

The Reign of Christ

by John F. Walvoord

This sermon explores the different interpretations of the millennial reign of Christ, including premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial views.

Scripture: Matthew 25:31

Topics: "Millennial Reign", "Eschatology"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the events surrounding the millennial reign of Christ on earth as described in Revelation 20. He explains the diverse interpretations of the millennial passage, the significance of the first resurrection, the rebellion led by Satan after the thousand years, and the final judgment at the great white throne. Walvoord emphasizes the eternal punishment of Satan and the wicked, the righteousness of Christ's reign, and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the millennial kingdom.

Transcript

This is one of the great chapters of the Bible. It presents in summary the tremendous series of events which relate to the millennial reign of Christ on earth. In this future period of one thousand years, many expositors believe that hundreds of Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled, such as that of Jeremiah 23:5-6:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A bewildering array of diverse interpretations greets the student of this passage. Generally speaking, however, expositions fall into a number of principal categories.

E. B. Elliott points out that there have been four explanations of this millennial passage: (1) the literal and premillennial interpretation followed by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. This holds to a literal period of a thousand years preceded and followed by resurrection and judgment. (2) The amillennial view that the resurrection is spiritual, that is, the new birth, and the millennium began with the first coming of Christ, a view popularized by Augustine. (3) The view of Grotius and Hammond that the resurrection referred to the revival of the church beginning at the time of Constantine when paganism was overthrown. (4) The postmillennial idea introduced by Whitby and advocated by Vitrina which understands the

resurrection

to signify a resurrection of the principles, doctrine, spirit, and character of the Christian martyrs and saints departed: being thus one in part spiritual, in part ecclesiastical, and indeed in part too national; inasmuch as it is supposed that the Jews will be then nationally restored, as well as converted, to take a share of it.³⁰⁴

Elliott much prefers the postmillennial view, that of Whitby, and argues his case for it at length. As Elliott notes, the most important divisions arise from the interpretation of the thousand years, and the three major views are: the premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial interpretations. Each of these, however, has many variations and subdivisions which need to be understood in a proper interpretation of Revelation 20. Premillennial interpretation. All premillennial interpreters consider the second advent of Christ as preceding His thousand-year reign on the earth. They differ, however, in their interpretation of preceding passages in the book of Revelation as well as in their concept of the millennium itself. Three important types of premillennialism can be observed:

1. Premillenarians of the historical school tend to interpret Revelation 6 through 19 as largely fulfilled in history but hold that chapter 20 and following are future and are to be interpreted somewhat literally. An illustration of this form of premillennialism is found in E. H. Horne who believes that symbolism to a large extent ceases in chapter 20 and specific prophecy is given. Horne states:

The symbolic language in which previous chapters have been written is here dropped, and certain predictions are made in plain words, though they contain allusions to the Dragon and the Beast, which are symbolic figures. The meaning of the Dragon is here so carefully explained, as "the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," that all of symbolism is removed: and the Beast is only indirectly referred to at all. The change in style is no doubt due to the change of subject; though the predictions found in this chapter relate to the consequences of the Second Advent, and that event will remove all need of concealment of things future.³⁰⁵

Horne's position is that all the prophecies of Revelation are future from John's point of view but that much of the material through chapter 18 has already been largely fulfilled and will be climaxed with the second coming of Christ and a literal millennium.

2. A second form of premillennialism emphasizes the soteriological character of the millennium. This point of view is usually advocated by covenant theologians who are premillennial and by others such as George Ladd in his work *Jesus and the Kingdom*. The millennium is considered by them as primarily an aspect of God's soteriological program, and the political character of the kingdom and the prominence of the nation Israel are subordinated. For this reason, some like Ladd attempt a synthesis of the amillennial and premillennial points of view by finding some prophecies relating to the future kingdom as being fulfilled in the present age.

3. The most popular form of premillennialism in the twentieth century is supported by premillenarians who consider the millennium an aspect of God's theocratic program, a fulfillment of the promise given to David that his kingdom and throne would continue forever over the house of Israel. Advocates of this position include many twentieth century premillennial scholars such as Lewis Sperry Chafer, Alva McClain, Charles Feinberg, Charles Ryrie, Wilbur Smith, and Merrill Unger, and many popular writers and Bible teachers such as C. I. Scofield, A. C. Gaebelein, H. A. Ironside, William Pettingill, and numerous others. Advocates of this view hold that the millennium is a period in which Christ will literally reign on earth as its

supreme political leader and that the many promises of the Old Testament relating to a kingdom on earth in which Israel will be prominent and Gentiles will be blessed will have complete and literal fulfillment. Because the distinctive character of this millennial reign of Christ is maintained in contrast to the present age, this view is sometimes designated as the dispensational interpretation. In the interpretation of the book of Revelation, they consider all material from 4:1 on as future, and are often named futurists. See note at 4:1.

Amillennial interpretation. The amillennial interpretation is essentially a denial that there will be a millennial reign of Christ after His second advent. It is amillennial or nonmillennial because it denies such a literal reign of Christ on earth. Although there is a great variety of amillennial interpretations, adherents of this view also form several subdivisions.

1. The historic Augustinian form of amillennialism is based on Augustine's work *The City of God*.³⁰⁶ In his discussion of the millennium, Augustine advanced the theory that the thousand years fall in the interadvent period and will terminate with the second advent. Because this denied a future millennium after the second advent, his interpretation has in modern times been called amillennial.

Augustine was an advocate of the view, common in his day, that human history would be completed in 6,000 years. Unlike some early premillenarians who held the same point of view but believed that the millennium would be the seventh millennium of history, Augustine felt that the seventh millennium was the eternal state. As Augustine followed what is known as the septuagint chronology which began the sixth millennium several centuries before Christ, he considered that the final millennium was well along at the time of his writing. Augustine tended to interpret the one thousand years as literal, but he was not emphatic on this point and left the question somewhat open. In order to accommodate his point of view to Revelation 20, he held that "the first resurrection" is a spiritual resurrection which occurs when a person is regenerated by faith in Christ, while the second resurrection described in Revelation 20 occurs at the time of the second advent. Augustinian amillennialism is very important because most schools of thought which oppose premillennialism are derived in some measure from Augustinian theology. Many modern scholars hold with some minor variations to Augustinian amillennialism.

Harry Buis, an amillenarian belonging to the preterist school of interpretation, believes that the thousand years of the millennium describe the period between the first and second advents of Christ. His reasons for holding this position are typical of the amillennial position:

1. No other passage of Scripture mentions such a thousand-year period. Obscure passages are to be interpreted in the light of less obscure passages, and not vice versa. 2. The entire book is one filled with symbolism; therefore any doctrine based on insisting upon a literal thousand-year period is building on a weak foundation. 3. The amillennial position agrees most fully with the interpretation that the primary application of the beast was the Roman Empire. 4. The creeds of the church such as the Apostles' Creed make no mention of such a literal period between this age and the eternal kingdom. The greatest Bible scholars of all times, the Reformers, were not premillenarian.³⁰⁷

Premillenarians usually have objected to this type of argument as being inconclusive. The six mentions of "a thousand years" in the passage are sufficient to establish the doctrine as scriptural. In general the premillennial answer to arguments of this kind is that they do not have sufficient weight to alter the ordinary meaning of the passage.

Another well-known advocate of Augustinian amillenarianism is Abraham Kuyper who, in attempting to demonstrate the untenability of the premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20, nevertheless makes this confession:

In every other writing the construction of the first ten verses of chapter 20 would require a literal interpretation, but as in Revelation the idea "thousand" is never taken literally, and also here merely expresses the exceeding fulness of the divine action, the precise, literal and historical understanding can not be imputed to God, and the exegete is duty bound to interpret what as Divine language comes to us according to the claim of the exegesis that is adaptable to it.³⁰⁸

What Kuyper overlooks, of course, is that the term "thousand" is never used alone anywhere else in the book of Revelation. Where it is used in combination with numbers, as the 12,000 of each tribe of Israel, there is no proof whatever that other than the literal sense is intended, and this is also true in the entire New Testament.

Lenski also follows traditional Augustinianism when he states, "These 1,000 years thus extend from the incarnation and the enthronement of the Son (12, 5) to Satan's final plunge into hell (20, 10), which is the entire New Testament period."³⁰⁹

Typical of the Roman Catholic interpretation of the millennium is that by R. J. Loenertz, who makes the millennium the present age between the two advents and makes the millennium equal to the three and one-half years of the great tribulation. The period when the two witnesses of Revelation 11 lie dead in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days is made equivalent to the period when Satan is loosed at the end of the millennium. The contemporary Roman Catholic interpretation is an extension of the Augustinian amillennialism which equates the millennium with the present age.³¹⁰

2. A modified Augustinian interpretation of the millennium is probably the most popular amillennial viewpoint today. Advocates include capable twentieth century scholars such as Louis Berkhof, William Hendriksen, Oswald Allis, Floyd Hamilton, Gerhardus Vos, and many others. Like Augustine, they believe that Revelation 20 parallels the earlier chapters of the book of Revelation and constitutes a recapitulation. Unlike Augustine, however, they believe the millennium refers to the saints reigning in heaven with Christ. In contrast to Augustine, they do not make any attempt to make the thousand years a literal period. As this was made impossible after a.d. 1000 had come to pass, their "millennium" accordingly runs from the death of Christ to His second coming. The binding of Satan is considered to be partial, consisting in Christ's triumph over him, first in His temptations and later in every triumph which stems from Christ. The first resurrection occurs when the Christian's soul is taken from earth to heaven at his death. The second resurrection relates to the resurrection of all men.

A variation of this point of view is found in B. B. Warfield who to some extent follows an earlier suggestion of Duesterdieck and Kliefoth that the millennium is the intermediate state.³¹¹ In contrast to Hendriksen, however, Warfield is more optimistic, hence is usually classified as a post-millenarian. His interpretation of Revelation 20, however, is very similar to Hendriksen's. Robert Culver comments on Warfield's view:

While his theories are ingenious, they are not convincing. I know of no prominent writer who has heartily endorsed and adopted his views of Revelation 20... Except that his view was expressed by a noted scholar, whose expositions in Christian doctrine and some other areas are justly famous, it is doubtful that his view of the Millennium would have made an impression on the Christian public.³¹²

Still another variation within modern amillennialism is the form of preterist interpretation advanced by H. B. Swete in *The Apocalypse of Saint John* in which he follows the earlier suggestion of Grotius and Hammond that the millennium started with the triumph of Christianity at the time of Constantine when Christianity began to be a major force in opposing paganism. This view, also advanced by Albertus Pieters, combines various views of amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism. Like the amillennialists, these men view the millennium as being in the present age and of indeterminate length, following Augustine in this. Like postmillennialism, amillennialism is optimistic in viewing the church as moving triumphantly to victory. Like premillennialism, it recognizes the continuity of chapters 19 and 20 of Revelation in that the binding of Satan, the first resurrection, and the thousand years are chronologically subsequent to chapter 19. Amillennialism recognizes also that the destruction of the beast is the downfall of Rome as a pagan power. Swete states, "St. John has in view the moment of the overthrow of the Beast and the False Prophet, i.e., the final breakup of the Roman world-power and its ally, the pagan system of priestcraft and superstition."³¹³ Swete describes the millennium as "the age of the Martyrs, however long it might last," and continues that this period "would be followed by a far longer period of Christian supremacy during which the faith for which the Martyrs died would live and reign."³¹⁴ Swete declares that this "is the essential teaching of the present vision."³¹⁵ The millennium will conclude with the war of Gog and Magog which Swete considers the climax of the present age.

3. The interpretation that the millennium is purely a descriptive term is followed by still other amillennarians. Milligan, for instance, believes that the millennium does not indicate any time period at all.

The fundamental principle to be kept clearly and resolutely in view is this, that the thousand years express no period of time. Like so many other expressions of the Apocalypse, their real meaning is different from their apparent meaning. They are not to be taken literally. They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness. Satan is bound for a thousand years-- i.e., he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years--i.e., they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory.³¹⁶

C. Anderson Scott expresses hearty agreement with Milligan that the thousand years express no period of time at all but rather simply an idea that Satan is completely bound.³¹⁷

William Bruce expresses the opposition to a literal interpretation of the millennium of all expositors who consider Revelation as purely descriptive rather than predictive:

The theory of a personal reign of Christ upon earth, with the risen saints for His subjects, is founded on a literal apprehension of a prophecy that was never intended to be literally understood, and which is impossible to be literally fulfilled.³¹⁸

Like most others who adopt a descriptive interpretation of Revelation, Bruce considers it self-evident that literal prediction is impossible as well as literal fulfillment.

Ames, in keeping with his view that the millennium is the present age and not of exact duration, holds as a normal principle that in the entire book of Revelation "numbers are taken as symbols of epics, not as a measurement of duration."³¹⁹ On the contrary, it may be observed that while numbers have symbolic value, there is no solid evidence that any of the numbers of the Revelation referring to time periods are other than literal.

Vaughan believes like Ames:

I am not aware of any instance in which that particular duration (one thousand years) is used in Scripture literally. We are all familiar with the phrases, A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The application of the expressions is always vague, not strict: it denotes a period protracted, prolonged, but indefinite.³²⁰

Vaughan, as is typical of other writers, fails to recognize that when Scriptures speak of "a thousand years" as in Psalm 90:4, a literal thousand years is meant. A thousand years with a man is only a moment with God, but this does not deny that it is actually a thousand years with man. Again, when 2 Peter 3:8 states that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, the meaning is clear that one day with God is as a literal thousand years with man--that is, the day has great detail in God's plan. When the verse goes on to say a thousand years are as one day, it is speaking of a literal thousand years with man as being as one day with the Lord. In none of these references is the literalness of a thousand years questioned.

Some consider the millennial teaching of Revelation 20 a complete enigma and are therefore amillennial to the extreme. This view is usually followed by modern liberals who do not take prophecy seriously.

Postmillennialism. One of the most recent points of view, at least in its modern definition, is the interpretation of Revelation from the postmillennial view. Adherents of this position regard the thousand-year reign as being completed prior to the second coming of Christ. It is very similar to amillennial interpretations such as that of Swete and Pieters in that it views the millennium as the final triumph of the gospel in the present age. It is usually more specifically a literal view, however, and considers the millennium to be a thousand years. Adherents to this postmillennial position are largely nineteenth century scholars such as Charles Hodge, A. H. Strong, C. A. Briggs, and David Brown. Most of them trace their view to that of Daniel Whitby, seventeenth century controversialist. With variations, they consider the gospel as being triumphant during the last one thousand years of the present age which most of them consider as being still future, although not all insist that it is a literal period of that length.

A variation of postmillennialism, advanced by certain liberal scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, connected postmillennialism with the theory of evolution. Such writers paid little attention to the precise details advanced in Revelation 20 and often stretched the millennium to millions of years that they felt still were required to bring humanity to its full flower.³²¹ This point of view has had little influence on contemporary discussion of the millennial doctrine.

With the occurrence of the two world wars, postmillennialism suffered a severe reversal. However, a recent writer, Loraine Boettner, in his work *The Millennium*, has revived the view of Charles Hodge that the millennium is still ahead, a thousand years in which the gospel will be triumphant, a period climaxed by the return of Christ.

With the great variety of interpretations of Revelation 20 with their corresponding influence on eschatology, the task of giving an exposition of this chapter is greatly complicated. The confusion of so many interpretations, however, is dispelled if the events of this chapter are allowed to follow in their natural chronological sequence, with the return of Christ and the conquest of the beast and the false prophet serving as the introduction to the millennium. The opening events of the twentieth chapter then become a natural outgrowth of the battle in which the beast and the false prophet and his armies are destroyed, leading to the next step, the judgment of Satan himself. The repeated phrase "And I saw" (cf. 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11, 12) marks the major steps of the progress of the revelation.

The sequence of events is supported not only by the chronological order itself (note the "when" of 20:7) but by the logical dependence of one event upon the preceding event. This is strong evidence for chronological order in this section and, if this is granted, the millennial kingdom follows the second coming as described in 19:11-16. The only reason for denying such a conclusion would be to avoid premillennialism. There is no evidence in the passage at all which would give ground to question that from 19:1 to 21:8 a strict chronological order is observed. Many expositors would extend the chronological sequence to the end of the book of Revelation. Accordingly, though Revelation as a whole is not strictly in chronological order, as some chapters are parenthetical or summary in character, chapters 19 and 20 constitute a unit and form one continued prophetic strain. The folly of attempting to find historic fulfillment in chapters 6 through 20 is well illustrated in Hengstenberg who, following the conservative postmillennial point of view, begins the millennium at Christmas Eve a.d. 800, when the pope crowned Charlemagne. Hengstenberg believed Christ would return at the end of approximately 1,000 years from that date, namely, in his own lifetime.³²²

The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

20:1-3 And 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.

The next phase of the prophetic program is introduced by another vision of an angel (cf. 7:2; 8:1; 10:1; 14:6, 8, 9, 15, 17, 18; 17:1; 18:1; 19:17). Though some have understood the angel of 20:1 to be Christ Himself, in lieu of specific proof it is better to assume that this is another great angel operating at the command and in the authority of God. As John witnesses the scene, he observes the angel coming down from heaven possessing the key of "the bottomless pit," that is, "the abyss" (cf. 9:1, 2, 11; also "the deep," Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7). This is the home of demons and unclean spirits. The angel is also observed to have a great chain in his hands. In verse 2 the angel is seen laying hold of Satan and binding him for 1,000 years after which, in verse 3, Satan is cast into the abyss and its door is shut. A seal is placed upon Satan himself making it impossible for him to deceive the nations until a thousand years have elapsed, after which, the angel declares, Satan must be loosed for a little while.

The dramatic prophecy contained in these three verses has been the subject of endless dispute because to some extent the whole controversy between premillenarians and amillenarians hangs upon it. The passage yields to patient exegesis, and there is no solid reason for taking it in other than its ordinary sense. According to the prediction the angel is empowered for six functions: (1) to lay hold on the dragon, (2) to bind him for 1,000 years, (3) to cast him into the abyss, (4) to shut him up, that is, to use the key which will lock up the abyss, (5) to set a seal upon Satan which will render him inactive in his work of deceiving the nations, (6) to loose him after the thousand years. At every point, however, the prediction has been disputed.

Encell, in keeping with his historical interpretation of Revelation, finds the chain with which Satan was bound a symbol of "the chain of evidence that has been coming to life for nearly a hundred years past, but mostly within the last half century, and is still coming to life, corroborating the truths of the Bible." By this he means archaeological evidence confirming the Bible record. He continues:

We are living in the time when the many lengths of this chain are being brought forward for which to bind Satan; when he is securely bound a happy state of things will prevail, as for a long period of time, is indicated by the expression "a thousand years." How long a period of time is symbolized no mortal knows.³²³

The difficulty with this symbolic interpretation is that it fails to satisfy the passage. The mounting evidence for Christianity does not seem to have bound Satan in the twentieth century.

The question has been raised as to how an angel who is an immaterial being can lay hold on Satan who is also an immaterial being. Such a query is born of unbelief. Certainly the qualities belonging to a physical body are frequently attributed to angels and to Satan; and God, the Creator of angels, can also deal with them in a physical way. Particular objection has been raised to the idea of binding Satan with a chain, again on the grounds that an immaterial being such as an angel or Satan cannot be bound with a physical chain.

In considering this problem, we must bear in mind that we have here the language of appearance, that is, that John saw the angel with a chain in his hands. The word chain here (Gr., *halysis*) is the same as found in Mark 5:3 relating to the man possessed of demons who had been bound with chains. It is also used for the chains which fell off Peter (Acts 12:7) and for Paul's chains (Acts 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:16). Different words, however, are used in 2 Peter 2:4 referring to the chains of darkness binding the wicked angel, and for the everlasting chains of Jude 6. These are more general terms for being bound. The four instances in Scripture of the word for "chain" in Revelation 20:1 give no reason for interpreting the word in other than its ordinary sense.

Whatever the physical character of the chain, the obvious teaching of the passage is that the action is so designed as to render Satan inactive. The intention is not to represent Satan as merely restricted but as rendered completely inactive. In confirmation of this, verse 3 states that he is cast into the abyss, which by its character is a place of confinement. The angel uses the key and shuts him up in the abyss. If God wanted to show that Satan was totally inactive and out of touch with the world, how could He have rendered it more specifically than He has done in this passage? The fact that Satan is bound for a thousand years is confirmed by the multitude of passages dealing with the kingdom period in which Satan is never found working in the world.

Of major importance, however, is the decision whether this scene refers to the future millennium or to the present age as is taught by the amillenarians. It should be made clear from this passage that if the millennium is the interadvent period between the first and second comings of Christ, as held by amillenarians (the common Augustinian viewpoint of the interadvent age), then Satan must be bound during the present age. There are few theories of Scripture which are less warranted than the idea that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ. Amillenarians often refer to Luke 10:18, as does Augustine, where Christ said to the seventy witnesses returning in triumph from their period of witness and miracles, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." From this it has been inferred that the fall of Satan occurred at the first coming of Christ instead of in relationship to the second coming.

Opposed to the amillennial interpretation, however, is the uniform revelation of the New Testament which shows that Satan in the present age is a very active person. If anything, he is more active than in preceding ages and is continuing an unrelenting opposition to all that God purposes to do in the present age.

In Luke 22:3, Satan is said to have entered "into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve" with the result that he went out to betray Christ. Satan is revealed to have attempted to dominate Simon Peter as recorded in the Lord's saying in Luke 22:31: "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." It was only the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the binding of Satan, which prevented the defeat of Peter.

Throughout the rest of the New Testament similar references are found. In Acts 5:3 Ananias and Sapphira are said to be filled with Satan and motivated to lie to the Holy Spirit regarding the extent of their gift to the church. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, Paul records that Satan is active in blinding the minds of those who hear the gospel: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

In 2 Corinthians 11:14 Satan is declared to be transformed into an angel of light thereby deceiving the church through false teachers. The unsaved, according to Ephesians 2:2, live "according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 that Satan had hindered his coming to them. More dramatically, in 2 Timothy 2:26, unsaved people are declared to be taken captive by the devil at his will and are rescued only by the grace of God. The capstone to this series of references to the activity of Satan is found in 1 Peter 5:8 which should settle the matter beyond dispute. In this passage Christians are told, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This passage, instead of saying that Satan is bound and unable to deceive the nations, pictures him as a lion which has been loosed, walking about, roaring, seeking someone to devour. That Satan is hindered by the protective power of God is evident throughout the Scriptures as in the case of Job. There is no evidence whatever that Satan is bound today, but rather the mounting evil in the world and in the church would seem to demonstrate that he is more active than ever. The nations of the world are being deceived today and saints are being opposed by the ceaseless activity and deceptive power of Satan.

Much has been made of the fact that these verses are found in a book largely given to symbolic presentation and visions. It is true that John is seeing a vision in these early verses of chapter 20. The passage reveals, however, something more than what he saw. John visually saw the angel bind Satan and cast him into the pit. John could not see visually how long Satan was to be in the pit nor could he see the purpose, namely, that the devil should deceive the nations no more and that he should be loosed again after the thousand years. This purpose had to be given to John by divine revelation which constituted an interpretation of the vision. If the record had given only what he saw without any indication as to the meaning of the passage, it might have lent itself to diverse interpretation. But with the vision recorded as it is, accompanied by the divine interpretation, expositors are not free to inject their own preconceived ideas but must accept the plain statements and interpretations of the passage as given.

It is most important to observe that while the thousand years are mentioned in verses 4 and 5 in the vision of John, they are also mentioned in verse 6 in the interpretation. The expositor is not free to spiritualize the interpretation of the vision but must accept the interpretation in its ordinary and literal meaning. If this is done, there is no other alternative than the premillennial interpretation which holds that at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound for a thousand years. This will constitute one of the major features of Christ's righteous rule upon the earth and in fact will make possible the peace and tranquillity and absence of spiritual warfare predicted for the millennial kingdom. The period before Satan is bound, that is, the great tribulation, and the period at the close of the millennium, when Satan is again loosed, stand in sharp

contrast to the tranquillity of the thousand years in between. The fact is that the only period in all human history in which Satan will not execute his work of deception will be the thousand years in which Christ will reign.

This passage also introduces, for the first time in Scripture, the exact length of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ. Six times in this passage the fact is stated that the period is a thousand years or a millennium.

The idea that the future millennium would be 1,000 years has been suggested by apocalyptic writers before Christ. In the Book of the Secrets of Enoch, 32:2; 33:1-2 Enoch holds the idea that the history of man will run for seven thousand years, the last millennium of which will be one of great blessedness and will precede the eighth millennium, which is eternity.³²⁴ According to R. H. Charles, Enoch's view can be explained as follows:

As the world was made in six days, so its history will be accomplished in 6,000 years, and as the six days of creation were followed by one of rest, so the 6,000 years of the world's history would be followed by a rest of 1,000 years. On its close would begin the eighth eternal day of blessedness when time should be no more, 32:2-33:2.³²⁵

While evidence points to the conclusion that it was commonly believed that the kingdom reign of Christ would be a thousand years even before this scripture was written, possibly originating in direct revelation from God through His prophets although not recorded in Scripture, here scriptural authority is given for this concept.

Much of the opposition to the futurist interpretation has been leveled at this concept of a literal thousand years. Barnes, more than a century ago, in commenting on the phrase "a thousand years," stated that it should be understood "either (a) literally; or (b) in the prophetic use of the term, where a day would stand for a year, thus making a period of three hundred and sixty thousand years; or (c) figuratively, supposing that it refers to a long but indefinite period of time." Barnes seems to prefer the interpretation that the millennium is 360,000 years in duration. He further holds that Revelation 20 should not be taken literally, and interposes the words "as if" before the judgment and resurrection of 20:4 as well as with the binding of Satan. This would seem to be adding to the book, so strongly forbidden in 22:18.³²⁶

Baldinger, like many others, rejects completely the prophetic character of Revelation and dismisses the thousand-year reign of Christ in these words:

This mooted passage is, therefore, nothing more than a word of encouragement to those Christians who are facing martyrdom for refusing to bow before the image of the beast or burn incense to Caesar... a man who brings an unprejudiced mind to this passage will find not a scintilla of evidence for two resurrections... We believe it [the millennium] refers merely to a great period of time of unknown length, in which evil will be more and more restrained and the gospel increasingly triumphant.³²⁷

There is no good reason for taking the thousand years in other than their literal sense. Even Augustine, living in the fourth and fifth centuries, though he denied many other aspects of the literal reign of Christ on earth in his attempt to accommodate it to the interadvent age, was favorable to the concept of a literal thousand years. It was only after the second thousand years of the interadvent age had passed that questions began to be raised concerning the literalness of this event in an attempt to harmonize it with the interadvent period. It is evident that much has to take place which will require time, including the repopulation of the world after its decimation in the great tribulation.

While Scripture sometimes uses the term "day" in other than a literal sense, never in the Bible is a month or a year used in other than its literal sense. Even the word day used of a period of time in reference to "the day of the Lord" is used literally throughout the book of Revelation. It may also be faithfully held that all numbers in the Revelation are literal. About the only number that can even be reasonably questioned is that of the army of two hundred million in 9:16. Even here it is probable that the number is intended to be taken literally as is the "ten thousand times ten thousand" of 5:11. Certainly there is nothing inherently impossible in a thousand-year period in which Christ should reign upon the earth.³²⁸

The Judgment and Resurrection of Tribulation Saints (20:4)

20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

The interpretation of verse 4 is complicated by a lack of specificity. John in his vision records that he saw thrones but refers to those sitting on the thrones as "they" (the subject "they" supplied by the translator as implied in the third person plural of the verb). Who are these sitting on thrones and what is meant by the judgment given to them? One possibility is that the subject of the verb "sat" includes Christ and all the saints related to Him including both the church and Israel. Possible confirmation of this is found in 22:5 where the servants of the Lord are said to reign with Christ.

The most probable interpretation is that they are the twenty-four elders who are said to reign on earth (5:10). This correlates with the prophecy of Christ recorded in Luke 22:29-30: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." These words addressed to the twelve disciples indicate that they will share with Christ His rule over the world and especially will judge Israel at the beginning of the kingdom. Inasmuch as the twelve apostles are members of the church, the Body of Christ, they represent the church as such. A parallel passage is found in Matthew 19:28.

The judgment here predicted may be considered a general one involving several phases of divine judgment at this stage in world history. According to Matthew 25:31-46, the nations or the Gentiles will be judged following the return of Christ. In a similar manner the house of Israel is judged according to Ezekiel 20:33-38. The implication in the latter part of verse 4 is that the tribulation saints resurrected from the dead are also judged and rewarded. If the saints of the Old Testament are raised at this time, they too may be the objects of divine judgment and reward.

Specific mention, however, is made of those described as "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." This detailed description fits only one class of saints, namely, the tribulation saints who in refusing to worship the beast are martyred. Here we learn that they are beheaded, first, for their positive witness for Christ and the Word of God, second, because they refuse to worship the beast and receive his mark. The background of this experience is found in Revelation 13:15-17. Included in the number of tribulation saints are the two witnesses of chapter 11, the "souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (6:9), and the martyrs referred to in 12:11. The group as a whole is seen in heaven in 7:9-17.

These who were the special objects of Satan's hatred and the beast's persecution are now exalted, rewarded, and blessed. They are declared to have "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The verbs are in the past tense but are obviously prophetic from John's perspective because he is looking at these events from the viewpoint of eternity future as if already accomplished. The expression "they lived" implies that they are resurrected and live again, similar to the meaning of Christ's statement in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." It is the resurrection of life mentioned in John 5:29.

The tribulation saints are also declared to reign with Christ a thousand years. This has troubled some who have considered the church as properly reigning with Christ, which implies that saints of other ages will be the subjects of the kingdom. It should be evident from this passage that others will share places of prominent rule with the church as the Body of Christ in the millennial kingdom as is also revealed in verse 6. There is a sense, of course, in which saints participate in the present spiritual kingdom of God. This explanation is quite inadequate to support the teaching that we are now reigning with Christ in any real sense. The order is rather that we suffer now and reign in the future (2 Tim. 2:12). Such a reign with Christ would require Christ to be in the present earth in a physical way participating directly in the government of the world.

Most important also in verse 4 is the expression "they lived" (Gr., *eze,,san*), used in the sense of coming to life. Amillenarians who equate this with spiritual resurrection or regeneration point out that the verb does not actually mean to be resurrected, but only to live. While the word itself is not specific, it is the context which designates it as a bodily resurrection. Verse 5 states, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." The resurrection at the end of the millennium is obviously a bodily resurrection as it includes the unsaved. The context therefore invests the word with the necessary content of bodily resurrection. This is confirmed by the fact that the same verb is used of Christ in 1:18 where He states, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." The same expression is found also in 2:8. As Culver has pointed out, if the saints are going to reign with Christ, they will need to be alive in the same sense that He is, namely, having a resurrection body.³²⁹

The most important truth introduced in verse 4 is the evident fact that a thousand years separate the resurrection of the martyred dead from the resurrection of the wicked dead. This is borne out in the passage which follows.

The First Resurrection (20:5-6)

20:5-6 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: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

In order to clarify the exact distinctions observed in this passage, John mentions now that in contrast to the martyred dead raised at this time, the rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished. The resurrection at the beginning of the millennium is therefore characterized as "the first resurrection." In what sense can the tribulation saints in their resurrection be labeled "the first resurrection"?

It is obvious that Christ was the first one raised from the dead with a resurrection body as He was the firstfruit from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20). On the occasion of the resurrection of Christ, Matthew mentions that at the death of Christ, "the graves were opened" and that later "many bodies of the saints which slept

arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27:52-53). This difficult passage is best explained as an actual resurrection of a token number of saints in keeping with the symbolism of the feast of the firstfruits, when a handful of grain, not just one stalk, was presented to the priest. There is no evidence that the resurrection of Matthew 27 included all the righteous saints up to that time, as Daniel 12:2 seems to place the resurrection of the Old Testament saints immediately after the great tribulation described in Daniel 12:1. In any event, there was a genuine resurrection on the occasion of the resurrection of Christ.

In describing the resurrection of the saints here, the familiar word for "resurrection" (Gr., anastasis) is used, a word occurring about forty times in the New Testament. This word is almost always used of bodily resurrection. The only exception seems to be in Luke 2:34. The fact that practically all instances of anastasis refer to physical resurrection makes it improbable that it means here what amillenarians frequently interpret it to mean, namely, a spiritual resurrection or regeneration. It is just as unnatural to deny that it means bodily resurrection here as in the case of the resurrection of Christ Himself. Hence, it may be concluded that this resurrection is not different in kind from other resurrections which are included in the designation "the first resurrection."

At the end of the church age the rapture of the church will take place, and the dead in Christ will be raised. At the end of the great tribulation, the tribulation saints will also be raised from the dead. It would seem clear from these facts that the term "the first resurrection" is not an event but an order of resurrection including all the righteous who are raised from the dead before the millennial kingdom begins. They are "first" in contrast to those who are raised last, after the millennium, when the wicked dead are raised and judged. Just as there are two kinds of physical death, namely, the first death which results in burial, and the second death which is described as being cast into the lake of fire (20:14), so there are two kinds of resurrection, a first resurrection having to do with the resurrection of the righteous, and a second resurrection having to do with the wicked. They are separated by at least one thousand years. Just as the first death did not occur to all in one moment but is experienced individually by those who die over a long period of time, so the first resurrection is fulfilled according to the groups that are in view.

A further question can be raised concerning the special mention of the martyred dead of the tribulation. In view of the fact that they are publicly humiliated and suffer as no preceding generation of saints have suffered, so God selects them for public triumph on the occasion of the establishment of His kingdom in the earth.

The blessedness of those who take part in the first resurrection regardless of classification is summarized in verse 6 in the words "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Their estate is a happy and holy one. They are delivered from the power of the second death; they are given the special status of priests of God and of Christ, and are privileged to reign with Him for the thousand years. As previously indicated in verse 4, the privilege of reigning with Christ is not exclusively the reward of the church, but the righteous saints in general are given privileged places of service. This does not mean that classifications of saints are ignored, but each saint is rewarded according to his individual relationship to the sovereign will of God.

An illustration of the differing capacities in which saints can reign is afforded in the book of Esther. Esther, as queen, reigned with Ahasuerus as his wife and queen, while Mordecai, her uncle, reigned as the chief political officer of the king. Both reigned but in different senses and in different offices. If the church is afforded the special place of being the Bride of Christ and reigning in this sense, other resurrected people

will also reign and enjoy privileges and rewards. They will apparently not only share in the political aspects of the kingdom but also in its religious life, for they are declared to be "priests of God and of Christ," a designation of a privileged rank similar to that which the church enjoys in this present age under Christ our High Priest. The expression "shall reign" (Gr., *basileusousin*) is future in the best manuscripts. Inasmuch as this is future in relationship to the martyred dead who die in the tribulation and are raised in the second advent, it provides added proof for the pre-millennial interpretation.

The main burden of this passage, however, is to demonstrate beyond any question that there will be a thousand-year period between the resurrections of the righteous and the wicked. Passages such as Daniel 12:2 and John 5:28-29, which refer in general to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, must be interpreted as declaring the fact of resurrection rather than that the two events take place at the same time, even though the word hour is used of both events. The significance seems to be that the time will come when both the righteous and the wicked will be raised without designating exactly when it will occur. J. B. Smith attempts to establish an unnecessarily complicated system of rules relative to the mention of the righteous and their resurrection.³³⁰ The main facts of this passage are clear when the general rule is applied that that which is plain should interpret that which is obscure.

In considering Revelation 20:1-6 as a whole, there is much to commend its normal and literal interpretation. Alford writes pointedly:

Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole Church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense: and it is a strange sight in these days [1860] to see expositors who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain psychai eze,,san at the first, and the rest of the nekro,,n eze,,san only at the end of a specified period after that first,--if in such a passage the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave;--then there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hearty enough to maintain: but if the second is literal, then so is the first, which in common with the whole primitive Church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope.³³¹

The Loosing of Satan and the Final Revolt (20:7-9)

20:7-9 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: 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: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

Before considering the climax of the thousand years as revealed in this passage, a brief survey of the Scripture bearing upon the millennial kingdom described here will serve to emphasize and justify the literal interpretation of the thousand years. John in his vision in Revelation does not occupy himself with the details of the millennial kingdom but only with the fact and duration of it. The character of Christ's reign on earth is fully described in many Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:4-9; Psalm 72, and many others. From these scriptures it may be seen that Jerusalem will be the capital of the millennial

kingdom (Isa. 2:3) and that war will be no more (Isa. 2:4). Isaiah 11 describes the righteous reign of Christ and the peace and tranquillity of His kingdom. There will be justice for all, the wicked will be punished, and even the natural ferocity of beasts will be abated. The character and extent of the kingdom are summarized in Isaiah 11:9: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." In the latter portion of Isaiah 11, Israel is revealed to be regathered from the various parts of the earth and brought back to her ancient land rejoicing in the fulfillment of God's prophetic word.

Psalms 72 gives a similar picture of the righteous reign of Christ, describing righteousness as flourishing and abundance of peace as continuing as long as the moon endures. The dominion of Christ is stated to be from sea to sea with all kings bowing down before Him, all nations serving Him, and the earth being filled with the glory of the Lord. Then will be fulfilled the desire of the nations for peace and righteousness, for the knowledge of the Lord, for economic justice, for deliverance from satanic oppression and evil. For the whole period of one thousand years the earth will revel in the immediate presence of the Lord and His perfect divine government. Israel will be exalted and Gentiles also will be blessed. The major factors of the millennium, therefore, include a perfect and righteous government with Christ reigning in absolute power over the entire earth. Every nation will be under His sway, and God's purpose in originally placing man in charge of the Garden of Eden will have its ultimate fulfillment in the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign over the earth.

The prominence of Israel in the millennial scene is evidenced in many passages of the Old Testament. After the purging experience of the great tribulation, those who survive become the citizens of the kingdom after the rebels are purged out (Ezek. 20:34-38). Israel then is rejoined to God in the symbol of marriage, being transformed from an unfaithful wife to one who reciprocates the love of Jehovah. Gentiles who share in the kingdom blessings have unparalleled spiritual and economic benefits, and the thousand-year reign of Christ is a time of joy, peace, and blessing for the entire earth. Though problems in understanding this period persist due to the fact that there is not a complete revelation on all details, the major facts are sufficiently clear for anyone who is willing to accept the authority and accuracy of Scripture and interpret language in its ordinary sense.

John passes quickly over all these details as if it is unnecessary to repeat them at this point and takes us directly to the conclusion of the millennial kingdom when Satan again is loosed from his prison. The word for expired (v. 7) is from *teleo*, meaning "brought to the goal or the end," hence "finished." The same word is translated "fulfilled" in 20:3, and "finished" in 20:5. The prison referred to is, of course, the abyss into which Satan is cast at the beginning of the millennium.

On being relieved from his confinement, Satan loses no time in resuming his nefarious activities and plunges into his campaign to deceive the nations of the entire earth. These who are tempted are the descendants of the tribulation saints who survive the tribulation and enter the millennium in their natural bodies. B. F. Atkinson believes infants born during the millennium will live to its conclusion and will not be required to make a choice between the devil and Christ until the end.³³² The children of those entering the millennium far outnumber the parents, and undoubtedly the earth is teeming with inhabitants at the conclusion of the thousand-year reign of Christ. Outwardly they have been required to conform to the rule of the king and make a profession of obedience to Christ. In many cases, however, this was mere outward conformity without inward reality, and in their inexperience of real temptation they are easy victims of Satan's wiles.

Hoste comments:

The golden age of the kingdom will last a thousand years, during which righteousness will reign, and peace, prosperity, and the knowledge of God be universally enjoyed. But this will not entail universal conversion, and all profession must be tested... Will not a thousand years under the beneficent sway of Christ and the manifested glory of God suffice to render men immune to his [Satan's] temptations, will they not have radically changed for the better, and become by the altered conditions of life and the absence of Satanic temptations, children of God and lovers of His will? Alas! It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God.³³³

Govett suggests four reasons why Satan must be loosed after a thousand years: (1) to demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice; (2) to demonstrate the foreknowledge of God who foretells the acts of men as well as His own acts; (3) to demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan; (4) to justify eternal punishment, that is, to show the unchanged character of wicked people even under divine jurisdiction for a long period of time.³³⁴

In describing the nations, the term "Gog and Magog" is used without any explanation. From the context it would seem that this is not the same event as that described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 where Gog and Magog are prominent; and the battle which follows is entirely different and separated by at least a thousand years from that of Ezekiel's prophecy. Baines contrasts this battle with that of Ezekiel in these words:

Gog and Magog are here used in a wider sense than in Ezekiel, and their invasion differs in time and details, though agreeing in character and object, with that which he foretells. Ezekiel predicts an incursion by a great northern power called Gog, which, from certain geographical indications, is easily identified with Russia. In the Revelation, however, Gog and Magog are used to designate the nations, not merely from the north, but from all parts, "the four quarters of the earth." Again, the invasion named by Ezekiel is at the beginning of Christ's reign; that in the Revelation at the end. The hosts in Ezekiel, too, fall on the mountains, and their bodies are buried; whereas the forces assembled in the Revelation are devoured by fire from heaven. The judgment is instantaneous. Christ's reign is a reign of righteousness, during which evil is not tolerated as now, but promptly crushed.³³⁵

While many explanations have been made, one of the intriguing ones is that Gog refers to the ruler and Magog to the people as in Ezekiel 38. Hence, what the passage means is that the nations of the world follow Satan, including the rulers (Gog) and the people (Magog) under the rulers. Another plausible explanation is that the expression is used much as we use the term "Waterloo" to express a disastrous battle, but one not related to the historic origination of the term. Many contrasts can be observed between this battle and that of Ezekiel in that Satan is prominent in this whereas he is not mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39. The invasion of Ezekiel comes from the north whereas this invasion comes from all directions. Ezekiel's battle probably occurs previous to the battle of the great day of God Almighty before the millennium, whereas this occurs after the thousand years have been finished. The number of those who rebel against God and follow Satan is described as innumerable "as the sand of the sea." Thus the last gigantic rebellion of man develops against God's sovereign rule in which the wicked meet their Waterloo.

As the battle is joined in verse 9, the great host led by Satan and coming from all directions compasses the camp of the saints. The word for "camp" (Gr., *parembole*,) refers to those engaged in battle and who are in battle array, hence a "camp," "fortress," or "citadel." Here the term seems to refer to the city of

Jerusalem itself which is described as "the beloved city" (cf. Ps. 78:68; 87:2). Apparently Christ permits the army to assemble and encircle the capital city. No sooner has the army of Satan been assembled, however, than fire comes down from God out of heaven, and the besiegers are destroyed, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus is shattered the last vain attempt of Satan to claim a place of prominence and worship in attempted usurpation of the prerogatives of God. Thus ends also the false theory that man under perfect environment will willingly serve the God who created and redeemed him. Even in the ideal situation of the millennial reign of Christ, innumerable hosts immediately respond to the first temptation to rebel. This is the end of the road for the nations who rebel against God as well as for the career of Satan.

The Doom of Satan (20:10)

20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Following the destruction of the armies of Satan, the devil is cast into the lake of fire. Attention is called to the fact that he is the deceiver. Satan, who was first self-deceived in launching his career to be like God (Isa. 14:14) and then began his career by deceiving Eve in the garden, is still the same character at the time of his final judgment. There is no sanctifying grace for fallen angels. In the divine act of judgment which casts Satan into the lake of fire, he joins the beast and the false prophet who preceded him by one thousand years. The text should be understood as teaching that both the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire when Satan joins them, a thousand years after being cast into it. It is most significant that the verb *basanisthe, sontai* is in the third person plural, indication that the verb should be understood as having for its subjects not only Satan but also the beast and the false prophet. It could be translated "They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Thus the Word of God plainly declares that death is not annihilation and that the wicked exist forever, though in torment. There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than that used here in mentioning both day and night and the expression "for ever and ever" (Gr., *eis tous aion, nas ton aion, no, n*), literally "to the ages of ages." The lake of fire prepared for the devil and the wicked angels is also the destiny of all who follow Satan.

The Establishment of the Great White Throne (20:11)

20:11 And 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.

The familiar phrase "And I saw" introduces the next phase of the prophetic revelation. John sees a great white throne with One sitting on it of such great majesty that earth and heaven flee away from before Him. In 4:2 John had beheld "a throne ... set in heaven" wit

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