies of Revelation, but instead pushes these prophecies into a future seven-year tribulation period (the "7-year Trib." on line 2) after the resurrection of the righteous (the "Rapture"). But the Parallel Method makes a careful distinction between the present

# 1. The Parallel Method

**The Great (or Long) Tribulation** of the Church and Israel. The Jews are dispersed and the Temple lies desolate. Only a remnant of the Jews is saved at this time. This long time of tribulation is the day of salvation, during which all must be saved. At the end of this period the Jews are regathered.

**Warning:** A time of intensified trouble (the warning trumpets). At the sign of Messiah's coming, national Israel repents.

**The Rapture:** The separation by Messiah of the righteous and the unrighteous. The righteous dead are raised, and together with the righteous living are caught away. Those taken are the entire number of those who will be saved, both Jews and Gentiles. Once they are taken, the doors are shut and no others will be allowed in.

**The Wrath of God:** The final outpouring of God's vengeance against rebellious mankind. The day of salvation has passed.

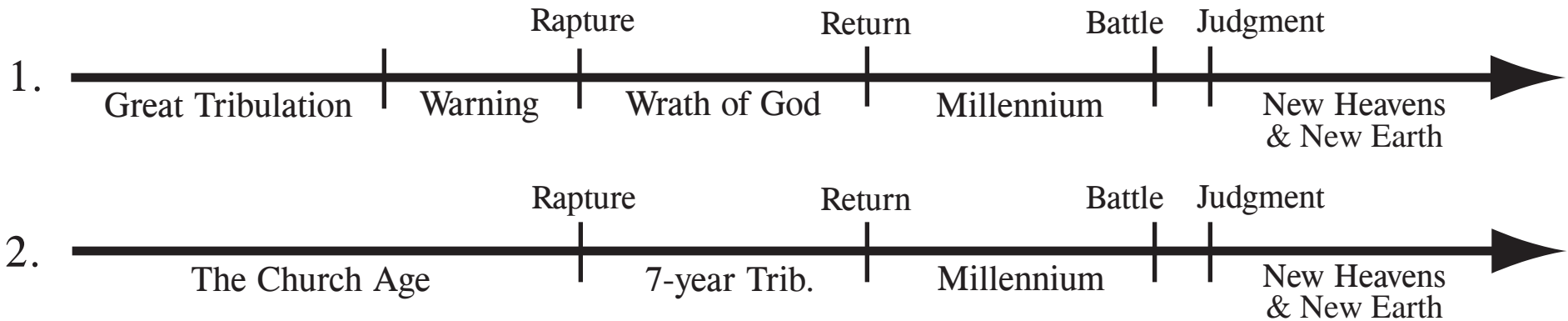
**Return of Messiah:** Destruction of all the ungodly "as in the days of Noah." Sinners are removed from the earth.

**Millennium:** A time of blessed rest and victory. The earth is restored, sin and death are banished. Glorified saints share in Messiah's rule over the earth.

**Battle of Gog and Magog:** The resurrection of all the ungodly who, coming up with Satan from the pit ("the beast ascending out of the abyss"), fight face to face against Jesus and his saints. A truly awesome confrontation between resurrected saints and resurrected sinners.

**The Final Judgment:** The spiritually dead, raised at the end of the 1,000 years, are judged before God's throne.

**The New Heavens and the New Earth:** Saved Jews and Gentiles will dwell in unity with God and one another for eternity in the New Jerusalem.



# 2. Traditional Dispensationalism

**The Church Age:** A temporary interruption (gap, parenthesis) in prophecy, not mentioned in the Old Testament. This age, as well as the crucifixion of Jesus as part of a plan of salvation, only came about because of the rejection of Jesus by Israel. This provides a temporary mode of salvation by which few are saved. This teaching provides no prophetic consolation for believers suffering today.

**The Rapture:** The "next event" to be fulfilled in prophecy. Only a "worthy" portion of the final number of the saved are included, and only Gentile Christians. One of as many as four rapture/resurrections to take place.

**The 7-year Tribulation:** A literal seven year period that includes all of the troubles and sufferings of Revelation. It is a time of purification for the "unworthy" saints left behind (a Protestant form of purgatory). Many "tribulation saints" will be saved during this time of suffering through a gospel of legal obedience.

**Return of Messiah:** Destruction of only the armies fighting against Jerusalem.

**Millennium:** Resurrection of "tribulation saints." Regathering of Israel. Co-existence of glorified saints and fleshly sinners. Marriage and bearing children continue among those in the flesh. Sin and death continue to exist on the earth. Salvation available on the basis of legal obedience.

**Battle of Gog and Magog:** Glorified saints in incorruptible bodies face a rebellion of fleshly sinners. (Not much of a contest.) The release of Satan from the pit is separated from the release of the ungodly.

**The Final Judgment:** The resurrection of the ungodly follows the Battle of Gog and Magog, and includes those killed in that battle.

**The New Heavens and the New Earth:** Israel and the Church will be separated: Israel on earth, the Church in heaven. Paul's "one new man" is denied eternally.

tribulation of the Church (the “Great Tribulation” on line 1, during which “everyone who is found written in the scroll” will be saved, Dan. 12:1; or as Jesus put it, in which “if those days were not cut short, no flesh would be saved” Matt. 24:22) and the warning trumpets and wrath of God to come (“Warning,” and “Wrath of God” on line 1).

Each system also understands the contents of the various periods differently:

**The Great Tribulation vs. The Church Age:** While the early Church understood that they were going through the time of great tribulation in their own lifetimes (a tribulation that persecuted Christians in many countries are also experiencing today), dispensationalists teach that the present Church Age doesn't appear in Old Testament prophecy at all, but rather that what we're living in now is a 'gap' in prophecy that took place 'because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah.'

The idea that the Jews rejected Jesus would have sounded quite strange to the apostles. When Paul encountered a similar point of view, he responded: 'Am I not a Jew?' (“*For I, too, am an Israelite*” Rom. 11:1). He didn't reject Jesus, nor did the thousands of other Jewish people that accepted Jesus in the Book of Acts and in the centuries that followed.<sup>103</sup>

Nor should the salvation of believing Gentiles be considered an afterthought on the part of God, as it's often presented in dispensational teaching.<sup>104</sup> Rather, the salvation of Gentiles, together with Jews that believe in Jesus, is why Jesus came! “*For in*

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<sup>103</sup> In John 6:15, the Jewish people were planning to make Jesus king “by force”! That doesn't sound like rejection to me. Thousands came out to hear him speak (Luke 12:1) and greeted him as Messiah when he entered Jerusalem (Luke 19:38). It was the Jewish leadership that rejected him, not the entire nation. It's true that several hundred years later, very few Jewish believers in Jesus remained in the world, but that's a different story (see our seminar [The Jewish Roots of Christianity](#)).

<sup>104</sup> Many dispensationalists teach that the salvation of the Gentiles was a sort of “plan B” adopted by God after the ‘Jews rejected Jesus,’ causing plan A to fail.

*this way God loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten son, that *everyone* that believes in him will not perish but will have eternal life" (John 3:16).

This is God's eternal plan that he conceived before the universe was created: the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 1:4,5)! From all eternity, he knew even the number that would be saved. And when that number is reached (Rev. 10:7), and the full number of those destined to die has been fulfilled (Rev. 6:11), the plan of salvation will be over. The trumpets will announce the coming judgment, and the righteous in Messiah will be resurrected (the "rapture").

**The Rapture:** Dispensationalism long taught that the Rapture (the resurrection of the righteous) was the next event to be fulfilled in prophecy. I heard this taught for many years as a new Christian. All the prophecies being fulfilled in the modern nation of Israel were for some reason overlooked.

But the rapture they spoke of would not be a rapture of the entire church. Rather dispensationalism teaches that only some of the church will participate in the rapture. The unworthy must face the 'seven year tribulation,' which is, in effect, a dispensational version of purgatory.

But as we have seen, the tribulation of the Church is now. Today is the day of salvation, when all must be saved. There will be no second chance for salvation. Either you are raised in the resurrection of the righteous or burned in the fire of God's judgment. There is no middle ground. There will be no "tribulation saints" as dispensationalists teach.<sup>105</sup> Once the Messiah comes, the door will be locked, and no matter how hard you knock, you will not get in (Matt. 25:10-12).

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<sup>105</sup> These are people said to be saved by legal observance(!) in the 'seven-year tribulation period.'

**The Wrath of God and Return of the Messiah (“Return”):** Jesus said his coming will be “as in the days of Noah.” If you weren't in the ark, you were killed in the flood. So it will be at the coming of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26,27). After the righteous are caught away in the resurrection, God will pour out his wrath (“Wrath of God”), and this time, no one will be spared.

**The Millennium:** Since all the wicked will be killed by God’s wrath, only the righteous will be “worthy to attain” (Luke 20:35) the millennial period (or the “regeneration” as Jesus called it, Matt. 19:28). This means that the millennium will not be a continuation of life as it is today, with sinners constantly grieving the heart of God, as dispensationalists imagine.<sup>106</sup> Rather it will be a time of blessing and Sabbath rest, in which the saints will rule the world with Jesus.

**The Battle of Gog and Magog:** The unrighteous are not seen again until the end of the millennium, when the Bible says they will be raised from the dead and fight against Jesus and the saints. This will not be a battle of fleshly sinners against resurrected saints, as dispensationalists imagine. That wouldn’t be much of a battle at all. Rather, it will be resurrected saints against resurrected sinners, a final, awesome battle that will expose once and for all who is the Lord's and who is against him.

**The Final Judgment:** This horrifying battle is ended by fire from heaven. This is the greatest moment of the book of Revelation, when the Father God appears, at whose presence heaven and earth flee away. Before his throne, the unrighteous of all time are gathered, and the final judgment begins.

**The New Heavens and the New Earth:** The unrighteous are led away to the lake of fire, after which the new heavens and the new earth appear. Dispensationalists originally taught that here Israel

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<sup>106</sup> Dispensationalists teach a millennium in which resurrected saints and fleshly sinners will live side by side.

and the Church would be separated, one in the new heavens, the other in the new earth. But this misses the point of Paul's "one new man" teaching entirely, that Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus have been united as one in the body of Messiah (Eph. 2:15).<sup>107</sup> It also misunderstands the symbolism of the new Jerusalem: that God the Father will dwell with us there forever: "*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! – the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them, and they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them'*" (Rev. 21:3; also 21:22,23; 22:3,4).<sup>108</sup>

### The Church in the Ages to Come

Some may find it helpful at this point to review what Revelation and its parallels teach about the Church in the ages to come. For this, we'll look again at the chart presented earlier in our discussion of the Millennium (in Rev. 20, "The Church in the Ages to Come").<sup>109</sup>

The large green oval represents the present earth; the gray oval below represents death (or Hades or the grave). The partial blue oval at the upper left represents Paradise, where the souls of the righteous who have died await the resurrection.<sup>110</sup> The present

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<sup>107</sup> It also assumes a separate way of salvation for the Jews, in contradiction to the clear statement of Peter to the Jewish people: "*let it be known... to all the people of Israel... [that] salvation is in no one else [than Jesus], nor is there another name... by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:10,12).

<sup>108</sup> The dispensationalists (and some others) imply that dwelling in the new heavens will be a greater blessing than living on the new earth. But since God himself will dwell in the new Jerusalem, being in the new heavens will bring no added benefit.

<sup>109</sup> It's the chart with the two big ovals on it, one green and the other gray, just after Rev. 20:5a.

<sup>110</sup> The location of paradise was a controversial topic in the early Church, with some maintaining the older Jewish belief in an underworldly paradise (compare Luke 23:43 with John 20:17). But a heavenly location was soon favored, aided by John's placement of the souls of slain martyrs under the altar in heaven (Rev. 6:9) and Paul's vision of paradise in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4; together with the early Christian teaching that Jesus relocated departed saints to a heavenly paradise at the time of his ascension). Even so, for hundreds of years a distinction was maintained between paradise (where we will be "with the Lord," that is, with Jesus, 2 Cor. 5:8) and the direct presence of the Father God, which comes only after the resurrection in the new heavens and new earth.

situation of the Church is shown in part 1 (“Heavenly Warning Signs”). The open circles, which represent the Church, can currently be found both on the earth and waiting in paradise for the resurrection. The nonbelievers, represented by black filled circles, can be found on earth and, for the souls of the dead, in Hades below. This is how it is right now and will continue to be through the time of the heavenly warning signs that precede Jesus’ return.

In part 2 (“Resurrection of the Righteous”), all the righteous dead from all time will be raised to physical life again, and meet with Jesus in the air (1 Thess. 4:16). Here they will be joined by believers that remain alive on earth at that time (1 Thess. 4:17). These, *“in the twinkling of an eye,”* will be caught up with them and changed into their resurrection bodies (1 Cor. 15:51,52).

In part 3 (“Wrath of God”), God will pour out his wrath on the nonbelievers that remain on the earth. Jesus compared this to the days of Noah in which all that were not in the ark were destroyed (Luke 17:26,27). Those that are not caught up in the resurrection will be destroyed by the wrath of God. They will then join the other nonbelievers in Hades.

In part 4 (“Millennium/Messianic Kingdom”), Jesus and the believers of all time come to the earth to establish his Messianic kingdom, where they reign for a thousand years.

In part 5 (“End of Millennium/Second Resurrection”), all the wicked dead of all time are raised to physical life on earth. They ascend with Satan from Hades, and attack the Messiah and his people.

In part 6, God defeats Satan’s army with fire from heaven which destroys the present heavens and earth. This is followed by the final judgment, in which the wicked are sent to the lake of fire (eternal punishment).

In part 7, God creates a new heavens and a new earth, in which the righteous dwell with him forever.