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## SUBSCRIPTIONS

- 1 Year (\$20.00 in Canada/\$22.00 outside Canada)
- 2 Year (\$36.00 in Canada/\$40.00 outside Canada)
- 3 Year (\$54.00 in Canada/\$60.00 outside Canada)
- 4 Year (\$70.00 in Canada/\$78.00 outside Canada)

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Manuscripts in either English or French, editorial correspondence, and books for review, should be sent to:

Editor,

*The Baptist Review of Theology/La Revue Baptiste de Théologie*,  
Heritage Baptist College and Theological Seminary,  
30 Grand Avenue,  
London, Ontario, Canada  
N6C 1K8

## **ABSTRACTS**

*The Baptist Review of Theology/La Revue Baptiste de Théologie* is abstracted in *Religious and Theological Abstracts*, *New Testament Abstracts*, and *Old Testament Abstracts*.

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Correspondence received in response to articles may be selected by the editor, with the permission of the correspondent, to appear in a printed exchange with the author of the article.

## **ISSN**

International Standard Serial Number 1192-4241

## **PRINTED BY**

Canadian Christian Publications, Toronto Ontario.

**REIGNING WITH CHRIST:  
REVELATION 20:1-6 IN ITS SALVATION-HISTORICAL  
SETTING**

Don Garlington

A. A. Hoekema begins his masterful monograph on biblical eschatology with the observation: "Properly to understand Biblical eschatology, we must see it as an integral aspect of all of biblical revelation. Eschatology must not be thought of as something which is found only in, say, such Bible books as Daniel and Revelation, but *as dominating and permeating the entire message of the Bible.*"<sup>1</sup> Hoekema then approvingly quotes Jürgen Moltmann:<sup>2</sup>

Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving... The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set... Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, and of every Christian existence and of the whole Church.

G. E. Ladd has also affirmed that "to understand the significance of the second coming of Christ in the New Testament, one needs an over-all view of the basic nature of biblical theology."<sup>3</sup>

Although Hoekema and Ladd have arrived at different conclusions respecting the "millennium" of Revelation 20, they are in accord — and rightly so — that one's conclusions respecting future eschatology will depend on one's perception of eschatology as the present fulfillment of the Old Testament. In other words, it is the "Already" which defines and delineates the "Not Yet" of the eschatological timetable. Accordingly, a sketch of the Bible's outlook on things to come is imperative in order

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<sup>1</sup>*The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 3 (italics mine).

<sup>2</sup>*Bible*, 3.

<sup>3</sup>*The Last Things: An Eschatology for Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 40.

to understand the specific question of the reign of Christ and his saints as depicted in Rev 20:1-6. It is especially important that we have a grasp of the whole before descending to particulars, lest we incur the rightful criticism of R. H. Mounce: "Judging from the amount of attention given by many writers to the first ten verses of chapter 20, one would judge it to be the single most important segment of the book of Revelation. The tendency of many interpreters at this point is to become apologists for a particular view of the millennium."<sup>4</sup>

### 1. *An Overview Of Biblical Eschatology*

What characterizes as a whole the Old Testament's hope for the future<sup>5</sup> is the anticipation that Yahweh, either in his own person or in the person of a representative, would one day intervene into human history for the purpose of saving his people and destroying his enemies. This hope finds its initial expression in the prediction of Gen 3:15 that the seed of the woman would crush the seed of the Serpent. Subsequently in salvation history the seed of the woman becomes the seed of Abraham and thereafter the seed of David. It is particularly the Davidic-kingship model which becomes predominant in biblical thought. Passages such as Gen 49:10; Num 24:17-19; 2 Sam 7:10b-16 (1 Chron 17:10b-14); Ps 2:7-8; 110:1; Isa 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Ezek 34; Amos 9:11-15; Zech 14:9-21 (cf. Dan 7:13-14) articulate the idea that a coming Israelite monarch was expected to take charge of the kingdom of God on earth, with the twofold effect of extirpating Israel's foes and exalting the covenant people.

It is especially the prophets of Israel who give voice to the notion

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<sup>4</sup>*The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 351. Mounce, however, does espouse a premillennial position.

<sup>5</sup>See, among others, Hoekema, *Bible*, 3-12; H. N. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1962), 3-8; G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 45-75; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 3-35; G. W. Buchanan, *Jesus: The King and His Kingdom* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1984), 15-25; J. Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979); S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (New York: Abingdon, n.d.); M. Latke, "On the Jewish Background of the Synoptic Concept, 'The Kingdom of God'" in B. Chilton, ed., *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 72-91; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 77-90.

that a Jewish sovereign would exercise his rule over the whole of humanity. Set against the backdrop of the apostasy of Israel and the impending dominance of her foreign enemies,<sup>6</sup> the prophets foresee a time when the tension between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the earth would be ended. In principle, Yahweh is creator, Lord, and king of the nations. However, he is not yet king to all the nations in the sense that he is to Israel. (We discern here a sort of "Already" and "Not Yet" as respects the universal reign of God.) Therefore, by means of intervention — called by the prophets the "day of the Lord" — Yahweh will come to earth to establish his eternal rule over a renewed Israel composed of both Jews and non-Jews (e.g., Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3; Isa 19:19-25; 51:4-5; 61:18-21; and the catena of prophetic passages in Rom 15:9-12).

The New Testament presupposes the prophetic anticipation of the glorious future (and its development in Jewish Apocalyptic). From the Hebrew Scriptures the writings of the New Covenant inherit the fundamental notion of the kingship of Yahweh as realized in the person of his Anointed. They inherit as well the idea that the people of God, composed of believers in the Messiah — irrespective of race — are to be delivered from their enemies (ultimately sin and Satan) and made to reign with the Lord's Anointed. Thus, the New Testament writers represent the events connected with the appearance of Jesus Christ as the direct and immediate fulfillment of Israel's hope as expressed in the documents of the Old Testament (e.g., Rom 1:1-7; 16:25-27).

However, the New Testament introduces an important modification into the scheme of salvation as set forth by the Old Testament. Whereas the Old foretold one coming of Messiah and with him the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God, the New informs us that God's purposes are, in fact, realized in two successive stages or phases; what the Old Testament saw as one act of the consummation of redemption, the New Testament sees as two acts or phases of the one and same consummation. Another way to say it is that the New Testament presents a scheme of overlapping ages: something new has begun in Christ, but the "present evil age" (Gal 1:4) is still with us. In principle, all things have been created anew with the first advent of the Son of God and the gift of his Spirit. However, it has not yet arrived in its consummate fullness and will not arrive until the second coming of Christ. Therefore, the time between his two comings is one

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<sup>6</sup>See further J. Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (New York: Abingdon, 1953), 17-44; J. B. Green, *How to Read Prophecy* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 54-61.

of overlap of old and new aeons.

The New Testament, then, purports that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth has inaugurated the beginning of the end. By distinguishing between "this age" and "the age to come" (e.g., Matt 12:32; Eph 1:21; cf. 4 Ezra 7:50),<sup>7</sup> it informs us that God has acted in his Son at the "end of these days" (Heb 1:2) to bring to fulfillment the promises made to the fathers.<sup>8</sup> However, this Son will come again to bring to consummation that which was inaugurated by his first coming, to save "to the uttermost" (Heb 7:25) those who are eagerly waiting for him (Heb 9:28). Therefore, the saving plan of God, propounded by the Old Testament in terms of a simple once-for-all event, has been elaborated and enriched by the New Testament: God *has saved* his people, but he *will save* them for all time. In the words of Ladd, there is in the New Testament fulfillment without consummation.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. Hermeneutical Perspectives**

### *A. Christ and His People as the Central Content of the Old Testament*

Fundamental to the exegesis herein presented is that the New Testament serves, as it were, as the "lexicon" of the Old Testament's eschatological expectation. To put it as succinctly as possible, the Old Testament anticipates realities which are unpacked and explicated by the apostolic writings from the vantage point of salvation-historical realization in Christ. This means that symbols, images, and prophetic language more broadly considered are to be understood as interpreted by those who were one with the sending of Christ by the Father (Matt 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 13:20; 17:18; 20:21).<sup>10</sup> Of particular importance is the principle that *Christ and his (latter-day) people are the sum and substance of the Old Testament*. In arguing this, we turn first to Luke 24:25-27 and thereafter to 1 Pet 1:10-12.

According to Luke 24:25-27, 44-47, Christ is in all the Scriptures.

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<sup>7</sup>See G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 147-83, and G. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Repr. 1972), 12-41.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 21.

<sup>9</sup>*Presence*, 105-21.

<sup>10</sup>See H. N. Ridderbos, *Redemptive History and the New Testament Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 12-15.



As the author of Hebrews (1:1) later, Jesus speaks of the pre-Christian revelation as one which came through "the prophets," implying that the whole of the Old Testament is prophetic (cf. Rom 1:2; 16:26). The problem with the disciples, however, was that they were slow to believe *everything* the prophets had said, because, as they interpreted the prophets, it was incomprehensible that the Messiah should hang on a tree (Deut 21:23). Jesus responds to their sluggishness by reducing the totality of the prophetic Scriptures to the suffering and consequent glory of the Christ (vv. 26, 46),<sup>11</sup> the two indispensable elements of their proclamation, to which everything else is subordinate. This, in short, is *the message of the Old Testament*. Henceforth repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be preached to the nations in his name (v. 47).

Especially noteworthy is the fact that in v. 27 Jesus assumes the role of the interpreter of the Old Testament, and, in so doing, sets the standard for all subsequent interpreters. He, in other words, provides *the model for the way in which we are to approach the Old Testament text*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 1189, is right to insist that these two constitute a unit. The rejection of the Christ, in the thinking of the disciples, should not have been relegated to the level of the subliminal.

<sup>12</sup>R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 207-29 rightly discerns that Jesus' use of the Old Testament is paradigmatic for the later apostolic employment of Scripture. Hence, the New Testament's approach to the Old Testament is Christ-centred (*ibid.*, 206-29). However, Longenecker denies that the modern interpreter can reproduce the exegesis of the New Testament because its methods of interpretation by and large either assume a revelatory stance or are culturally bound (*ibid.*, 214-220). To reply briefly, the issue, strictly speaking, is not, can we *reproduce* the exegesis of the New Testament?, but can we *emulate* the exegesis of the New Testament? The answer given here is yes, because, without laying claim to anything like apostolic inspiration, we can apply the same hermeneutical principles to the Old Testament as the New Testament writers and interpret the whole christologically and christocentrically as they. After all, the instruction on the way to Emmaus was given not to apostles but to ordinary disciples of Jesus. Moreover, Longenecker's conclusions create a certain perplexity for the expositor, inasmuch as only those portions of the Old Testament interpreted explicitly by the New Testament can be fitted into a christological framework, while the rest must be explained only on the level of the historico-grammatical. As a result, not only are we left with a bifurcated Old Testament, the

Luke singles out several matters of importance in Jesus' treatment of the Scriptures.

(1) He began at the beginning, i.e., "from Moses." To begin with Moses means that he commenced his exposition with those books composed by Moses, the pentateuch or the first division of the Hebrew Bible. In principle, then, Jesus acknowledges that the earliest stages of revelation contain in a nutshell everything to be elaborated by subsequent revelation. In particular, it is arguable that Gen 1-3 is the fountainhead of the remainder of the Bible and that the *protevangelium* of Gen 3:15 is the seed which the whole of the Old Testament nourishes and waters in preparation for the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh.<sup>13</sup>

(2) He carried on through the rest of the "prophetic Scriptures." What was stated more or less in seminal form in the books of Moses is developed in the later stages of revelation; the initial announcements of the salvific plan are expounded, clarified and expanded, thereby preparing the way for the Christ himself. Consequently, there is to the Old Testament a *sensus plenior* (a "fuller meaning" than the historico-grammatical sense), i.e., an ultimate salvation-historical purpose of God which is fulfilled in the advent of Jesus Christ.<sup>14</sup> In fact, I would submit that the New Testament always uses the Old Testament in such a

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*prima facie* point of Luke 24:25-27, 44-47 is neglected, viz., that Christ is in *all* the Scriptures.

<sup>13</sup>Pace J. A. Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981, 1983), 2:1567, prophecies like Gen 3:15; Num 24:17; Deut 18:15 and such types as the scape-goat, the manna, the brazen serpent, and the sacrifices would have figured in Jesus' exposition of the Scriptures.

<sup>14</sup>See R. E. Brown, *The 'Sensus Plenior' of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore: St. Mary's University Press, 1955); *idem*, "The 'Sensus Plenior' in the Last Ten Years," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963), 262-85; D. J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 179-211; W. S. LaSor, "The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation" in D.K. McKim, ed., *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 47-64. These treatments are much preferred over the more one-dimensional approach of W. Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in McKim, ed., *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics*, 11-141; *idem*, *The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1985).

salvation-historical (typological) manner and never employs "historical-grammatical exegesis" as such.

(3) He made himself the terminal point of the entirety of the Old Testament revelation: "He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

(a) Information concerning him is to be found "in *all* the Scriptures." Every division of the Hebrew Bible contains information about him, and there is no portion which does not: either by prophecy or prefiguration, he is the subject matter of the whole Torah. All the promises of God were meant to find their yes in *him* (2 Cor 1:20).<sup>15</sup>

(b) "The things concerning himself" receive in this context an important qualification, because v. 27 cannot be detached from v. 26 (also v. 46), according to which the Christ had to suffer and then enter into his glory. In other words, when "he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself," he set before them what we nowadays call "salvation history." Of crucial significance for us is that "the things concerning himself" can never be abstracted from God's purpose to save a people and place his name upon them (cf. Rev 3:12).<sup>16</sup> Any conception of Israel which fails to do justice to the Old Testament's *christological focus* is illegitimate by definition.

1 Pet 1:10-12 complements the picture sketched by Luke 24:25-27 by informing us that *the terminal point of the whole of prophecy is Christ and his church*. The opening portion of Peter's letter, 1:1-9, relates that perseverance in trials eventuates in the (eschatological) salvation of the soul. Peter then adds the further encouragement that this salvation was a matter of investigation on the part of the prophets, who, according to vv. 10-11a, searched and inquired into the particulars of the messianic work. However, of more importance to us is Peter's focus on two issues.

First of all, there is the suffering and glory of the Messiah, v. 11. The point here is the same as Luke 24:26, 46: the whole of the Old Testament can be reduced to the testimony of "the Spirit of Christ" that he should suffer and then be glorified. Second, the people of Christ are

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<sup>15</sup>See Green, *Prophecy*, 83-96.

<sup>16</sup>The placement of God's name upon his new covenant people — the nations to whom repentance and forgiveness are proclaimed (Luke 24:46) — is one of the most noteworthy signals that the status and privileges of Israel have been transferred to the church of Jesus Christ. See D. B. Garlington, *'The Obedience of Faith': A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991), 242-246.

central in the prophetic preaching. According to v. 10, the prophets prophesied concerning the grace "directed to you" or "which had you in view (εἰς ὑμᾶς).<sup>17</sup> Peter stresses, consequently, that to the prophets it was revealed that they were not serving themselves in these things but "you;" such things have been proclaimed to "you" through those who preached the gospel to "you" (v. 12). This is where vv. 10-12 link up with vv. 1-9: the church itself, as it bears the image of Christ, must pass through the pattern of suffering followed by glory; and it was the prophets who foretold this.

It goes almost without saying that such teaching places *the church of Jesus Christ — Gentile as well as Jew* — in a position of unprecedented privilege. The people of God have always been his special possession (e.g., Exod 19:5); but this text explicitly states that the people of the new age occupy a place of unparalleled importance:<sup>18</sup> they are the subject of biblical prophecy, and their future is inseparable from that of Christ himself. Hence, the *christological* principle of hermeneutics is inconceivable apart from the *ecclesiological* principle: where Christ is found, his people are found also. Accordingly, the history of Israel is to be viewed as the preparation for that people "upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:11), the "one new man" in Christ (Eph 2:15).<sup>19</sup>

In sum, Luke 24:25-27, 44-47, and 1 Pet 1:10-12 provide *the paradigm for our approach to the prophetic Scriptures* by: (1) establishing a time-line of salvation history, which is initiated in the earliest stages of the Old Testament and achieves its climax with the advent of Jesus Christ; (2) specifying the suffering and glory of the Christ as the sum and substance of Old Testament proclamation; (3)

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<sup>17</sup>On the construction, cf. 1 Cor 15:10. L. Goppelt translates as the grace "destined for you" (*Der Erste Petrusbrief* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978], 105).

<sup>18</sup>See as well Luke 7:28; Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:11; Eph 1:14; Col 1:24-27; Heb 11:39-40.

<sup>19</sup>T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 11-33, has developed at length the proposition that God's dealings with Israel were intended as a preparation for his subsequent dealings with humanity at large. That something significantly new commenced at Pentecost, with faith from that point on assuming a distinctively Christian colouring, has been demonstrated with clarity by J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970), 38-54; T. J. Deidun, *New Covenant Morality in Paul* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 39-41.

marking out Christ and his church as the subject matter of the whole of revelation; (4) suggesting that God's prior dealings with his chosen people were anticipatory of the time when, in Christ, he would bring to consummation his plan of salvation.

### *B. The Prophetic Expectation of the Future Salvation*

With these perspectives in mind, we turn a retrospective glance to the prophets and their message of the coming salvation. Among the most relevant principles of prophetic interpretation are the following.

(1) In the prophetic vision, there is a placement of events within close proximity of one another which, in actuality (as history has shown), are separated by great intervals of time. The technical term for this characteristic of prophecy is "prophetic foreshortening." The classic illustration is that of the advent of Messiah. The prophets saw only one coming, with no distinction made between two phases of that coming. Thus, what is represented by the prophets as transpiring once-for-all in "the latter days"<sup>20</sup> is realized over an expanse of time which is already virtually two millenia in length. Therefore, it is in light of the New Testament we discern that Messiah's coming is in *two* stages, corresponding to the *inauguration* and *consummation* of God's eschatological purposes.

(2) Prophecy is characteristically cast in terms of the limited understanding of the person to whom it was given. That is to say, the language of prophecy is conditioned by the historical and cultural setting in which the prophet and the people found themselves. Ridderbos explains: "The prophet paints the future in the colors and with the lines that he borrows from the world known to him, i.e., from his own environment—. We see the prophets paint the future with the palette of their experience and project the picture within their own geographical horizon. This appears in the Old Testament in all kinds of ways."<sup>21</sup> The mode of prophecy, then, is affected by the limits of old covenant life and the peculiar relations of that age. From this general consideration certain corollaries emerge.

For one thing, the future kingdom is beheld as an extension and glorification of the theocracy, the most common representation of which is its condition in the reigns of David and Solomon. The prospect for the future, accordingly, is portrayed in terms of *the ideal past*, in terms both

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<sup>20</sup>See Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 1-12.

<sup>21</sup>Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, 525. At more length, see Green, *Prophecy*, 69-81.

familiar and pleasing to the contemporaries of the prophet. This phenomenon has been termed "recapitulation eschatology," i.e., the future is depicted as a recapitulation or repetition of the past glory of the kingdom.<sup>22</sup>

In the second place, this peculiar mode of prophetic speech, which represents the future by means of things familiar to prophet and people, can be designated as the symbolic outer covering or "wrapping paper" of prophecy. It is the fulfillment which strips away, so to speak, this wrapping paper and shows us just how far the symbolism was actually meant to extend. There are several examples.

One is the land of Palestine. In almost every prophecy of the future salvation, the land features prominently. However, when we turn to the New Testament, the land all but disappears, and even when it is mentioned (e.g., Matt 5:5; Eph 6:3) it stands for the "new earth" (Isa 65:17), interpreted by the New Testament as a transcendent/eschatological entity (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1).

Another is the way in which the temple, so important in the prophetic outlook, is treated by the New Testament. Ezek 40-44 and Hag 2:6-9, for example, lay great stress on the place of the temple in the restoration of Israel to the land. The New Testament, however, uniformly redefines the temple as both the (new covenant) people of God (e.g., 1 Cor 3:9, 16-17; Eph 2:20-22; Rev 3:12) and God himself dwelling in the midst of his people (John 1:14; Rev 21:22).<sup>23</sup> We may add that the zeal for the glory of the (actual) Jerusalem temple was a characteristic trait of intertestamental Jewish literature.<sup>24</sup>

A third illustration is that of the warfare between Israel and the nations. Prophecies such as Ezek 38, Dan 7, Joel 3, Zech 14, and Obad speak of a great and final conflict between the kingdom of God and its rival powers. The New Testament, however, says nothing about actual combat involving Israel and the surrounding nations. Rather, it takes,

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<sup>22</sup>Cf. P. Fairbairn, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1964), 270-276.

<sup>23</sup>See the detailed discussions of B. Gärtner, *The New Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 49-122; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 58-178; W. J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer, 1985), 35-76.

<sup>24</sup>E.g., 2 Maccabees 5:15 (*et passim*); Sirach 49:12; *Jubilees* 1:27-28; *Sibylline Oracles* 3:773-75, and the Qumran materials as assembled by Gärtner, *Temple*, 16-46.

e.g., Ps 2:1 and interprets it as the collusion of the Romans and the Jews (!) in the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 4:25-28). In another instance, Gog and Magog, in Ezek 38, are brought into connection with Satan's last attempt to deceive the nations (Rev 20:7-8). The fight is not between Israel and non-Jewish peoples; instead, the forces of evil surround the "saints" (v. 9), who are the earthly counterparts of those already reigning with Christ (vv. 4-6).<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, the detailed descriptions of these wars in the prophets (and Revelation) are to be understood "ideologically," not geographically.

However, at least two qualifications are in order. First, not every form of expression is a symbol to be divested at the time of fulfillment. Particularly in the life of Christ, there is a "literal" fulfillment of the prophetic word.<sup>26</sup> We think, for instance, of his birth at Bethlehem (Mic 5:2 = Matt 2:6), his triumphal entrance into Jerusalem (Zech 9:9 = Matt 21:4-9; Mark 11:7-10; Luke 19:35-38; John 12:12-15), his sufferings on the cross (Ps 22; Isa 52:13-53:12), including such details as the casting of lots for his clothing (Ps 22:18; cf. Exod 28:32 = John 19:24), and his resurrection from the dead (Ps 16:8-11 = Acts 2:25-28; 13:35).

Second, in some cases a prophecy is capable of both a symbolic and literal meaning, depending on the different phases of fulfillment. For example, the age of Messiah is depicted as a time of world peace when even the non-image-bearing creation will be at harmony with

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<sup>25</sup>It is true that v. 9 speaks of the "beloved city." However, the "city" is defined most naturally in terms of 21:2-8, i.e., the eschatological city of God inhabited by the sons of God (cf. Matt 5:14b) who have conquered (21:7). As G. B. Caird comments, the mention of the city before its descent from heaven in chapter 21 is no problem, because "in whatever place and at whatever time God's people are gathered together, there is the city of God" (*The Revelation of St. John the Divine* [2nd ed.; London: A & C Black, 1984], 257). Note especially the important parallel in 3:12: "He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name."

<sup>26</sup>"Literal" is a convenience term. We note B. Ramm's qualification that the "literal" meaning of a text is that which is "natural," "proper," "obvious," and "normal" (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation* [3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970], 119-23). In some cases, therefore, the "literal" meaning is a *metaphorical* meaning. Cf. further Green, *Prophecy*, 18-19, 28-30.

itself (Isa 9:6-9; 65:25). At the first coming of Christ to inaugurate the kingdom of God this programme of peace is explicated as the reconciliation of men to God and to one another in Christ (Rom 5:1; 12:18; Eph 2:14-18; 4:3). However, in the consummation of that same salvation, the prophetic language of "natural enemies" dwelling together will have very much a "literal" realization: the new creation will restore the peace of the original creation. Another example is Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32). As inaugurated fulfillment, Joel's oracle comes to pass on Pentecost, because Peter quotes the entire passage as finding its accomplishment on that day. Yet it is equally obvious that the language of cosmic catastrophe did not find an actual implementation at that time. Therefore, at the point of inaugurated salvation (on Pentecost), certain aspects of Joel's prophecy are to be understood as apocalyptic dress for the enormity of the event which has just taken place with the outpouring of the Spirit. In keeping with the Old Testament imagery of the passing of the old creation and the coming of the new,<sup>27</sup> the turning of the ages has been achieved.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, a comparison of Acts 2:16-21 with the Olivet discourse (Matt 24 and parallel passages) and 2 Pet 3:12 gives us reason to believe that the consummate phase of the new creation will be attended with an actual dissolution of the elements, and that Joel's vision is to receive a kind of material fulfillment which it did not at Pentecost.

All this leads me to submit, as a hermeneutical observation, that prophecy can receive both a metaphorical and a literal fulfillment, as it relates to the inaugurated and consummated stages of salvation respectively. In other words, the first coming of Christ brings in principle what is to be completed at his second advent. With the Christ-event of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, the "old things have passed away, all things have become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Nevertheless, the "old things," considered from the vantage point of world history, will, as physical entities, pass away with his second appearance.

From the foregoing discussion, the most relevant hermeneutical perspectives, the framework within which our discussion of Revelation 20 must take place, are: (1) the pattern of promise and fulfillment exhibited by the two Testaments; (2) Christ and his church as the focus of the prophetic Scriptures. These in turn require some further attention.

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<sup>27</sup>E.g., Isa 13:10; Ezek 32:2-8; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30-31; 3:14-16; Zeph 1:15. Cf. S. Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos: Studies in Biblical Patterns of Creation* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 71-84.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Green, *Prophecy*, 29.



### C. The Shape of Promise and Fulfillment in Biblical Theology

(1) The original (Jewish) scheme of one simple realization of God's promises has been modified into a twofold fulfillment corresponding to the two comings of Christ.<sup>29</sup> As Geerhardus Vos, among many, has pointed out, everything in biblical soteriology transpires according a binary configuration.<sup>30</sup> To illustrate, salvation is now (e.g., Eph 2:8), but it is also future (e.g., Rom 5:10); we have been justified by faith (e.g., Rom 5:1), and yet "the doers of the law" are to be justified in final judgment (Rom 2:13);<sup>31</sup> the Christian has been raised with Christ in newness of life (e.g., Rom 6:4-11), but still he anticipates a time when his body will be made like Christ's glorious body (e.g., Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15); we have been glorified (2 Cor 3:18), but will be glorified (e.g., Rom 8:18-25, 30); the believer has been sanctified by the sacrifice of Christ (e.g., Heb 10:10), but he awaits a climactic sanctification which will altogether eradicate his sin (e.g., Eph 5:27); perfection is a present reality (the implied antithesis of Heb 7:19; 9:9; 10:1), yet one must be borne on to (eschatological) perfection (Heb 6:1).

Even if we regard the above categories in terms of "salvation in three tenses" (we have been saved, we are being saved, we will be saved), the basic binary structure of soteriology is not disrupted,

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<sup>29</sup>See, e.g., Hoekema, *Bible*, 18-20; Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 37-41; O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (3rd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 81-93; B. Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual" in J.S. Feinbery, ed., *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments. Essays in Honor of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.* (Westchester: Crossway, 1988), 266-276; E. E. Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," in I.H. Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 209-210.

<sup>30</sup>"The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit," in R.B. Gaffin, ed., *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980), 93-94. Vos grounds both the present possession of salvation and its future manifestation in the eschatological gift of the Spirit.

<sup>31</sup>In what sense this is so is discussed by me in "The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans. Part II: The Obedience of Faith and Judgment by Works," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991), 47-72.

because the "present tense" of redemption is but the extension of the "past tense" and the harbinger of the "future tense" of consummated glory. Thus, the present has meaning only as it relates to the past and the future, to what God has done in Christ at his first coming and what he will do in Christ at his second appearance. For the New Testament authors, then, human history now assumes the complexion of a time of tension between the two advents of the Son of God, i.e., between the "Already" and the "Not Yet," or between "this age" and "the age to come." To borrow Oscar Cullmann's famous illustration, the "D-Day" of inaugurated salvation has come, but still outstanding is the "V. E. day" of consummation.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, as we shall argue from Revelation 20, the thousand-year reign of Christ and his people is an integral part of eschatological salvation; it is located within that span of time between the inauguration and the consummation of redemption, during which Christ is drawing all men to himself by the preaching of the cross. He has bound the strong man (Satan) and has plundered his house (Matt 12:29), thus bringing release to the captives and enabling Paul to announce later on the Areopagus that the "times of ignorance" (for the nations) are at an end; God *now*<sup>33</sup> commands *all men everywhere* to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31). It is within this interim between the announcement of salvation and its final actualization that the dead hear the voice of the Son of Man and live, anticipating that time when "all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth" (John 5:25-29). Our argument is precisely that the "millennial reign" of Rev 20:1-6 is resurrection to life in Christ.

The purpose of elaborating (and reiterating) all this is to say that the historical unfolding of salvation operates along the lines of *two* epochs of fulfilment, or, phrased differently, *two* phases of the same epoch, not *three*. In a sense, it is a negative point — but a necessary negative. Once the overarching pattern of salvation history has been determined, it follows that there is no place for another time-period which effectively amounts to a third epoch or phase in the outworking of God's purposes. Therefore, we must take exception to those chiliastic schemes which confuse this pattern by placing more emphasis on the (supposed) penultimate rather than ultimate stage of the work of Christ. In our view, they represent an intrusion into and, therefore, interruption

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<sup>32</sup>*Christ and Time*, 84.

<sup>33</sup>In Paul particularly, "now", (νῦν/νυνί) signals the arrival of the eschaton, e.g., Rom 3:31; 5:10; 6:22; 7:6, 17; 8:1.

of the conceptual framework established by the New Testament. Not only are such constructions unnecessary,<sup>34</sup> they actually obscure the architecture of biblical history.

(2) The relation of Israel and the church lies at the heart of any consideration of eschatological matters. It is, of course, an extremely complex matter; and because of the limitations imposed on this study, I must to a degree proceed presuppositionally.

It was argued above that Christ and the church are the sum and substance of Old Testament prophecy: Christ is in all the Scriptures, and his people are the termination point of the prophetic vision. In other words, Israel had no reason for existence apart from foreshadowing and preparing the way for the latter day people of God, upon whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor 10:11) and without whom the saints of old could not be perfected (Heb 11:40). Surely, one must be impressed with the fact that the New Testament transfers to Jew and Gentile indiscriminately titles, predicates, and privileges originally attributed to Israel (e.g., Rom 1:6-7; 9:24-26; 1 Pet 2:9-10).<sup>35</sup>

The relevance of these observations is that one's conception of Israel and the church will determine to a large degree one's approach to the prophets. If we envisage an on-going distinctive place for ethnic Israel in the plan of God, then we will read the prophets in this light. Accordingly, the nationalistic colouring of the prophetic message will be taken "literally," i.e., at face value in terms of the original setting in salvation history, and its fulfillment will be deferred until "the millennium," in which again Israel will be predominant among the nations as she was in the days of David and Solomon.<sup>36</sup> If, however, as

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<sup>34</sup>In spite of Mounce, *Revelation*, 359.

<sup>35</sup>See E. E. Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," 213; *idem*, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 121-135; L. Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 140-151; P. E. Hughes, *Interpreting Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 51-54; Garlington, *Obedience*, 233-253.

<sup>36</sup>Some such conception is characteristic of the millennium-like passages in Jewish Apocalyptic. For references, see Mounce, *Revelation*, 357; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Oliphants, 1974), 288-289; J. M. Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 352-354; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 2:143; *idem*, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism and Christianity. A Critical*

I think, we are consistent with the apostolic hermeneutic, we shall see Israel as the type of all believers in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, and we shall interpret the prophecies not as a "literal" description (or history written beforehand) of what will befall an Israelite state in a thousand year time-span, but as a pictorial representation of the fullness of salvation in Christ, irrespective of national and ethnic distinctives.

It is here that once again we must introduce a negative factor in order to arrive at a positive conclusion. Some eschatological systems rub against the grain of what is one of the New Testament's chief controversies with then contemporary Israel, viz., that this nation is special and distinct from all other peoples. Of course, the point is controversial and complex. Nevertheless, the thrust of recent New Testament scholarship is to the effect that Christianity distanced itself from Judaism precisely in the matter of the identification of the people of God.<sup>37</sup> Without going into any real detail, we note only that Paul, particularly in Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians, is compelled to argue that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.<sup>38</sup>

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*History* (New York: Schocken, 1963), 167-361. In Apocalyptic literature generally, time is schematized according to a predetermined pattern, e.g., *1 Enoch* 21:7; 91-107 (interestingly, *1 Enoch* 91:16 predicts a new heaven). It is possible that John's organization of the eschatological timetable finds a formal parallel with Jewish precedents. Even so, the specific meaning of his various time-references must be ascertained by internal considerations. Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 289.

<sup>37</sup>The current trend was sparked off by E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), and followed up notably by the essays of J. D. G. Dunn, now collected in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990); *idem*, "Romans 13:1-7 — A Charter for Political Quietism?," *Ex Auditu* 2 (1986), 60-63. Cf. the earlier work of R. N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), esp. 65-85. I have argued the same throughout my *Obedience* and more briefly in "Obedience of Faith. Part II," 61-63; "ἘΠΟΣΤΛΕΙΝ and the Idolatry of Israel Romans 2.22)," *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990), 142-51. Space here will not permit any meaningful interaction with those scholars who have dissented.

<sup>38</sup>See J. M. Bassler, *Divine Impartiality: Paul and a Theological Axiom* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982); *idem*, "Divine Impartiality in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984), 43-58; P. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith: The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to*

Israel, in the plan of God, has served her purpose. Consequently, "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him" (Rom 10:12). To put it bluntly, *the Gentiles are as important as Israel*; they are "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19); they are part of the "holy temple in the Lord" indwelt by the Spirit of God (vv. 21-22); Israel is no longer *the* exalted and glorified people of God.<sup>39</sup> Correspondingly, non-Christian Judaism has forfeited the right to the title "Jew;" its gatherings are "synagogues of Satan" (Rev 2:9; 3:9). Therefore, any interpretation of the prophets (or the New Testament) which posits a distinction between Israel and the rest of believing humanity must falter, because it seeks to advocate what the New Testament expressly repudiates.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. *Revelation 20:1-6: The Reign Of Christ And His People*

Hoekema rightly begins his discussion of Rev 20 by setting the chapter within the progressive parallelism of the book.<sup>41</sup> These sections, he

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*the Romans* (London: SCM, 1971).

<sup>39</sup>As claimed, e.g., by Sirach 50:22; Tobit 14:7; Judith 10:8; 13:4; 16:8, 11; Wisdom of Solomon 3:8; 18:8; 19:22; Additions to Esther 11:11.

<sup>40</sup>It goes without saying that more than one prophecy of the future salvation envisages the subordination of the Gentiles to Israel and her possession of their goods (e.g., Isa 23:18; 45:14, 60:11; Hag 2:7; Zech 14:16-21), with Jerusalem as the hub of the renewed kingdom (e.g., Isa 2:2-4; Zech 14:16). For this reason, Israel can be said to inherit the nations (Isa 54:3; cf. Ps 2:8). Nevertheless, there is another picture as well, viz., that the Gentiles will receive the full rights of citizenship (e.g., Isa 19:19-25; 56:1-8; cf. Ps 87:4). The former description is accounted for by the tendency of the prophets to portray the coming kingdom in terms of the ideal past (and thus to speak comprehensibly to their own generation), while the latter is explicable by the prophets' own awareness that eschatological salvation would transcend the existent categories, as confirmed by the NT.

<sup>41</sup>*Bible*, 223-26, following W. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966). See Hoekema, *Bible*, 223, n.1 for further literature. I might add that the Fourth Gospel is structured similarly, i.e., by means of progressive parallelism organized in terms of the seven episodes of the new creation. Among the first to call attention to this was C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

observes, exhibit an "eschatological progress" which climaxes with chapter 21's depiction of the blessedness of the new life on earth.<sup>42</sup> Chapter 20, as he notes, forms part of the seventh parallel, chapters 20-22, which narrate the overthrow of the dragon, the ancient serpent.<sup>43</sup> "This last section describes the judgment which falls on Satan, and his final doom. Since Satan is the supreme opponent of Christ, it stands to reason that his doom should be narrated last."<sup>44</sup> This means that Rev 20 is not to be understood as following chronologically the return of Christ, related by the preceding chapter. Thus, Rev 20:1 takes us back once again to the beginning of the New Testament era, and the thousand-year reign occurs not after the parousia but before it.<sup>45</sup> Assuming this as the book's overall literary structure,<sup>46</sup> we offer the following observations on the text of Rev 20.

(1) Within the resumé of salvation history provided by the seventh parallelism, 20:1-3 informs us of the binding of Satan.<sup>47</sup> In attempting an explanation of the phenomenon, we must be sensitive to Mounce's caveat that the text of Revelation itself ought to be the foremost indicator of John's intentions.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the undergirding

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<sup>42</sup>*Bible*, 226.

<sup>43</sup>The depiction of Satan as "that ancient serpent" is reminiscent of the fall of Adam. As P. E. Hughes comments, "He who deceived and defeated the first Adam has met his match, and more than his match, in the person of the incarnate Son, who is the Second Adam. The point is that the advent of Christ brought about a change in the relationship between Satan and the nations" [*The Book of Revelation: A Commentary* (Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity/Eerdmans, 1990), 209].

<sup>44</sup>Hoekema, *Bible*, 226.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>46</sup>This arrangement of the book does acknowledge the existence of sub-structures among individual chapters. However, the principal argument is that the parts contribute to the whole, which is a sevenfold reiteration of salvation history, specifically the eschatological work of Christ in making all things new. We note, though, M. Rissi's qualification that in chapter 20 we are not dealing with mere repetition, because common traits occur in "a completely altered context" [*The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11-22.15* (Naperville: Allenson, n.d.), 31].

<sup>47</sup>An idea not unknown in Apocalyptic literature, e.g., *1 Enoch* 10:4-5 (perhaps based on Isa 24:22); 18:12-16; 21:1-10; *2 Enoch* 7:1; *Jubilees* 5:10, or in other religious traditions (Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 286).

<sup>48</sup>*Revelation*, 353.

assumption here is that as a salvation history, particularly one written from the vantage point of the interim between Jesus' first advent and his parousia, Revelation finds points of contact with other New Testament documents which address similiar, if not identical, concerns to those of John.<sup>49</sup> These contacts, consequently, will enable us to construct a biblical theology of the reign of Christ.

In Matt 12:29, Jesus asks: "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house." This announcement of the binding of the strong man (Satan) is placed in immediate connection with Jesus' exorcism of demons, which are proof-positive that the kingdom of God has arrived. It is hardly accidental, then, that John, who probably was an eyewitness to the Beelzebub controversy related by Matthew, should draw upon the imagery of the binding of Satan. That this particular binding should be performed by an angel is not a problem, because in Apocalyptic literature angels regularly stand as representatives of God and his doings.<sup>50</sup> It makes sense, then, to think that Rev 20:3 marks the inception of the kingdom of God with the binding of Satan.

Luke 10:17-18 is also relevant: "The Seventy returned with joy, saying 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'." Here, again in a figure of speech, Jesus indicates that Satan and his kingdom have been dealt a crushing blow. It is this figure which is taken up by Rev 12:10: "the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night."<sup>51</sup> Note as well that in Luke 10 this fall is brought into direct connection with the missionary preaching of the disciples.<sup>52</sup>

A third significant text is John 12:31-32: "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." Standing in

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<sup>49</sup>That the Synoptics, in addition to the Fourth Gospel, have rather profoundly influenced Revelation has been demonstrated in detail by L. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: Kok, 1965).

<sup>50</sup>Cf. the prominent role of the angel in 4 *Ezra*, who speaks the mind of God, and the many times angels (good and bad) appear throughout the Enoch literature. Thus, in the Matthean narrative Jesus is the agent of God, while in Revelation the angel performs the same function.

<sup>51</sup>J. A. Hughes, "Revelation 20:4-6 and the Question of the Millennium," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 35 (1973), 283-87, has shown in detail the parallels between chapters 12 and 20 and how the latter is illumined to a considerable degree by the former.

<sup>52</sup>Hoekema, *Bible*, 229.

the shadow of Calvary, Jesus announces that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (12:23), i.e., to die. In the process, he will "cast out" the ruler of this world. Note that the verb ἐκβάλλω bears a striking resemblance to βάλω in Rev 20:3. More important, however, is the contextual factor that in v. 20 some Greeks arrive at the feast seeking Jesus; they, within the symbolism of the Fourth Gospel, are the vanguard of the new humanity in Christ.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the casting out of Satan is inextricably bound up with the acceptance of the nations, the eschatological harvest of John 4:35-38. This corresponds in principle to the mission of the seventy in Luke 10.

Apart from these Gospel references, a point of contact is to be found with the book of Acts. Rev 20:3 states that the effect of Satan's binding is that he no longer deceives the nations; and it is just such a conception which is echoed by Paul in his missionary preaching as recorded by Acts 14:16: "In past generations he [God] allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways." These were the times characterized by the worship of "vain things" rather than the "living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them" (v. 15). The same note is sounded in Acts 17:30, when Paul informs the Athenians that "the times of ignorance God overlooked" (i.e., by-passed as regards salvation). As on the earlier occasion, the "times of ignorance" were specifically the ignorance of the living God as manifested in the adoration of idols.<sup>54</sup> It is, accordingly, no quantum leap from these descriptions of the condition of the pagan world before the gospel era (the *now* of Acts 17:30) to that of John in the Apocalypse, who speaks of the deception of the nations by Satan. This is the functional equivalent of the ignorance of God and the worship of idols.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Dodd, *Interpretation*, 371.

<sup>54</sup>As G. W. E. Nickelsburg reminds us, the phrase "the living God" was common in Jewish polemics against idols and idolators [*Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 39]. Cf. *Bel and the Dragon* 7, 25; *Jubilees* 21:3; *4 Macc* 5:24; *Sibylline Oracles* 3:763; 1 Thess 1:9.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Hoekema, *Bible*, 228: "In Old Testament times, at least in the post-Abrahamic era, all the nations of the world except Israel, so to speak, were under Satan's rule... One could say that during this time the nations were deceived by Satan, as our first parents were deceived by Satan when they fell into sin in the Garden of Eden." As noted above, the designation of Satan as "that ancient Serpent" recalls Gen 3 and Adam's renunciation of God the creator. There is, accordingly, an organic connection between Adam, who believed the Serpent's lie, and



The cumulative force of these passages is that the binding, fall, and casting out of Satan mark the inception of the process whereby the seed of the woman crushes the head of the serpent. Jesus' ministry of exorcisms, gospel preaching, and finally death on the cross signal the beginning of the end of Satan's reign over the nations. And it is precisely because he has bound the strong man that Paul could announce that the times of ignorance are at an end. For the same reason Paul can look forward to the consummation of Satan's overthrow at the end of the age (Rom 16:20). "The removal of Satan, therefore, is integral to the good news of Jesus Christ. It is a complement of that teaching which lies at the heart of the Christian gospel, that the kingdom of God comes through the Christ and will triumph in history through him. The defeat of Satan and the triumph of the kingdom are essential elements in the acts of judgment and redemption which God accomplishes through the Christ."<sup>56</sup>

None of this implies that Satan no longer engages in deceptive work (cf. 2 Cor 3:15; 11:3-4, 13-15).<sup>57</sup> But it is to say that a major shift has taken place with the onset of the eschaton. No longer is Israel the only people in possession of the knowledge of God: the advent of Christ has brought about a change in the relationship between Satan and the nations.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, Satan is unable to prevent the spread of the gospel by mounting an anti-Christian army against the church, until, i.e.,

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all his descendants. This likewise accounts for Paul's portrayal of man outside of Christ in Adam-like terms (Rom 1:18-32). See M. D. Hooker, "Adam in Romans I," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959-60), 297-306; J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980), 101-102; A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in E. A. Livingston, ed., *Studia Biblica 1978. III. Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 17-20; Garlington, "ἸΕΡΟΣΥΛΕΙΝ," 144-45.

<sup>56</sup>Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 287.

<sup>57</sup>"We must remember that the very idea of binding Satan is a symbolic way of describing a curbing of his power and activity; it does not mean his complete immobility. His incarceration in the abyss does not mean that all of his activities and powers are nullified, only that he may no longer deceive the nations as he has done through human history and lead them into active aggression against the saints during the thousand years" [G. E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 262]. Ladd denies, however, that the binding of Rev 20 is the same as that of Matt 12.

<sup>58</sup>See Hughes, *Revelation*, 209-210.

the thousand years are at an end, as narrated by vv. 3, 7-10. This episode of Rev 20 is paralleled by Rev 12:7-12, where likewise the Devil, "the deceiver of the whole world," is thrown down.

(2) In vv. 4-6, the scene shifts from earth to heaven. Whereas vv. 1-4 and afterward 7-10 tell us what is happening on earth, vv. 4-6 give us a glimpse of what is transpiring concurrently in heaven. In placing an interpretation on this paragraph, the main thesis to be propounded is that the "first resurrection" of vv. 5-6 is the so-called "intermediate state," in which the dead in Christ enter into a new and higher phase of the experience articulated by Paul in Eph 2:1-6: "And you he made alive... and raised us up with Christ with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

According to John's own words, he sees the souls of certain individuals (5b). "Souls" (not "lives," which would make no sense in this context) refers to "persons in the disembodied state which prevails between death and resurrection."<sup>59</sup> Very likely, John's main interest is in the martyrs, as would be expected given the life-setting of the Apocalypse. However, the field of vision cannot be restricted to them. As Hughes<sup>60</sup> observes, these souls are classified in two categories: (1) "those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God;" (2) "and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or on their hand." Moreover, the parenthetical statement of v. 5a speaks of the "rest of the dead" who did not come to life until the end of the thousand years; they stand in contrast to those who share in the blessedness of the "first resurrection" and, consequently, must be the unbelieving dead. "The souls in view, then, are the souls of all who, whether their lives have been shortened by the cruel death of martyrdom or they have died, so to speak, in their beds, belong to the company of those who persevere to the end in following their Lord while here on earth."<sup>61</sup> This twofold classification is reiterated from 17:6.

Hence, the souls in the throne room are those of all who have died in Christ, in opposition to the dead still awaiting resurrection. These people are identical with those who came to life and reigned with Christ.

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.* Hughes illustrates by the experience of the brothers James and John. One died the death of a martyr, while the other lived into old age; yet both were promised that they would be baptized with the baptism of Jesus' own suffering (Mark 10:38-39). Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 294-95; Ladd, *Revelation*, 264.

In this we are reminded again of something in Paul, viz., through the free gift of righteousness the people of Christ are made to "reign in life" (Rom 5:17). Combined with parallel teaching such as Rom 6:4-11; Eph 2:1-10; Col 3:1-3; John 5:25, all of which speak of the believer's (spiritual) resurrection in Christ, one is able to infer from John's throne room scene that resurrection (life) and reigning are of a piece with each other. Those who participate in the blessedness of the first resurrection have become in a peculiar sense a "kingdom of priests" (Rev 1:6), thus fulfilling the ideal of ancient Israel (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6; 1 Pet 2:9).

The crux of the issue, however, is the meaning of "came to life" (v. 4c). Many have rightly pointed out that several times in the New Testament (Matt 9:18; Rom 14:9; 2 Cor 3:14; Rev 2:8) this form of the verb (ἐζήσαν) refers to physical resurrection. But is it the meaning here, and are we compelled to understand the "first resurrection" in precisely the same way as conveyed by vv. 11-13? In answering the question, several considerations must be brought forward.<sup>62</sup>

First, a precedent for two sorts of resurrection has been set by John 5:25-29: a spiritual rising from the dead is to be followed by a physical one.<sup>63</sup> Since, I assume, the apostle John is the author of both the Fourth Gospel and Revelation, the talk of one kind of resurrection which eventuates in another ought to occasion no surprise.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>See, in addition, Hughes, "Millennium," 290-302, whose conclusion is here accepted, viz., that resurrection in the New Testament, and particularly in Rev 20, is not confined to bodily resurrection.

<sup>63</sup>Ladd, *Revelation*, 266, denies a parallel between the Fourth Gospel and Revelation, not on *a priori* grounds but context. Whereas, he reasons, the former provides contextual clues for two kinds of resurrection, the latter does not. However, we shall argue presently that chapter 21 of Revelation, an integral part of the context, provides just such clues with John's use of irony and paradox.

<sup>64</sup>It is particularly the premillennial interpretation which insists that both resurrections in Rev 20 must be understood in identical terms, e.g., Ladd, *Revelation*, 265-67; *idem*, in R. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1977), 190. Ladd presses two points: (1) the verb ζάω nowhere in the New Testament is predicated of living souls after death during the "intermediate state;" (2) if ἐζήσαν does not mean bodily resurrection in v. 4, then we are faced with the problem that the same word is used in two distinct senses in chapter 20. Ladd is supported in the latter contention by Mounce (*Revelation*, 356), and both quote a much exaggerated statement of Henry Alford (*The Greek Testament* [Chicago: Moody, rep. 1958]

Second, John can call the passage of deceased Christians into the presence of God a "resurrection," inasmuch as he is describing the actual condition of these people, not what merely appears to be the case. To the non-Christian onlooker, the death of the believer is the end of existence, which compels him to draw the conclusion that there is no difference between the Christian and himself. John, however, comforts his readers by informing them that instead of being the termination of life, physical death is the portal through which the believing person enters into a new phase of that resurrection which began when he first heard the voice of the Son of Man.

Third, Rev 20 is not the only instance of this sort of reasoning in the New Testament. 1 Pet 3:18-4:6 draws an analogy between the death of Christ in the flesh and that of the martyred saints, who likewise were "judged in the flesh like men" that "they might live in the spirit the way God lives" (κατὰ θεόν) (4:6).<sup>65</sup> Peter's language finds an interesting point of contact with Wisdom of Solomon 3:4-6: "For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them." Apart from the common element of martyrdom, this comparison is noteworthy because one of the ideas permeating the book of Wisdom is that what *appears* to be true is not necessarily true. In a more general vein, Paul can comfort the Thessalonians respecting "those who have fallen asleep," inasmuch as their prospect of future bodily resurrection is as sure as those who will be alive at the Lord's coming.

Furthermore, the application of a term to the "intermediate state" which, properly speaking, belongs to the last day is explicable within the cadre of another New Testament phenomenon, viz., that of depicting this state as though it were the final condition of individuals. There are two outstanding examples. The one is the words of Jesus to the thief on

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4.732). As to their first point, Hoekema has located at least one such usage, viz., Luke 20:38 (*Bible*, 233), which demonstrates that the New Testament can use ζάω this way. See further Hughes, "Millennium," 289-291, and the next note. Regarding the second point, it is true, on our interpretation, that ἔζησαν refers to two different sorts of resurrection. But as we shall see below, this is intentional on John's part; it is again an instance of irony and paradox.

<sup>65</sup>Here is another instance where ζάω is used of the existence of souls after death. As in Luke 20:38, God is the God of the living, not the dead.

the cross: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). "Paradise" (παράδεισος) is the LXX's rendering of the "Garden of Eden" in Genesis (2:8, 9, 10, 15, 16; 3:1, 2, 3, 8; 10, 23, 24; 13:10) and later in Ezekiel (28:13; 31:8-9). What Jesus promises the thief (and every believer) in the "intermediate state" is the life and bliss of the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam. Second, as a negative example, Luke 16:19-31 depicts the torment of the rich man in terms of the physical realities of fire and thirst; yet it is clear from vv. 27-31 that his condition is not that of final resurrection to the "second death."<sup>66</sup>

In the fourth place, M. G. Kline,<sup>67</sup> whose discussion we shall follow at some length, has called attention to two factors which shed considerable light on the issue at hand. One is the adjective "first" (πρῶτος), in the phrase "the first resurrection." Kline reasons by analogy with Revelation 21. He points out that in this chapter πρῶτος is the opposite of "new" (vv. 1, 2, 5): the "first," he says, is used for that which is superseded by the "new."

In this passage to be "first" means to belong to the order of the present world which is passing away. *Protos* does not merely mark the present world as the first in a series of worlds and certainly not as the first in a series of worlds all of the same kind. On the contrary, it characterizes this world

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<sup>66</sup>Whatever we understand precisely by the "second death," Hughes is certainly right that this event and/or condition is the effect of Adam's fall and is, properly speaking, *his* death: "To be in Adam is to partake of his death, the first death, of which one's own death on earth is the entail, and which leads on to the second death of final judgment" (*Revelation*, 216). The "second death," therefore, is the reversal of the "paradise of God" and the converse of the bliss of the creation covenant as symbolized by the Garden of Eden, the place of God's immediate presence with his people. Consequently, the second death "denotes total and endless exclusion from life and from the incomparable glory and perfection of the new heaven and earth" (*ibid.*, 43).

<sup>67</sup>"The First Resurrection," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 37 (1974-75), 366-375. Kline's article touched off a debate in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, with a response by J. R. Michaels, "The First Resurrection: A Response," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 39 (1976), 100-109, and Kline's rejoinder in the same issue, "The First Resurrection: A Reaffirmation," 110-119. Supportive of Kline's conclusion is N. Shepherd, "The Resurrections of Revelation 20," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 37 (1974), 34-43.

as different in kind from the "new" world. It signifies that the present world stands in contrast to the new world order of consummation which will abide forever.<sup>68</sup>

He notes further that an alternate term for "new" in this chapter is "second," i.e., the "second death" (v. 8) is the antithesis of the "first things" (v. 4). "Whatever accounts for the preference for "first" over "old" in describing the present world, the use of "first" naturally led to the use of "second" alongside of "new" for the future world, particularly for the future reality of eternal death for which the term "new" with its positive redemptive overtones would be inappropriate."<sup>69</sup> It is this antithetical pairing of first death (implied by 21:4) and "second death" which provides us with the same idiom as "first resurrection" and second resurrection (implied by the former expression).

The same pattern of "first" as opposed to "new" is likewise present in the letter to the Hebrews to distinguish old and new covenants (8:7, 8, 13; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9). Similarly, Paul, in 1 Cor 15:45-46, can contrast the "first man Adam" with the "second man" and "last Adam," Jesus Christ. Here it is especially evident that Christ is the eschatological man as opposed to Adam, the protological man. Again to quote Kline:<sup>70</sup>

In none of these passages does *protos* function as a mere ordinal in a simple process of counting objects identical in kind. In fact, precisely the reverse is true in all three passages; in each case it is a matter of different kinds, indeed, of polar opposites... As for Revelation 21 itself, the framework within which *protos* performs its antithetical function is that age-spanning structure of biblical eschatology which divides universal history into two stages: this world and the world to come. To be called "first" within that pattern is to be assigned a place in this present world with its transient order. That which is "first" does not participate in the quality of consummate finality and permanence which is distinctive of the new kingdom order of the world to come.

All this means that the "first resurrection" is something this side of bodily resurrection, "some experience that does not bring the subject of it into his consummated condition and final state."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Kline, "First Resurrection," 366-367.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 370. "The way 'the first resurrection' is identified with living and reigning with Christ a thousand years in Revelation 20:4-6 has the

Furthermore, there comes to light both a striking paradoxical schema and a criss-cross pattern between the expressions "the first resurrection" and "the second death."<sup>72</sup>

The proper decipherment of "the first resurrection" in the interlocking schema of first-(second) resurrection and (first)-second death is now obvious enough. Just as the resurrection of the unjust is paradoxically identified as "the second death" so the death of the Christian is paradoxically identified as "the first resurrection". John sees the Christian dead (v. 4). The real meaning of their passage from earthly life is to be found in the state to which it leads them. And John sees the Christian dead living and reigning with Christ (vv. 4, 6); unveiled before the seer is the royal-priestly life on the heavenly side of the Christian's earthly death. Hence the use of the paradoxical metaphor of "the first resurrection" (vv. 5ff.) for the death of the faithful believer. What for others is the first death is for the Christian a veritable resurrection!<sup>73</sup>

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effect of connecting the qualifying force of *protos* quite directly to 'the thousand years.' The millennium as such is virtually called a 'first' age. It falls within the days of this present passing world characterized by 'the first things.' The Parousia with its concomitant consummative events of resurrection and judgment must then follow these 'thousand years'" (*ibid.*, 374).

<sup>72</sup>See the diagram of M. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 78, illustrating the similar interpretation of R. Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman, 1951), 182.

<sup>73</sup>Kline, "First Resurrection," 371. On p. 372, Kline replies to the interpretation of the "first resurrection" as regeneration (cf. Erickson, *Options*, 86). We should qualify, however, that although this resurrection is not regeneration/conversion as such, it is an extension of it and an intensification of its blessedness. Along similar lines, Hughes, *Revelation*, 214-15, and earlier in "The First Resurrection: Another Interpretation," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 39 (1977), 315-318, is undoubtedly correct that the "first resurrection" of Rev 20 is organically one with the resurrection of Christ. However, we must resist his charge that our approach "spiritualizes" this resurrection so as to leave it as "a mere theological concept unconnected with bodily resurrection" (*Revelation*, 214). The argument is precisely that resurrection, like everything else in the New Testament, forms a

Kline's second point is that the blessing of the Christian dead is a recurring theme in Revelation. As Rev 14:13, Rev 20 is one of the seven beatitudes of the Apocalypse (1:4, 14; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 22:7, 14). Indeed, a comparison of these two beatitudes of the Christian dead is instructive. According to the former, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." This "sabbath blessing," says Kline, is very much like the "millennial blessing" of Revelation 20: "For the biblical concept of sabbath rest includes enthronement after the completion of labors by which royal dominion is manifested or secured (cf., e.g., Isa 66:1; Heb 1:3b). The sabbath rest of the risen Christ is his kingly session at God's right hand. To live and reign with Christ is to participate in his royal sabbath rest."<sup>74</sup>

The letter to the church in Smyrna (2:8-11) presents another parallel to 20:4-6. Here the risen Christ promises the "crown of life" to those who are "faithful unto death;" it is they who will not be "hurt of the second death" (vv. 10b-11). In addition, 2:9-10; 20:2-3, 7-10 speak of the activity of Satan. Kline also raises the possibility that there is a

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continuum. The "first resurrection" is indeed one with Christ's own rising from the dead: the saints come to life and reign with Christ just because of their union with him, "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). Nevertheless, there is a context specificity about John's phrase "first resurrection" in Rev 20:5-6: the seer contemplates the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and the word of God. Therefore, the rising in question, though the outgrowth of Christ's resurrection, is a new phase of the believer's kingship in Christ, which in turn leads to the consummate blessings depicted in Revelation 21 and 22.

<sup>74</sup>"First Resurrection," 373. Cf. Rev 6:11, which similarly bestows rest on the martyrs. Dumbrell, *End of the Beginning*, 41, rightly remarks that "rest" is "peace in God's presence," the goal of all human experiences. In salvation-historical perspective, "rest" is a synonym of "peace" = "salvation." See, e.g., A. G. Hebert, *The Throne of David: A Study of the Fulfilment of the Old Testament in Jesus Christ and His Church* (London: Faber, 1941), 159-63; A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in D.A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197-220. The "rest" of the martyrs, then, is "paradise regained," the realization of the creation goal of human existence.



relationship between the numerical symbols of the ten days of tribulation (2:10) and the thousand years of reigning (20:4, 6). "The intensifying of ten to a thousand together with the lengthening of days to years might then suggest that the present momentary tribulation works a far greater glory to be experienced in the intermediate state as the immediate issue of martyrdom."<sup>75</sup>

(3) Next, we must pay brief attention to the fate of "the rest of the dead" (v. 5a). According to v. 4, John sees both a broader and a narrower circle of believing dead. In 4a are envisaged all those seated on thrones, to whom judgment has been committed, a probable allusion to Dan 7:22, which foresees judgment as a prerogative of the saints of the Most High, as well as of the Son of Man (vv. 9-14). In 4b, John beholds in particular the martyrs, who had not worshiped the beast nor received his mark on their foreheads or hands.

In contrast, v. 5a adds parenthetically that there is a category of the dead who are to be distinguished from those who are reigning with Christ, a group, in other words, who do not partake of the first resurrection and who, consequently, are to be affected by the "second death" and do not come to life until the thousand years are completed. It is true that the author predicates the same verb (ἐζήσαν) of them as of the believing dead. However, as we observed with Kline, this is an instance of the irony and paradox employed by John in his treatment of Christ's people and his enemies respectively. The believer dies and yet is raised to sit with Christ in the heavenly places; the unbeliever comes to life, but, as we recall from John 5:29, he rises to "the resurrection of judgment."<sup>76</sup>

(4) Finally, the termination of the "millennium" corresponds to the release of Satan for "a little while" (v. 3), when again he will deceive the

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<sup>75</sup> "First Resurrection," 373-374.

<sup>76</sup> Hoekema, however, takes ἐζήσαν in the same sense as in v. 4 and interprets it as follows: "When he says that the rest of the dead did not live or come to life, he means the exact opposite of what he had just said about the believing dead. The unbelieving dead, he is saying, did not live or reign with Christ during this thousand-year period. Whereas believers after death enjoy a new kind of life in heaven with Christ in which they share in Christ's reign, unbelievers after death share nothing of either this life or this reign" (*Bible*, 236). The aorist tense of the verb can be interpreted variously (see Hughes, "Millennium," 289-290). I would narrow the possibilities to "ingressive" (initial action) or "constative" (summary of prolonged action); either way the sense of v. 4 is not materially affected.

nations (vv. 3, 7, 10) and mount the army to be defeated in the ultimate eschatological battle (= Armageddon in chapter 16). Perhaps the closest verbal parallel is Paul's prediction, in 2 Thessalonians 2, of the revelation of the man of lawlessness. The coming (παρουσία) of this "lawless one," says Paul, is to be "by the activity of *Satan*" with "all power and with *pretended* signs and wonders," along with "all wicked *deception*" for those who are to perish; it is upon them that God sends a strong *delusion*, to make them believe a *lie* (vv. 9-11). Observe that this work of deception takes the particular form of a claim to Godhood (v. 4). Here, in other words, is Satan, "the god of this world," in the person of the Antichrist deceiving the nations for a while, until the Lord Jesus slays him with the breath of his mouth (v. 8). Especially noteworthy is the reversion of the nations to their idolatry, the very situation confronted by the apostles in Acts 14 and 17. There is, in other words, a return to the "times of ignorance."

All this takes place after the thousand years have been accomplished, making the reign of the saints concurrent with the binding of Satan. Strictly speaking, then, the "millennium" of Rev 20 is the heavenly reign of the believing dead with Christ which terminates with the unbinding of Satan. It would be preferable not to speak of a "millennium" at all in this sense, given the context-specific colouring of John's "thousand years," which is a symbolic number in any event (cf. Ps 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8).<sup>77</sup> If the term is to be retained at all, I prefer, with Hoekema, to speak of a *realized millennialism*, i.e., a present *heavenly*

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<sup>77</sup>Rissi comments that "in this context the number 1000 has lost its temporal significance, as have all numbers in the apocalypse that denote a specific 'time', and has become an expression for the peculiar character of the time that is intended by the concept. Here it is *the time of the revealed Messiah*" (*Future of the World*, 34, italics mine.). Furthermore, "the number 1000 qualifies the *moment* when history comes to an end as the moment of the perfect revelation of Christ's lordship over the world" (*ibid.*, 98 n. 79, italics his.). Cf. Green, *Prophecy*, 79-81; Hoekema, *Bible*, 227; Waltke, "Kingdom Promises as Spiritual," 273; H. Hoekema, *Behold He Cometh: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1969), 643-645; P. S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 178. Mounce concedes that although John, in his view, taught a literal millennium, "its essential meaning may be realized in something other than a temporal fulfillment" (*Revelation*, 359).

not future earthly reign of the people of Christ.<sup>78</sup> "So understood, the passage says nothing about an earthly reign of Christ over a primarily Jewish kingdom. Rather, it describes the reigning with Christ in heaven, between their death and Christ's second coming, of the souls of deceased believers. It also describes the binding of Satan during the present age in such a way that he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel."<sup>79</sup>

As a final note, the termination of the thousand years with the release of Satan does not militate against the identification of the "millennium" as the (partial) realization of God's salvific designs. Biblical prophecy, unlike so many of its interpreters, does not pinpoint precisely the order of things to come (cf. 1 Pet 1:10-11). In this sense, New Testament prophecy imitates its Old Testament counterpart in that very little concern is had for a precise chronological program. In both Testaments, numerous details are left uncertain and unspecified until the fulfillment, at which time matters are clarified.<sup>80</sup> What is important, rather, is a necessary sequence of events.<sup>81</sup> In the present case, John wants his readers to comprehend that, notwithstanding their persecution by the agents of Satan, Christ and his people *are* reigning. Satan is no longer deceiving the nations as before, and when he does so again, it is only for a brief while, and even then it will signal the end of this age. When the deception occurs, the wary saint, ironically, will know that his Lord is coming soon to judge the Evil One and his hosts.

#### 4. Conclusion

As any other passage of Scripture, Rev 20 must be set within the parameters of salvation history. Accordingly, a hermeneutic must be applied to the particular question of the thousand-year reign of Christ which seeks to be sensitive to the overall biblical architecture of

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<sup>78</sup>Bible, 235.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>80</sup>1 Cor 15:24-28, for example, makes the reign of Christ extend until the resurrection, when his enemies become a footstool for his feet. However, in Rev 20 the reign is coextensive with the thousand years, which comes to an end with the release of Satan. There is no contradiction between the two, only a difference of perspective. This in itself warns us against oversimplifying or overrefining the timetable of future-eschatological events.

<sup>81</sup>G. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 488.

promise and fulfillment. The principal points of such a hermeneutic may be reduced to the following. (1) Christ and his people are the sum and substance of the Old Testament. Passages such as Luke 24:25-27, 44-49 and 1 Pet 1:10-12 provide the paradigm for the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. (2) Within the schema of God's new creation plan, Israel existed to typify the latter-day people (1 Cor 10:6, 11), those upon whom the end of the ages has come (1 Cor 10:11) and without whom the saints of old could not be perfected (Heb 11:40); in them is Christ, the hope of glory (Col 1:27). Consequently, (3) the prophetic outlook on Israel's future salvation, though cast in terms comprehensible to the original hearers, is modified by its apostolic interpretation, with God's ultimate intention being clarified by its actual historical fulfillment. The nationalistic and militaristic language of the prophets has been transposed into another key, that of the universal reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace, who accepts all without distinction, Jew and Gentile (Rom 15:7-12).<sup>82</sup>

It is these broader perspectives provided by a salvation-historical hermeneutic which place a control over the exegete's conception of the thousand years of Rev 20. This control is two-sided. On the negative side, methodological consistency will dictate that the reign of Christ is

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<sup>82</sup>That the messianic expectations of first-century Judaism should have been cast in politico-militaristic terms (cf. Green, *Prophecy*, 86-93) is not surprising, given that in ancient Israel politics and religion were inseparable. See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 178; J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 195; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM, 1974), 1.307; V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 207, 229; A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), 5-6; D. Arenhoevel, *Die Theokratie nach dem 1. und 2. Makkabäerbuch* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1967), 4, 16; B. Renaud, "La Loi et les lois dans les livres des Maccabées," *Revue biblique* 68 (1961), 48; O. Proksch, "ἄγιος," etc., in G. Kittel and G. Griedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:91-92; K. G. Kuhn, "Ἰσραήλ," etc., in G. Kittel and G. Griedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 3:360. "It is important to note, however, that while Jesus proclaimed himself the realization of Old Testament hope, he was not the Messiah for which late Judaism was waiting" (Green, *Prophecy*, 91).

not to be understood in terms of a precise thousand-year period, during which the theocratic hopes of Israel are "literally" realized. Rather, the "millennium," as an integral part of the salvific process, is coextensive with the "latter days," during which the nations are summoned to render the obedience of faith to king Jesus (Gen 49:10; Ps 2:8-9; Rom 1:5).<sup>83</sup> It is that time foretold by the prophets when the strangers to the commonwealth of Israel would be accepted as the equals of the ancient covenant people (Eph 2:11-22). Far from reinforcing the Jew/Gentile divide, this "day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:1) obliterates such distinctions forever.

Consequently, to put it positively, the "millennium" of Rev 20 is organically one with the new era inaugurated with the first advent of Jesus Christ, and is to be situated within the larger framework of the arrival of the eschaton "at the end of these days" (Heb 1:2). It is here that the phrase "intermediate state" is misleading. To be sure, from one point of view the existence of deceased believers is "intermediate" in relation to final resurrection (the "second resurrection"); it is an interim period. Nevertheless, in the most meaningful sense it is not intermediate at all; it is but the continuation and higher experience of the newness of life to which the Christian has been admitted by faith. At most, it can be called the "meantime" of the believer's redemption,<sup>84</sup> because it is none other than his present reign with and rest in Christ, which are to be protracted forever, when his body is made like the glorious body of Christ (Phil 3:21).<sup>85</sup>

In short, the "millennial reign" of Rev 20:1-6 is eternal life intensified: the reign of Christ and his saints is a piece of realized soteriology. Nothing could have been more relevant for John's readers

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<sup>83</sup>Paçç Mounce, *Revelation*, 357.

<sup>84</sup>"For Christ, it is the meantime as he awaits the final assault and total subjugation of the enemy. For the Christian who has departed this life, it is the meantime between death and resurrection as he awaits the reinvestment of the soul with his body, that, sown in weakness, will be raised in glory and power... And this is the meantime of a 'thousand years' within which the souls of the faithful live and reign with Christ" (Hughes, *Revelation*, 212).

<sup>85</sup>O. Cullmann, "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament," in *The Early Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 13, is right that "the whole *Regnum Christi* forms a unity, as is already evident from the fact that the phase which precedes the *parousia* merely represents a kind of recapitulation of the phase which is to follow it" (see also *ibid.*, 13, n. 18). Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 289-290.

to know. Contrary to what *appears* to be true, the throne room scene of Rev 20 assures suffering Christians that those who have gone before *actually* "reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:17). The blessedness of the first resurrection is a partial but very real bringing to pass of the promise of Rev 2:10: "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." It is for this reason that the risen Christ was revealed to John on Patmos.<sup>86</sup>

*Don Garlington is Professor of New Testament, Greek Exegesis, and Hermeneutics at Toronto Baptist Seminary. He obtained his Ph. D. from the University of Durham, England in 1987. His doctoral thesis has been published as 'The Obedience of Faith.' A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991).*

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<sup>86</sup>According to Rissi, all the statements about Jesus' appearance (in 19:11-16) "give manifold expression to a single basic motif: *the Coming One is He who has already come, who has already altered the world's total situation, who has overcome all powers and principalities, who is already known in the faith of his church as Revealer, Redeemer, and Lord of all lords, who now steps from the twilight of the unprovable and the unavailable into the radiant light of unveiled existence and vindicates the faith of his church. For John, what the future will bring is the unveiling of the reality already created in the history of Jesus*" (*Future of the World*, 29-30, italics his.).