

**THE BOOK OF
REVELATION**

by
ROBERT H. MOUNCE

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TO
MRS. GEORGE D. MOUNCE, SR.,
in grateful appreciation for the
profound impact of her godly life.

functions: he deceives men by working great signs (cf. 13:13–15), and he brands with the mark of the beast all but those who are willing to die for their faith (cf. 13:16–17).

The beast and false prophet are destined to be cast alive into the lake of fire. This designation for the place of final torment occurs only in Revelation, although the idea of punishment by fire is prominent in the extra-Biblical Jewish writings. *I Enoch* 54:1 speaks of the place of judgment as “a deep valley with burning fire,” and in *II Enoch* 10 it is described as a place of terror with all manner of tortures including a fiery river.³⁷ Although the actual word Gehenna is not used in Revelation, this is what John refers to as the lake of fire. Gehenna (an abbreviation for “valley of the son of Hinnom”) was the name given to the valley lying to the south and west of Jerusalem (the modern *Wadi er Rababi*). As the site of a cultic shrine where human sacrifices were offered (II Kgs 16:3; 23:10; Jer 7:31), it acquired an unholy reputation. Because of prophetic denunciation of this place of terrible wickedness (Jer 7:32; 19:6), it came to be equated with the hell of final judgment in apocalyptic literature. In NT times Gehenna was a place of fire and the abode of the wicked dead (Mt 5:22; Mk 9:43).³⁸

In the Revelation passage the lake of fire is said to burn with brimstone, a yellow, sulphurous substance which burns readily in air. It is found in a natural state in volcanic areas such as the valley of the Dead Sea (cf. Gen 19:24; Ezek 38:22). A lake of burning brimstone would not only be intensely hot, but malodorous and fetid as well. It is an appropriate place for all that is sinful and wicked in the world. The Antichrist and the false prophet are its first inhabitants. Later the devil (20:10), Death and Hades (20:14), and all evil men (21:8) will join them in this place of ceaseless torment.

21 The armies of Antichrist are killed by the sword which proceeds from the mouth of Messiah. While this is obviously not to be understood as a literal sword, neither is it to be taken as a metaphor for the gospel message. The scene is one of judgment, and the sword is the proclamation of divine retribution that slays all who have in the final alignment of loyalties arrayed themselves against God and the forces of righteousness. The supper of God is ready, and the vultures gorge themselves on the flesh of the wicked.

³⁷Cf. II Esdr 7:36; *I Enoch* 27:2; 48:9; 90:26 f; 103:8; *As. Mos.* 10:10; *II Bar.* 59:10.

³⁸The NT distinguishes sharply between ἄδης (the temporary abode of the ungodly in the period between death and resurrection) and γέεννα (the place of eternal punishment following the last judgment). See Jeremias, γέεννα, *TDNT*, I, pp. 657–58.

CHAPTER 20

Judging from the amount of attention given by many writers to the first ten verses of chapter 20, one would judge it to be the single most important segment of the book of Revelation. The tendency of many interpreters at this point is to become apologists for a particular view of the millennium. Without denying the significance of this important passage, it should not be elevated above such basic themes as the return of Christ, the final judgment and removal of all wickedness, and the splendor of the eternal state. A careful reading of the millennial passage (vss. 1–10) will show that it is perhaps limited to the resurrected martyrs alone, and that it contains no specific indication that their reign with Christ takes place on earth or that it necessarily follows the second advent. This commentary understands the millennium portrayed as an earthly reign which follows the second coming of Christ, although the text itself does not rule out alternate explanations.¹

4. SATAN BOUND (20:1–3)

- 1 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.*
- 2 *And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,*
- 3 *and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.*

1 The angel that descends from heaven has in his hand a key to the abyss and a great chain. The angel is probably the one who in chapter 9 released the demonic locusts by opening the shaft leading to the abyss. The abyss

¹Because elsewhere in Rev there is no indication of an intermediate reign, Schnackenburg thinks that 20:1–6 may be an interpretive doublet of 19:11–21 (*God's Rule and Kingdom*, pp. 339–47).

was thought of as a vast subterranean cavern² which served as a place of confinement for disobedient spirits awaiting judgment (Jude 6; *Jub.* 5:6; Lk 8:31). In *I Enoch* 88:1 a fallen angel is bound hand and foot and cast into an abyss that is "narrow and deep, and horrible and dark." In (or upon, *ASV* margin) the hand of the angel is a great chain³ with which he is about to bind Satan. There is no specific indication in verse 1 to determine when this event takes place, although it should be noted that the recurring "and I saw"⁴ of 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 12; and 21:1 appears to establish a sequence of visions which carries through from the appearance of the Rider on the white horse (19:11) to the establishment of the new heaven and new earth (21:1 ff). The interpretation that discovers recapitulation for the segment 20:1-6 must at least bear the burden of proof.

2-3 The angel seizes⁵ the dragon, binds him (with the chain), and casts him into the abyss. There he remains for a thousand years, unable to carry on his practice of deceiving the nations. At the close of the thousand years he is to be loosed for a little time (this brief period is described in 20:7-10). In verse 2 all four titles by which Satan is designated in Revelation are brought together. He is the dragon defeated in heavenly combat by Michael (12:7-8), the serpent who tried to sweep away the messianic community with a flood (12:15), and the devil who knows that his time is short (12:12).

What the binding of Satan entails depends upon whether the passage is taken as descriptive of the present age or of a period which will follow the second advent. Representative of the first point of view, Hendriksen holds that in the period between the two comings of Christ the devil's influence is curtailed so that he is unable to prevent the extension of the church by means of an active missionary program (p. 226). In support he lists a number of verses in which the binding, casting out, or falling of Satan is associated in some way with the first coming of Christ (Mt 12:29; Lk 19:17-18; Jn 12:31; Col 2:15). Walvoord, on the other hand, says that the intention of the passage is not to represent Satan as merely restricted but as rendered completely inactive during the thousand-year millennial period following the second advent (p. 291). In support of his position Walvoord cites a number of NT passages which show Satan as extremely active in the present age (Lk 22:3; Acts 5:3; II Cor 4:3-4; 11:14; Eph 2:2; I Thess 2:18;

² ἄβυσσος was originally an adjective meaning "bottomless" or "unfathomed."

³ Probably to bind the hands: ἄλυσις in Mk 5:4 is coupled with πέδη, "fetter" (cognate with πούς, ποδός, foot), and in Acts 12:7 the ἀλύσεις fall off Peter's hands. Perhaps some sort of handcuffs is intended.

⁴ καὶ εἶδον.

⁵ κρατέω (from κράτος, strength, power) has the basic idea of exercise of power. In Mt 26:50 it means "to take into custody."

II Tim 2:26; and especially I Pet 5:18, "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"). The answer to the problem obviously does not lie in one's ability to support his interpretation by collecting verses from other contexts in Scripture. Careful attention needs to be given to the text of Revelation itself. All the text actually says is that during a period designated as a thousand years Satan is to be bound and cast into the abyss, which is then shut and sealed. The purpose of the confinement is not punishment. It is to prevent him from deceiving the nations.⁶ The elaborate measures taken to insure his custody are most easily understood as implying the complete cessation of his influence on earth (rather than a curbing of his activities). The abyss is sealed (cf. Dan 6:17; Mt 27:66) as a special precaution against escape. Satan's imprisonment is to last a thousand years. Some understand this period as a literal one thousand years, while others take it to indicate a lengthy period of undetermined duration. The latter interpretation cites in support such verses as Psalm 50:10 which speaks metaphorically of cattle on a thousand hills, and II Peter 3:8 with its equation of one day and a thousand years. Nothing in the immediate context favors either interpretation. It is the larger concern to find a consistent millennial position which leads each exegete to commit himself on the meaning of the thousand years.⁷

In chapter 19 the kings of the earth and their armies were slain by the sword of Messiah (19:19-21). Yet now in chapter 20 the nations are pictured as still in existence. Moffatt notes that "such discrepancies were inevitable in the dovetailing of disparate conceptions" (p. 471), but adds that the reference in 20:3 is probably to those outlying nations on the fringe of the empire who had not shared in the campaign of the Antichrist. Caird, on the other hand, says that the battle of chapter 19 is the smashing of the political power which, undergirded by idolatrous religion and materialistic seduction, organized the nations in resistance to the sovereignty of God (p. 252). It is probably best to understand the nations of 20:3 as the remnant from nations who opposed Messiah rather than as select nations here and there who never entered the final battle. In either case, however, they are no longer under the seductive influence of Satan. No longer are they deceived into giving to the emperor the worship which belongs to God

⁶ Ostella argues that discontinuance of deception in Rev 20:3 is a critically decisive exegetical point and "ultimately demands the conclusion that the millennium involves an extension of redemptive history subsequent to the parousia" ("The Significance of Deception in Revelation 20:3," *WTJ*, 37 [1974-5], pp. 236-38).

⁷ Summers says the number does not represent a period of time at all but should be understood as a way of saying that the devil will be completely restrained (p. 204). Love says that Satan is bound whenever believers surrender their lives to Christ, and the end of the thousand years is the sphere outside the utterly surrendered life (p. 116).

alone. Looking ahead to the close of the thousand-year period, John adds that for a little while Satan must be released again. It is futile to speculate just why there needs to be yet another conflict. Satan will gather a following from around the earth and march on the beloved city. He is to be devoured by fire from heaven and cast finally into the lake of fire. Apparently a thousand years of confinement does not alter Satan's plans, nor does a thousand years of freedom from the influence of wickedness change man's basic tendency to rebel against his creator.

5. MILLENNIAL REIGN (20:4-6)

4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

5 *The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection.*

6 *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

4 John now sees thrones and the faithful martyrs who gave their lives rather than worship the beast or receive his mark. All we know for sure about the occupants of the thrones is that judgment is given to them. It is not likely that this judgment relates to the question of who is worthy to be resurrected and share in the millennial reign with Christ. The judgment appears to be connected in some way with the vindication of the martyrs and their right to assume the empire of the defeated powers of wickedness. Daniel's vision of the four beasts, their judgment and the passing of the kingdom to the saints of the Most High, is undoubtedly the background for much of John's presentation. In Daniel, one like a son of man receives everlasting dominion from the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13-14). The interpretation is then supplied, which is that with the coming of the Ancient of Days judgment is given for⁸ the saints of the Most High and they receive the kingdom (Dan 7:22).

The problem of naming the martyrs as those who sit upon the thrones is that they are not mentioned until later in the verse. Charles says that the one way to "restore sanity to the text" is to connect the opening

⁸The Aramaic text reads ܘܫܝܕܩܝܩܘܢܐ (LXX, ἀγίοις), which could mean "to the saints" (cf. ܩܕܝܫܐ in Dan 7:14 and ܩܕܝܫܐ in Dan 7:27 where ܩܕܝܫܐ indicates the indirect object rather than signifying "on behalf of").

words, "and I saw," with "souls of them that had been beheaded" and move the intervening words to a position after "upon their hand" (II, pp. 182-83).⁹ Others hold the occupants of the thrones to include apostles (who in Mt 19:28 are promised that they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel), saints (who in I Cor 6:2-3 are reminded that they will judge both the world and angels), and all who remain faithful in the final trial (Rev 3:21). Since the text remains silent about the occupants of the thrones, it may be wise not to go beyond suggesting that they may be a heavenly court (as in Dan 7:26) that will assist in judgment. One possibility is that mention of the martyrs in verse 4 leads away from the original theme of judgment, which is then picked up again in verse 11.

In addition to thrones John sees the souls of those who had been martyred for faithfulness in bearing the testimony of Jesus¹⁰ and the word of God. These are the souls under the altar in 6:9 and all who are to meet a similar fate until the time of their vindication (6:11). They are called souls because at this point they are still awaiting the resurrection. That they are said to have been beheaded does not restrict the group to those martyrs who had met death in this specific fashion.¹¹ It is representative of all who gave their lives in faithfulness to their commitment to Christ.

There is a question as to whether one or two groups of believers are mentioned in verse 4b-c. A straightforward reading of the English text seems to suggest two. Barclay speaks of those who were actually martyred and "those who suffered everything short of death for their loyalty to Jesus Christ" (II, p. 246).¹² Yet in 13:15 John had written that "as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Consistency would suggest that in the final conflict there are none who resist the Antichrist without paying for their stand with their life. The relative pronoun translated "such as"¹³ may indicate a fuller definition of the group just mentioned. They are those of chapter 13 who refused to worship the

⁹Supply καὶ εἶδον before θρόνους. Charles' view is that John died after finishing 1-20:3 and the remainder of the book was put together from documents he left by a faithful but unintelligent disciple (II, p. 147). Gaechter studies the thesis with care and concludes that the editor did not grasp the original sequence because John gave him no written documents and he had to rely wholly upon his memory ("The Original Sequence of Apocalypse 20-22," *Theological Studies*, 10 [1949], pp. 485-521).

¹⁰Taking τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ as a subjective genitive (as in 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10).

¹¹The verb πελεκίζω occurs only here in the NT. It is derived from πέλεκυς, a double-edged axe, which was the instrument of execution in republican Rome (Diodorus Siculus xix.101; Josephus, *Ant.* xiv.7.4).

¹²Swete calls the second group confessors and others who remained faithful in persecution (p. 262).

¹³ὅστις often introduces a relative clause which emphasizes a characteristic quality of its antecedent; cf. Mt 7:15, προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῶν ψευδοπροφητῶν οἵτινες ἔρχονται πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ἐνδύμασι προβάτων; Rom 1:25; Acts 10:47. In this case καὶ would serve as an explicative ("namely"); cf. Mt 8:33; I Cor 15:38.

beast (13:12) or to receive his mark (13:16) and consequently paid for their loyalty by death (13:15).

These martyrs are said to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. How one interprets this simple statement reveals his position on the millennial question. Ladd (p. 265) correctly observes that the crux of the entire exegetical problem is the meaning of "they came to life again" (ASV, "they lived"). Apart from the immediate context (vss. 4-5) where it is used twice and in reference to two distinct groups, the verb is found in Revelation in but two other places: in 2:8 of Christ who "died and came to life" (RSV) and in 13:14 of the beast who was wounded by the sword "and yet lived" (RSV). There is no basis for the claim that if the author of Revelation had wished to speak of an actual physical resurrection he would have used some other verb since there is no Greek verb which exclusively means "to raise from the dead."¹⁴ The verb he did use also occurs in such passages as Matthew 9:18 where the ruler of the synagogue tells Jesus that his daughter has just died but that if he will lay his hand on her "she will be restored to life" (TCNT), and in Romans 14:9 of the bodily resurrection of Christ ("For to this end Christ died and lived again").

The strong presumption is that the verb in verse 5 should be taken in the same sense as it is in verse 6. In the second case the statement, "The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished," certainly refers to a bodily resurrection at the close of the millennial period. If "they lived" in verse 4 means a spiritual resurrection to new life in Christ, then we are faced with the problem of discovering within the context some persuasive reason to interpret the same verb differently within one concise unit. No such reason can be found. Alford's much-quoted remark is worth repeating: "If, in a passage where *two resurrections* are mentioned . . . the first resurrection may be understood to mean *spiritual* rising with Christ, while the second means *literal* rising from the grave;—then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything" (IV, p. 732).

The length of the martyrs' reign is a thousand years. It is this number which gives rise to the term millennium (from the Latin *mille*, thousand, and *annus*, year). Only in Revelation 20:1-10 do we find any

¹⁴Note that ἀνίστημι (used quite regularly in the gospels for bodily resurrection; Mt 20:19; Mk 12:25; Lk 12:46; etc.) can also mean "to erect, cause to be born, stand up, appear, get ready" (BAG, p. 69). ἐγείρω may mean "to wake, lift up, restore, bring into being, appear" as well as "to raise from the dead" (BAG, pp. 213-14). ἀναζάω is found only twice in the NT (and not at all in the post-apostolic fathers or the Apologists): in Lk 15:24 of the return of the prodigal son, and in Rom 7:9 of sin springing to life at the coming of the commandment. ζάω, on the other hand, is found more than 140 times in the NT scattered through a wide range of contexts, each of which determines its specific meaning in that instance.

NT teaching about the millennium.¹⁵ The origin of the idea seems to stem from the eschatological expectations of late apocalyptic Judaism. In earlier times the Jews pictured a messianic kingdom which would last on the present earth forever (Isa 11:10-16; 65:20-25; Dan 7:14, 27). Under the influence of dualism there developed from about 100 BC onward an increasing pessimism about this earth as a proper place for such a glorious period. Beckwith thinks that the idea of a partial and temporary realization of God's kingdom prior to its complete establishment arose in an effort to mediate between the earlier eschatological hope of an earthly kingdom in Palestine ruled by Jehovah himself, and a later conception of a transcendental and universal kingdom for risen saints in a renewed heaven and earth (p. 735).¹⁶ Charles says that the millennium is really "a late and attenuated form of the old Jewish expectation of an eternal Messianic Kingdom on the present earth" (II, p. 142).

Jewish speculation as to the length of this temporary reign ranges from forty to 7,000 years.¹⁷ In Enoch's *Apocalypse of Weeks* human history takes place in seven weeks, followed by the messianic kingdom established in the eighth and lasting through the tenth week (*I Enoch* 93; 91:12-17). In *II Esdras* 7:28 it is definitely set at four hundred years. Some argued from the week of creation and the thousand-years-equals-one-day idea reflected in Psalm 90:4 (cf. *II Pet* 3:8) that after 6,000 years of world history there would be a thousand-year cosmic sabbath corresponding to the seventh day of creation in which God rested from his work (*Barn.* xv). In *Slavonic Enoch* the world is to last seven days of one thousand years each, followed by an eighth day with time divisions (*II Enoch* 32:2-33:2).¹⁸ It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the reign of the martyrs sketched in Revelation (preceding judgment and the eternal state) should last one thousand years. Nor is there any particular reason to suppose that in the mind of John the one thousand years represented a period

¹⁵The attempt to attribute to Paul a belief in the millennium on the basis of I Cor 15:20-28 is unconvincing. See Beckwith (pp. 98-100) for an excellent treatment of this claim. He concludes that although millenniums may be conceived to intervene between steps in the progress of the kingdom toward completion, in Paul's view what lies ahead is simply the absolute triumph of the kingdom and the inheritance which awaits the Christian.

¹⁶Ford says that "in earlier writings Israel contemplated a new historical and national era, but eventually developed a more transcendental hope which included the concept of new heavens and a new earth. . . . It was, perhaps, in order to harmonize these divergent views that the belief in an interim messianic period arose" (p. 352).

¹⁷For a summary of rabbinic views on the duration of the messianic age see Strack-Billerbeck, III, pp. 823-27.

¹⁸See Beasley-Murray (pp. 288-89) for further references illustrating the wide variation of belief concerning the ultimate future which existed in contemporary Jewish and Christian literature; also Ford, pp. 352-54.

of time of some other duration. Many of the earliest church fathers were millenarians. Toward the middle of the second century Justin Martyr said that properly instructed Christians were assured of a resurrection of the dead to be followed by a thousand years in Jerusalem (*Dial.* 80). Irenaeus, in the last of the same century, believed in an earthly millennium during which the saints and martyrs would be rewarded (*Adv. Haer.* v.32). Unfortunately, many chiliasts allowed their imaginations to run riot and read into the thousand-year period all manner of materialistic and sensuous extremes. Papias records as the words of Jesus an extravagant portrayal of the fertility of the earth in which each grape would yield twenty-five measures of wine and every grain of wheat 10,000 pounds of flour.¹⁹ Eusebius records that the heretic Cerinthus taught an earthly kingdom of sensual pleasure ("the gratification of appetite and lust; *ie.*, in eating, drinking, and marrying") to follow the resurrection (*Hist. Eccl.* iii.38). He also refers to Nepos, an Egyptian bishop who "supposed that there would be a certain millennium of sensual luxury on this earth" (*Hist. Eccl.* vii.24).

These extremes led later scholars to condemn the materialistic chiliasm which had taken root in the church. In the third century Origen rebuked those who looked forward to bodily pleasure and luxury in the millennium (*De Princ.* ii.11.2-3). It was Augustine, however, who about the beginning of the fifth century made the first serious effort to interpret Revelation 20 in a non-millenarian fashion. He held that the thousand-year period was to be taken as the interval between the first advent and the final conflict. The binding of Satan during this period was accomplished by Christ during his earthly ministry. The first resurrection was the spiritual birth of believers (*De Civ. Dei* xx.7 ff). This same embarrassment over the chiliasm of sectarians carried over into the theology of the Reformers. Lilje notes that "the modern rejection of chiliasm is usually based on dogmatic considerations, not on biblical exegesis" (p. 252). Beckwith adds that the fundamental fault of those who interpret this passage in a nonliteral fashion is "that they mistake the nature of apocalyptic prophecy, and read into the vision of our Apocalyptist here a meaning of which he gives no intimation and which is at variance with his language. Apocalyptic prophecy is not allegory. . . . Nor can the age-long struggle of the Church militant. . . answer to the picture of the millennial reign of the risen martyrs" (p. 738).²⁰

¹⁹See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* v.33.3; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii.39. The quotation is given in Barclay, II, p. 243 as well. It is paralleled in *II Bar.* 29:5-8 and in the rabbinical tradition.

²⁰For a convenient summary of the two millennial interpretations (literal and allegorical) see Erdman, pp. 154-62.

A question normally raised by non-millenarians is, What is the purpose of the thousand-year reign? The usual answer is that it is the vindication within history of the cause of Christ. With the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, there is tangible and convincing proof of the victory of righteousness over evil. There is another response, however, that is more specific and grows out of the text itself. Noting that the millennial reign with Christ is probably to be limited to the martyrs who gave their lives rather than submit to the blasphemous demands of emperor worship, it understands the thousand-year reign as a special reward to the martyrs of chapter 6. These were told to wait under the altar until their number would be complete and then their blood would be avenged upon those who dwell upon the earth (6:9-11). The millennium is not, for John, the messianic age foretold by the prophets of the OT, but a special reward for those who have paid with their lives the price of faithful opposition to the idolatrous claims of Antichrist.

This leads to a further question, Are we to think of this millennial reign as an actual period of political and social history which is to follow the return of Christ? Beckwith argues that when we distinguish the essential truth of prophecy from the form in which it is communicated (this being determined by the historical circumstances and dominant religious conceptions of the day), we will cease to find in Revelation 20 the prediction of an *eschatological* era. The essential truth of the passage is that the martyr's steadfastness will win for him the highest life in union with God and Christ. It is a commentary on the Lord's saying in Matthew 10:39, "He that loses his life for my sake will find it."²¹ This does not mean that the author composed an allegory to communicate to his readers certain abstract truths. He worked within the necessary limitations of his own historical perspective and wrote for his own day. His understanding reflects the immediacy of the culture in which he lived and worked. Beckwith states his confident belief in the final realization of the divine ideal revealed, but does not look for anything like a literal fulfillment of the predictions shaped by the conditions of a transient period of history (p. 301). Some will disagree with the distinction between form and content, but others will find in this approach a reasonable answer to some of the more perplexing aspects of predictive prophecy. In short, John taught a literal millennium, but its essential meaning may be realized in something other than a temporal fulfillment.

²¹Beckwith, pp. 736-38; for the underlying argument see the earlier section entitled "Permanent and Transitory Elements in the Apocalypse Distinguished," pp. 291-310.

5 The rest of the dead who lived not until the close of the thousand years would be all the faithful except the martyrs, plus the entire body of unbelievers. Only if the martyrs of the first resurrection are taken as symbolic of the church universal would the second resurrection be limited to the ungodly. The first sentence in verse 5 is a parenthetical statement which anticipates the activity depicted in verses 11 and following.²² The second sentence of the verse, "This is the first resurrection," continues the thought of verse 4 and refers to the resurrection of the martyrs.

6 Those who participate in the first resurrection are pronounced blessed and holy. The basis for their blessedness is threefold: they are not subject to the second death, they shall be priests of God and Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. The second death is defined in 20:14 and 21:8 as being cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. It is to share the eternal fate of the devil, the beast, and the false prophet (19:20; 20:10, 14–15), which is to endure torment day and night for ever and ever (20:10). Farrer notes that while the first resurrection is selective²³ and the second absolutely universal, the first death is virtually universal (some will be alive at the parousia) and the second is selective (p. 206). At Sinai God promised the Israelites that if they would obey his voice and keep his commandments they would be to him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). The faithful, by remaining true to Christ in the final trial by Antichrist, are thus priests²⁴ of God and Christ. As a royal priesthood (cf. I Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10) they reign with him a thousand years.

6. SATAN DESTROYED (20:7–10)

7 *And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

8 *and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

²²It is omitted by \aleph 82 *al sy*.

²³Ford suggests that it is probably best to understand "first resurrection" in the sense of "the first group to enjoy resurrection" (p. 350). Meredith Kline argues from the use of *prōtos* that the first resurrection is the death of the Christian ("The First Resurrection," *WTJ*, 37 [1974–5], pp. 366–75). Norman Shepherd takes the first resurrection as the resurrection of Christ ("The Resurrections of Revelation 20," *WTJ*, 37 [1974–5], pp. 34–43). James Hughes claims there is no mention in Rev 20:4–6 of a bodily resurrection, let alone two bodily resurrections ("Revelation 20:4–6 and the Question of the Millennium," *WTJ*, 35 [1972–3], pp. 281–302).

²⁴One Latin word for priest is *pontifex*, bridge builder. The role of the priest is to establish a bridge between God and man.

9 *And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them.*

10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

7 The next four verses (7–10) portray the release of Satan from his thousand-year imprisonment, the gathering of the nations for a final assault on the people of God, the fire from heaven which devours the enemy, and Satan's final destiny in the lake of fire. Ezekiel had described an attack upon Israel in the last days in which the aggressors would be completely defeated after a cataclysmic battle (Ezek 38–39). This eschatological warfare against Israel became one of the standard ideas in Jewish teaching about the last days. The *Sibylline Oracles* 3:662–701 is a good example. We are told that "fiery swords" (673) shall fall from heaven upon the "undisciplined empty-minded people" (670) who have surrounded Jerusalem. God is to judge "with war and sword and with fire and cataclysms of rain" (689–690).²⁵ It is worth noting that in Ezekiel and Revelation the assault follows the period of the messianic kingdom. In Ezekiel 36–37 Israel is restored to the land; then comes the warfare in chapters 38 and 39. This is followed by a portrayal of the eternal state under the figure of a rebuilt temple in the New Jerusalem (chaps. 40–48).

The release of Satan was anticipated in verse 3. Perhaps the most reasonable explanation for this rather unusual parole is to make plain that neither the designs of Satan nor the waywardness of the human heart will be altered by the mere passing of time. Once loosed from prison, Satan picks up where he left off and men rally to his cause. Reference to the Babylonian legend of Tiamat (the chaos-monster) who is released at the end of time and once again defeated by Marduk (the god of light; cf. Glasson, p. 112) is an interesting parallel but adds little to our understanding of the Apocalypse. The verb translated "finished" carries the idea of bringing to an appointed end or goal.²⁶

8 Both Satan and the false prophet are portrayed in Revelation as deceivers (12:9; 20:3; 13:14; 19:20). It comes as no surprise that upon Satan's release from the abyss he returns to his nefarious activity. It is probable that the second infinitive clause in verse 8 builds upon the first (rather than being parallel),²⁷ so that the verse says that Satan shall come

²⁵See also Dan 11; Zech 14; Isa 66:15–23; II Esdr 13:5 ff.

²⁶τελέω. Note that the Byzantine text reads μετά for ὅταν τελεσθῆ, which tends to present the χίλια ἔτη as a more definite period of time.

²⁷MSS which add καί before συναγαγεῖν (\aleph 051 2059s *al g vg*) understand a parallel syntax.