

The Millennium Of Revelation

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The Final Wind-Up of Human History
When Time is Replaced by Eternity.
An Exposition of Revelation 20.

“I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.” Revelation 20:1-3.

The fact that this one thousand year period transpires after the Second Advent means that the period must be a literal period of time. This answers the query as to whether the one thousand years are literal years or symbolic. (1)

THE TRADITION OF 7000 YEARS OF HUMAN HISTORY

“The Jewish Rabbis thought, as the world was created in six days and on the seventh God rested, so there would be six millenary periods, followed by a sabbatical millennium. Out of seven years every seventh is the year of remission, so out of the seven thousand years of the world, the seventh millenary shall be the millenary of remission. A tradition in the house of Elias 200 AD states that the world is to endure six thousand years - two thousand years before the law, two thousand years under the law and two thousand years under the Messiah.” (2)

We would agree with this theory IN PRINCIPLE because simple Bible chronology confirms that Adam’s creation was approximately 4000 BC. (3) However, no attempt should be made from the above, to try and date the Second Advent, because the periods are only approximate. If “the little season” after the millennium (Revelation 20:3) is included in the seven thousand years (which it should), then it is impossible to estimate when the six thousand years will end.

THE KEY TO REVELATION 20

The key to Revelation 20 is the term “bottomless pit” or abyss, in which Satan is bound. What is the bottomless pit? In the Old Testament Greek translation this term is used at least nineteen times. It is often translated “the deep”, meaning the ocean or the depths of the earth. Generally it means a place where there is no life. The first time the expression is used is at creation.

“...and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Genesis 1:2. (3a)

THE EARTH TO BE EMPTIED OF LIFE

We believe the “bottomless pit” or abyss or “the deep” refers to the earth in a desolate, chaotic, waste condition like it was at the beginning of creation. Does scripture confirm the claim that this earth in the future is to return to an empty, lifeless condition for a certain period of time? Yes; very clearly! The first authority is Jeremiah the prophet, who was given a vision of the future condition of the earth.

“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; [similar language to Genesis 1:2] and the heavens and they had no light. I beheld the mountains and lo, they trembled and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo there was no man and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger.” Jeremiah 4:23-26.

A SECOND APPLICATION OF OLD TESTAMENT PREDICTIONS

While this chapter referred initially to the invasion of the Babylonians of the land of Judah, it is obvious that this section of the chapter did not apply to Judah. The prophet, after beholding the local scene of destruction, is then shown how the whole earth will become desolate. Obviously, Jeremiah 4:23-28 applies to the future, for never have all the cities of the earth been broken down by the presence of the Lord. The Lord is present on earth now, by his Spirit, but he does not break down the cities. It must refer to the literal presence of Jesus Christ, when he comes the second time, when the literal cities of earth are broken down by his fierce anger.

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES DESTROY CIVILIZATION

In Revelation 15 & 16 the fierce anger of God is brought to view in the seven last plagues. These fall in the year prior to the Second Advent. (4) In the 7th plague, “the cities of the nations” fall in the mighty earthquake that occurs at that time. Thus at the Second Advent, this world will be turned into a wilderness. The earth will become an abyss. The second authority is Isaiah, the gospel prophet who also predicted the future of this earth,

“Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof. The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth and they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit [the bottomless pit] and shall be shut up in the prison and after many days shall they be visited.” Isaiah 24:1, 3, 19-22.

Who are “the host of the high ones that are on high”? St. Paul in speaking of Satan and his angels, likens them to “wicked spirits in high places”. (Ephesians 6:12) (margin.) Revelation 20 tells us that during the millennium Satan and his hosts are imprisoned in “the bottomless pit”. This is the time of their punishment. Isaiah also declared, “after many days shall they be visited.” (verse 22.) Revelation 20 says that the “many days” will be a thousand years. The scriptures are very clear that the time is coming, in “the Day of the Lord” at the Second Advent of Christ, that this earth is to be emptied of life. See also Zephaniah 1:14-18 where the same scene is portrayed.

Revelation 20 also declares that Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit with a great chain. How can an angel be bound with a literal chain? We believe he will be bound by a figurative chain, a chain of circumstances.

SECOND ADVENT DEPOPULATES THE EARTH

What are the circumstances that will bind Satan in this earth for a thousand years? They will be the apocalyptic events that transpire when Christ returns to this world. The first event will be the mighty resurrection of all God's sleeping saints, those who have died, faithfully believing in Christ. As St. Paul so beautifully declared:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

This is the great “resurrection of the just” - of true believers in Christ. They are coming back to life in the mighty resurrection at the Second Advent. The second event is the translation of the living believers.

“Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them, [the resurrected dead] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

THE SAINTS ARE TAKEN TO HEAVEN

What is the destination of God's people who are resurrected and translated and rise to meet Christ “IN THE AIR”? They then ascend with Christ to the “many mansions”.

“In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also.” John 14:1-3.

The Father's house is in the third heaven. (5) That is where God's kingdom is located. Christ left this earth at his ascension and went back to the Father's house. When he returns, he will take his people to the kingdom of heaven. This means then that all of God's people are to be removed from this old earth.

THE UNSAVED ARE DESTROYED

The third event at the Second Advent is the fate of the unprepared, the unsaved, those who are deliberate enemies of the love of Christ.

“And of the times and the seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, and they shall not escape.” 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3.

Here is revealed the tragic destruction of the unsaved. It is life or death at the Second Advent. Either we are saved or we perish.

“To you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

ONLY TWO DESTINIES

Many people do not want to believe what the above verse declares, but let us face the facts. Either we receive eternal life with Jesus Christ or we perish. (John 3:16) At the Second Advent there are only two groups, the righteous and the wicked. If the righteous are translated and the wicked are destroyed at the Second Advent, then this means that the earth will become empty, as the Old Testament prophets declared. This is confirmed by Jeremiah in his terrible picture of Armageddon.

“The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the

earth for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations. He will plead with all flesh; he will give then that are wicked to the sword ...evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the Lord shall be in that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.” Jeremiah 25:30-33.

Why are they not lamented or buried? Because there is no one there to lament or bury them. Because God’s people have been translated to the kingdom. The earth has been left empty. It is a bottomless pit, an abyss, and in this empty earth, amid the ruins, Satan will be imprisoned for a thousand years. The one and only scene before him will be the devastating evidence of his rebellion. How vain and senseless it will then appear.

REASON FOR A FALSE VIEW OF THE MILLENIUM

Through the years, the majority of Christians have held that the reign of the saints with Christ during the millennium is upon the earth. Their basis for this is found in the Old Testament, where many times the prophets allude to the reign of peace, prosperity and righteousness, when God is supreme in the earth. However, all these predictions refer to the time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth. (6) Originally these promises were to Israel who, if faithful, would have seen the above predictions fulfilled in a literal, local manner. Because Israel was not faithful, these predictions will be fulfilled in a worldwide manner, when this earth is made new, after the millennium, not during the millennium. (7)

ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SAINTS IN THE MILLENIUM

But what of God’s people who have been taken to the kingdom? The Revelator declares:

“After these things [events of the Second Advent] I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, Alleluia, salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments.” Revelation 19:1.

After the Second Advent, the saints are seen in heaven, and we read concerning them...

“I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given unto them...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Revelation 20:4

They reign not on the earth, but in heaven with Christ.

“Judgment was given to them.”

What does this mean? In the gospels Jesus declared: “Judge not that ye be not judged.” Matthew 7:1.

During the millennium, judgment is given to the saints. In what way? What type of judgment? St. Paul answers,

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? [The unsaved world]. Know you not that we shall judge angels?” [Fallen angels] 1 Corinthians 6:2.

SURPRISES FOR THE SAINTS IN THE KINGDOM

In what way will the unsaved be judged? With Christ the saints will examine the records of the unsaved, especially those that personally concern them. When we get to the kingdom there are going to be tremendous surprises. Jesus said,

“Many that are first shall be last and the last first.” (8)

Many whom we expected to be there will be missing. Others whom we expected not to be there, lo and behold, there they are! There will be questions raised in heaven when we realize who are missing. In heaven we will not lose our enquiring minds or our reason and intelligence, in fact, we will possess it to a far greater degree. Our questions will need to be answered and the answers will be found in the books. There are the records, secret records of every person. We will be able to investigate the records of any who are not there and ascertain the reason. When we read the secret record, then we will understand and be able to fully accept the decisions made.

Another aspect of the saints’ work of judgment is that they, with Christ, will share in determining the degree of punishment that should in justice be allotted to the unsaved. When we bear in mind that most of the saints will have loved ones, who will be lost, this takes on real significance. We suggest that in counsel with Christ, the saints, on examining the record of their lost loved ones and understanding their earthly situation, etc., will decide what degree of punishment is right and just for them. In this way there will be complete compliance concerning the sentence, and total accord, when in the final execution of the judgment, they witness the fate of those who once were their own flesh and blood. There will be no dissenting thought or voice on the part of the saints.

Some naturally ask, “How could anyone possibly be involved in assigning punishment to his or her own flesh and blood?” We need to remember that in the midst of the glories of the kingdom, earthly ties will sink into insignificance. Likewise, after 1000 years in bliss, our feelings toward lost relatives will probably have faded away.

WHY TWO GROUPS ARE SINGLED OUT

Why does the Revelator single out two particular groups in the scene of the investigative judgment of the unsaved? (Verse 4) (9)

1. “Them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.”
2. “And which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands.”

The first group appears to be the early Christian martyrs- the first of the saints to suffer for Christ. The apostle James was probably beheaded. (Acts 12:1, 2) Paul was beheaded, as well as many others. This was a form of capital punishment in that age. The claims of Christ clashed with earthly powers. The second group comprises those who are the last to suffer for Christ. By being loyal to Christ they clash with earthly powers who are led by “the beast and his image”.

These two groups form the first and the last of the persecuted saints of the Christian era, and as such, they represent the total number of the saints. The fact that the two groups are pictured as having been persecuted, highlights the significance of the judgment in which the saints are involved in heaven. In justice they, with Christ, determine the degree of punishment to be meted out to their persecutors. This is a fulfillment of Revelation 2:26-27, and also of Psalm 149.

“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let then sing aloud upon their beds [couches]. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen [unsaved] and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all the saints.” Psalm 149:5-9. (10)

The next verse declares,

“But the rest of the dead [those not resurrected at the Second Advent] lived not again, until the thousand years were finished.” Revelation 20:5.

“The rest of the dead did not rise till the end of the thousand years.” RSV.

At the end of the thousand years there will be another resurrection, “the resurrection of the unjust”. Jesus alluded to this in his tremendous statement,

“Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. John 5:28, 29.

This means that everyone of us will return from the dead. We are coming back, no matter who or what we are; we are coming back from the dead. There is to be a resurrection of every person. We have no say. What an awe-inspiring truth! No matter whether we have been cremated, buried at sea or what - after death, we are coming back, we will be recreated in a split second of time. We will stand again upon the earth. However, we do have a choice as to when we come back. We come back in the resurrection of life, or in the resurrection of damnation. There are two resurrections. Revelation 20 tells us that the two resurrections are a thousand years apart. At the beginning of the thousand years, at the Second Advent, is the resurrection to life.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death has no Dower, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ for a thousand years.” Verse 6.

But the second resurrection, is a resurrection to damnation, meaning condemnation. How vital it is for man to make the right decision. As the Lord reminds us

“Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2.

“Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”. Hebrews 3:7, 8.

“He that hath the Son bath life and he that hath not the Son bath not life.” 1 John 5:12.

“Whosoever believeth on him hath everlasting life.” John 3:16.

This is why it is urgent that we make our peace with God and let him have his way in our lives. Eternal life is too precious to lose. The Creator wants no man to be lost. “Why will you die?” he pleads. Everyone chooses his own destiny. Thus, there are the two resurrections, the resurrection to life at the Second Advent and the resurrection to condemnation at the end of the thousand years.

THE PROBLEM OF REVELATION 20:5.

Revelation 20:5 has caused difficulty to some because at first glance, it appears to read that the resurrection of the rest of the dead at the close of the millennium is the first resurrection. The answer to this problem is best solved by checking other translations of verses 4-6.

“They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” KJV.

“They cam to life and reigned along with Christ for a thousand years, (as for the rest of the dead, they did not come to life till the thousand years were completed.) This is the first resurrection.” Moffat.

“They were restored to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead were not restored to life till the thousand years were ended.) This is the First Resurrection.” Twentieth Century N.T.

The Good News Bible and Fenton likewise place the sentence in parenthesis, indicating that “the first resurrection” concerns those who live and reign with Christ of verse 4.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” Verse 6.

This means that only the saints of God are involved in the first resurrection.

WHAT IS THE SECOND DEATH?

Notice the marvelous reason why one is “blessed” if he has part in the first resurrection.

“On such the second death has no power.”

What is the second death? It is annihilation at the hands of God. It is the death that results from the “fire that comes down from God out of heaven and devours “the unsaved.” (Verse 9.) From the first death there is a return. From the second death there is no return. It is the wages of sin. It is separation from God, it is being blotted out of existence forever. “They shall be as though they had never been.” Obadiah 1:16.

SAINTS GIVEN SPECIAL BODIES AT THE FIRST RESURRECTION

On him who is raised at the Second Advent, the fires of God’s wrath have no effect. At the first resurrection the believer is raised with a body that is vastly different from the body he now possesses. As the apostle declared of the first resurrection:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It [the body] is sown [buried] in corruption; it is raised in incorruption, [it can no longer decay] it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: [a glorious body] it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.” I Corinthians 15:42-44.

The body of the first resurrection is immortal, impervious to age and decay.

“We shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound [at the Second Advent] and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption and this mortal [subject to death] must put on immortality [power over death].” 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

The spiritual body is still a body of flesh and bones but it is not subject to the power of the natural elements. It is a body that is able to pass through outer space to the kingdom of heaven and dwell in the presence of God who “is as a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:29.) What a future awaits him who will rise in the first resurrection!

HOW WILL THE SAINTS BE PRIESTS DURING THE 1000 YEARS?

“They shall be priests of God and of Christ.”

In what way will the saints be priests? Christ’s priestly ministry ceased at the close of probation. Thereafter intercession and mediation will be no more. The saints’ priestly ministry during the thousand years will involve the investigation of the records of the unsaved and determining their degree of punishment. In the investigative judgment of the saints from 1844 onwards, Christ and the twenty-four elders are involved. (12) But during the millennium the saints and Christ are involved. (13)

HOW DO THE SAINTS REIGN?

“And shall reign with him [Christ] a thousand years.”

Over whom do the saints reign? This is the objection that is raised against the view that the earth, during the millennium, is empty, void and waste. It is claimed that there must be living people on the earth for the saints to reign over them. But the saints are with Christ, “they live and reign with Christ.” (verse 4) “They shall reign with him.” (Verse 6) Seeing Jesus is “King of kings and lord of lords”, wherever he is, he reigns. Therefore the saints, being with Christ, will also reign, as kings and priests.

THE THIRD ADVENT

In the Gospels Jesus declared that in the great resurrections, all the dead rise up “at the voice of the Son of God.” (John 5:28) This means that Christ must return to the earth again at the end of the 1000 years when the great resurrection of the unsaved takes place. This event is often called the Third Advent. It is at , this Third Advent that Christ returns from heaven and brings all his people back with him to the earth.

PLAN OF SALVATION INVOLVES THREE ADVENTS

The great temple of truth is built upon three great advents of Christ: the first at Bethlehem, the second when he comes in the near future, and the third at the end of the 1000 years. Some Christians have become confused in this area. Whole churches have been divided over it. Some believe Christ returns at the beginning of the millennium, others at the end. The truth is that Christ returns at both the beginning and at the end of the thousand years. The prophet Zechariah alluded to the Third Advent,

“Behold the day of the Lord cometh...and his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. And the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst and there shall be a very great valley and the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee.” Zechariah 14:1, 4-5. (14)

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES IS SPLIT IN TWO

This is the Third Advent, because at the Second Advent, Christ comes only to “the air”. The saints are “caught up, to meet Him in the air,” and return with Him to the Father’s house, to the “many mansions.” At the Third Advent Christ actually lands on the earth, on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem, and a great valley, or plain will be formed. The reason for this plain is that when Christ returns with his people, the great city, the new Jerusalem, also descends to the earth.

“I John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2. (5)

This great city becomes the capital of the earth made new. It will rest upon the purified plain where the Mount of Olives has split asunder. Now Zechariah declared, “the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee.” This cannot be the Second Advent because at the Second Advent, Christ comes FOR his saints. This time he comes WITH them, and as he descends he calls from the dust all whom God has rejected. It is “the resurrection of damnation”. What a tremendous event!

SATAN LOOSED

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the (resurrected) nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.” Verse 7, 8.

How is Satan loosed? What was it that bound him? He was bound by the circumstances that occurred at the Second Advent of Christ. These were the events that depopulated the earth. The translation of the saints to heaven and the destruction of the unsaved, empties the world of life and turns this old earth of ours into a bottomless pit, or abyss. In it Satan will be figuratively bound. The loosing of Satan is the reversal of the

circumstances that bound him. It is the restoration of life to this planet. It is the repopulation of the earth, when God's people return to earth and the unsaved of all the ages are resurrected to life.

The earth will be teeming with multiplied millions of resurrected people. One wonders how the earth could hold them, but it will be for only "a little season". The exact length of this "little season" is not revealed.

After the second resurrection, the scripture declares that Satan will...

"Go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle." Verse 8.

GOG AND MAGOG

Why are the resurrected unsaved given the title of "Gog and Magog"? The Revelator, as usual, borrows this term from the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 38 & 39 Gog and Magog is the term used to describe the vast combination of the enemies of ancient Israel who would have been used by Satan to invade and destroy literal Israel. Gog and Magog represent the vast combination of the enemies of God and this expression is significantly used in this chapter as will be revealed below. (15)

"...goes out to deceive the nations."

This statement reveals that the unsaved will be raised up in the same condition as they died. They will succumb to the temptations of evil. They respond to Satan. On the other hand, God's people, who are raised in the first resurrection, are perfect and immortal. They are impervious to evil. Satan has no influence upon them, but the unsaved are raised up as they die. We will show later that there is a great purpose in this.

"To gather them together to battle."

Is this a battle against each other? No! It is against the holy city, the camp of the saints. When they see the glorious city, somehow Satan deludes them into believing it is rightfully theirs, just as he deluded a third of the angels in the very beginning. He deceives them into believing that they can take possession of it. When one visualizes the multiplied millions who will be marshaled under the great generals of the past who have resisted God, it will appear quite logical that nothing could prevent them from capturing and possessing it.

"The number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about and the beloved city." Verses 8, 9.

WHY RESURRECT THE UNSAVED

Here is a tremendous scene. All the unsaved of all the ages are marshaled, organized, deceived and deluded. Some ask the question,

"Why does God do this? If all these teeming millions are going to be destroyed, why raise them up from the dead just to destroy them? Why not leave them as they were? There are several reasons. Perhaps the greatest reason is that most of us believe that if people were given another chance, they would not commit the same sin again. We know there is good in every person, as well as bad. Most of us believe that if the environment were different it could be quite a different story in regard to a person's life. If the unsaved were given another opportunity, they probably would not make the same fatal choices.

There is another aspect in regard to the unsaved. Among unbelievers there are numbers of very beautiful people with delightful dispositions. Outwardly they do no harm and never become involved in anything questionable. They are excellent citizens, etc. However they have never acknowledged Christ or made a personal decision for Christ. Can such people be saved? No! Only those who really belong to God will be saved in the kingdom. Yet this type of person has never been seen to resist or defy God, but they are not

Christians.

Might not sinless worlds wonder about God's decision to exclude them from the kingdom?

In the second resurrection, God gives the universe and the saints, a demonstration of his wisdom and justice. When all the unsaved rise up - including all the above beautiful people - those who have never publicly resisted Christ, God publicly displays to the universe where these beautiful people really stand. As Jesus said, "He that is not with me, is against me." The on looking universe beholds Satan among them. They see the unsaved succumb to Satan's deceptions and publicly take their stand with Satan against God. What was secretly in their hearts in this life is publicly brought to light in the final judgment.

This assures the universe that when God, at the Second Advent, kept these people out of the kingdom, he decided right. It shows that the decision of God was correct. It confirms the judgment of God; it confirms God's wisdom and justice. God never makes a mistake. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

Imagine the scene! On the earth will stand everyone that has ever lived in the past. This will be the one and only time when all of mankind will exist together. From Adam down, every member of the race will be there. Every one we have seen or heard of in the past, we will see him again. The leading lights of history will be there. Those who are outside the city will be able to see within. There they will see the saints of God. Many will see their very own loved ones who had chosen to serve Christ and whom they ridiculed and despised because of it. They will see them in their glorious eternal state. Imagine how they will, curse themselves with remorse, when they see what they have lost. What a bitter and staggering disappointment. As Jesus declared,

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out." Luke 13:28, 29.

There surely will be weeping and gnashing of teeth on the part of the lost, when they see the glory of the holy city and the bliss of the saved. On the other hand, of those who have been faithful to Christ, imagine their gratitude when they gaze outside the city and see those who opposed, ridiculed and persecuted them for their faith in Christ. They will be overwhelmed with gratitude that God helped them make the right decision and kept them faithful.

The next point to notice is that after the unsaved surround the city to capture it,

"Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." Verse 10.

This ends the first scene of the final judgment. The Revelator operates on the principle of repetition and enlargement. He now repeats part of the scene and puts in more detail. He enlarges the picture.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

John now portrays the final judgment in all its awe and solemnity.

"I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away and there was found no place for them." Verse 11.

When the vast throng surround the city, suddenly above the city there appears the great white throne of judgment, and Christ is enthroned upon it. Every eye is riveted upon the Judge. Everyone, as it were, is petrified. All humanity stands before God.

"Every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." [margin: subject to the judgment of God] Romans 3:19.

So awe-inspiring, so overwhelming is the scene that it seems as if heaven and earth have disappeared, the unsaved stand under the penetrating gaze of a holy and omnipotent God. All their past flashes before them, they are oblivious to their earthly surroundings.

And I saw the [resurrected] dead small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and they were judged every man according to their works." Verse 13.

EVERYONE'S RECORD PUBLICLY REVEALED

It seems that across the heavens like a mammoth movie screen, there appears before every person a panorama of his past life. Each one sees himself exactly as he was. All his past life is exposed to the universe. He sees himself especially in the light of the love of God and the sufferings of Christ on the cross for him. Imagine the reaction! The saints are inside the city. Outside are the unsaved. When the life record of the saints is revealed, all that will be displayed will be the righteousness of their lives. The universe will see all the good things - done by the grace of God. Why only their righteousness? Because their sins, their failures, their unrighteousness has all been blotted out. They accepted the blood of Jesus Christ which alone can cleanse from sin. Imagine the depths of gratitude that sweep over the saints. How thankful they will be that on earth they applied the blood of Christ and faithfully followed him. Before the universe in this dramatic, awesome experience, nothing will be witnessed against them. How they will Look up to Christ upon the throne, the one who died for them, and bless him in overwhelming gratitude.

On the other hand, imagine those outside the city - the unsaved. One thing is certain. We will all be there. We will be either inside or outside the city. Everyone of us will be in one place or the other. "If we are on the outside of the city, there will be portrayed before the universe our total sin record. All our ugly secrets will be revealed. Only the record of our evil will be displayed. All the good things that we have done will not be mentioned. (16) They will have been blotted out. For unbelievers there will be no record of any righteousness. If we are outside of Christ, if we refuse to accept him, no record is made of our good deeds. (17) Only our sins are recorded. Imagine our reaction if a movie of our secret evil life were publicly displayed. We would wish that the earth would open up and hide us in our shame.

THE UNSAVED ADMIT THEIR GUILT

This, undoubtedly, is how they will react. When the unsaved see themselves as they really were, the scripture declares:

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ for it is written, As I live said the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:10.

Mark the significance of this scripture! Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess. When the unsaved see themselves as they really were, in acknowledgment they will bend the knee and confess to God. In this present life, only a few knees bow to God, only a few lips confess to Christ. But then, everyone will bow and confess. This involves the unsaved in particular; they will bend the knee and confess to God that He is righteous, loving and just. From the very lips of the unsaved before all the universe will come the confession that God is right and they are wrong and that they are deserving of destruction. What a scene!

WHY THE LOST CANNOT BE SAVED

There they stand, facing annihilation. But maybe you ask, why could not God now save them? They have confessed, they have bent the knee. But the unsaved have done it more or less under compulsion. There was no escape. In character they are still the same. If God now saved them they would be a problem. They would be like square pegs in round holes. Heaven would be misery to them. One cannot enjoy spiritual things, one cannot enjoy God, unless he has been born again, unless he has experienced a transformation of

mind and character. Therefore God cannot save them. It would be too big a risk. God is determined that evil shall never rise the second time. This is why God has been so patient over the 6,000 years of the reign of evil. This is why He is so particular. He will only redeem those whom he can trust. He will save only those who love Him, who have supreme confidence in him no matter what.

Therefore, for the sake of the universe the essential and tragic scene now takes place.

“Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them...”

“...and they were judged, [Punished] every man according to their works. And death and hell [grave] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Revelation 20:9,13-14.

WHAT IS THE LAKE OF FIRE?

The lake of fire is this burning planet. The fire that comes down from God not only consumes the unsaved, it melts the crust of the whole earth. This planet becomes a blazing mass. The earth is purified.

“The elements shall melt with fervent heat and the works that are therein shall be burned up ...all these things shall be dissolved ... the [atmospheric] heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved.” 2 Peter 3:10-12.

This mighty consummation is “the lake of fire”. It is the final death from which there is no recovery. It is annihilation. The fate of the unsaved is not eternal torment. The second death is destruction.

“They shall be as though they had not been.” Obadiah 1:16.

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Verse 15

What a tragedy. But all those who will be involved, have chosen it. This is why the Lord pleads...

“Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your heart, now is the day of salvation.”

In Proverbs 11:31 it declares that the righteous and the wicked will be recompensed or rewarded in the earth. This will be fulfilled to the righteous when they are rewarded with an inheritance in the earth made new.

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5.

It will be fulfilled to the wicked when they are consumed in the fire that purifies the earth.

“But the [atmospheric] heavens and the earth which are now [in existence] by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment [punishment] and perdition [destruction] of ungodly men.” w Peter 3:7.

But what is the significance of verse 10?

“And the devil that deceived them, [the unsaved] was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Revelation 20:10.

A LAKE OF FIRE AT SECOND ADVENT ALSO

As shown under Revelation 19:20 there is also a lake of fire at the Second Advent in which the beast and the false prophet will be cast. We suggest that the first lake of fire has a spiritual application. However some believe that the lake of fire at the Second Advent is formed by the flaming fire that comprises the glory of Jesus Christ at his return. (18) This fire will then envelope the whole planet.

“Our God shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before him and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge

his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” Psalm 50:3-5.

“The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints.” 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

“And then shall that wicked [man of sin] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

In the Greek rendering of Revelation 20:10, the word it are” is missing. It should read,

“The lake of fire where the beast and false prophet, [and the devil] shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

The translators supplied the word “are” to make up the sense but in the light of Revelation 19:20 we believe the supplied word should be “were”. That is, “Where the beast and the false prophet were”, at the Second Advent.

THE PROBLEM OF “FOREVER AND EVER”

Does not verse 10 confirm the doctrine of “eternal torment”? They “shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.” The expression “forever and ever” is the problem. This term is a Jewish idiom which denotes continuity, but not necessarily lasting for eternity. (19)

SATAN’S DESTRUCTION WITNESSED BY ALL

Other scriptures reveal that Satan will finally be consumed. This will be enacted in the very sight of the saved. As Isaiah declared:

“How are thou fallen from heaven O Lucifer ...yet you shall be brought down to hell to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?” Isaiah 14:12-17.

This suggests that finally Lucifer, or Satan, will be compelled to materialize as a man and will become an object of curiosity and astonishment as God’s people gaze upon him. Then before their very eyes the Lord will begin Satan’s annihilation. Under the caption of “the King of Tyre”, its invisible King, the Lord addressed Satan.

“Thou art the anointed cherub [angel] that covers. Thou was upon the holy mountain of God. Thou was perfect in thy ways, till iniquity was found in thee...I will destroy thee, O covering cherub. I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shall be a terror and never shall thou be any more.” Ezekiel 28:12-19.

WHY THE SAINTS SEE SATAN CONSUMED

Undoubtedly there is great significance in God’s method of Satan’s destruction. Not only will it be a display of justice, but it could also bring assurance and comfort to the redeemed. They will witness the annihilation - the complete destruction - of the great enemy of God and man. Satan’s dying sufferings will undoubtedly continue for more than a day, for he “shall be tormented day and night”. On the other hand, while many of the unsaved will meet their end in a split second of time, others in justice, will suffer longer,

because all are “judged [punished] according to their works.”(Verse 13) One thing is certain. Sin and sinners will be no more.

“For behold the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea - and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: the day that cometh shall burn them up, said the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave dim neither root nor branch ... and ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, said the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 4:1, 3.

Satan is the root of all evil and his followers are the branches.

“And death and hell [grave] were cast into the lake of fire.” Verse 14.

How is this fulfilled? The graves exist in the earth and when the purifying fires of God melt and dissolve the crust of the earth, all the graveyards, the realm of death, will be destroyed forever. Then comes the final scene. Immediately after the “ire has done its work, John records,

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.” Revelation 21:1, 4, 5.

The renewed earth will become the eternal home of God’s people. What a hope! What a future! It is worth living for and it is worth dying for.

APPENDIX I

What of the claim that “the man of sin” is Satan and not the Papacy? The following points show that the description, as given by St. Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, cannot apply to Satan.

1. Before “the man of sin.” is revealed there would be “a falling away” or apostasy. This apostasy was yet future when St. Paul wrote. Satan’s apostasy however, was revealed before the creation of the world when there was war in heaven, etc.
2. “The man of sin” would “sit in the temple of God” [the Christian church] “showing himself” [publicly displaying] “that he is God”. Satan has never sat in the Christian church publicly posing as God. He is the invisible Antichrist, whereas the Papacy is the visible Antichrist whose leader sits in the temple of God.
3. “The man of sin” will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s Second Coming. Satan, however, will not be destroyed at the Second Advent nor at the Third Advent, but after the final judgment. His destruction will be effected by fire beginning to burn within him which will slowly consume him from within. (See under Revelation 20:10.)
4. “The man of sin” is “after the working of Satan” or to according to the working of Satan”. In other words, he is inspired by Satan. He has Satan’s spirit, but he is not Satan in person.

REFERENCES

1. See the author's, "The Angel of Time", where the principle that symbolic "time" in prophecy, applies until the Second Advent. After that event time is literal.
2. Jamieson, Faussett and Brown on Revelation 20:3.
3. See Edward Roseodahl's, "Simple Bible Chronology".
- 3a. In the Greek Septuagint translation, the word "deep" is the same word translated "bottomless pit" in the KN version of Revelation.
4. Revelation 18:8.
5. See the author's "New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem, All Things New."
6. Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22-23; 11:5-9; 25:6-8; 55:12, 13.
7. See Revelation 21:1-2.
8. Luke 13:30.
9. Many translations of verse 4 read as if there were only one group singled out and that is the end-time group who are involved in the final conflict with the beast, etc. These are described as beheaded. However, Uriah Smith claim that the Greek cannot be understood in that way. See, "Thoughts an Daniel and Revelation!" page 746.
10. 'This scripture is also applied to the investigative judgment of the saints by the author of "Early Writings', Pages 52,53.
11. See the author's, "God's Final Ultimatum to Men".
12. Revelation 4:4; 5:8-10.
13. See "Early Writings", pages 290-291.
14. The predictions of Zechariah applied initially to literal Israel after they returned from Babylonian captivity. Because those predictions were not fulfilled to Israel, they now apply in a spiritual sense to spiritual Israel in the end time. Some of the local details drop out when applied to spiritual Israel. The predictions of Zechariah like a number of other Old Testament predictions are conditional in nature. See Zechariah 6:15.
15. See the author's, "Gog and Magog! Must Russia Invade Israel to Fulfill Ezekiel 38, 39?"
16. Ezekiel 18:24; 33:12, 13, 18.
17. John 3:18.
18. Under Revelation 19:20 we showed that the lake of fire into which the beast and the false prophet will be cast, is a spiritual lake of fire. They will be consumed by the burning anger of their supporters who will turn on them when they realize how the beast and the false prophet have deluded and used them.
19. The term "forever and ever" is a Jewish idiomatic expression which denotes continuity, or as long as life exists. However the length of time is dependent upon that to which it is applied. When it is applied to God and the saints' future existence, it means eternity but when it is applied to other items it means as long as life continues. For example:
 1. The Hebrew servant's ear lobe was bored through to indicate that he was to be a servant forever, meaning as long as he lived. (Exodus 21:1-6.)
 2. King David was king over Israel "forever". (1 Chronicles 28:4.) But that period of time wanted to forty continuous years. (1 Chronicles 29:27.)
 3. Jonah was in the whale's belly "forever". (Jonah 2:6.) Actually it was three days and three nights, but it was continuous. (Jonah 1:17.)

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