

Revelation 19:11 - 20:15

A Postmillennial Analysis

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There are many reasons why Revelation 19:11-20:15 must be re-evaluated by today's theologians. The most important reason is that a defective understanding of the scriptures cannot but cripple the church in its work. God has graciously upheld His church in spite of many doctrinal weaknesses. Nonetheless, God's ultimate solution is to give His people a firm foundation of truth by opening their eyes to a better understanding of the Bible, even of its "obscure" passages.

Historically, much progress had been made in our understanding of Rev. 19:11 - 20:15. This progress came to a halt upon the death of Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield in 1921; since that time, theologians have retreated from the implications of Warfield's work. It is the purpose of this analysis to regain lost ground, correct oversights on Warfield's part, and to develop the full implications of John's narrative.

The focal point of my discussion is the following Biblical narrative, which I quote in full:

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured,

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and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

These visions must be understood in light of the rest of the book, of which they form an integral part. In particular, John's use of certain numerical expressions is significant, and the absence of such numerology is equally significant. Therefore, an analysis of even a small portion of John's Revelation necessarily becomes a brief analysis of the entire book.

There are many verses in Revelation that are normative, establishing a

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correct understanding of the narrative and the underlying doctrines taught therein. For example, we are given to understand that the entire book is in fact a prophecy. This is indicated quite forcefully in the middle of the book, where John tells us "And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.'" (Rev. 10:11) This indicates that the verses that went before constituted prophecy, and even more clearly, that the verses to follow will comprise the remainder of what John must prophesy.

The primary theme of the Book of Revelation is the victory of the Lamb over all His enemies. We are given to understand that these enemies "will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). Christ destroys the beast and false prophet (Rev. 19:20); subsequently, "the rest [of Christ's enemies] were slain by the sword of Him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from His mouth" (vs. 21). This conquest is so complete that it is boldly declared that "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. 11:15).

This distinctive message is precisely what God determined to communicate to all believers of every age. Hence, in the very first verse of the book, we are confronted with "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants what must soon take place." We can take comfort in this wonderful fact, that the book's message was given to us, and to ALL of Christ's servants throughout the ages, without exception. Hal Lindsey and others who seek to limit the relevance of Revelation (effectively rewriting Rev. 1:1) are depriving the Church of one of the most inspiring messages the risen Lord has entrusted to His Church, a message encouraging enough to warrant the declaration, "blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear" (Rev. 1:2).

It can never be overstressed that John constantly uses symbols as vehicles for conveying prophetic truth. Revelation is a book of symbols, and it is in the unlocking of the symbols that the message reveals itself. Moreover, the symbols, though presented chronologically, do not necessarily represent actual events that are to unfold in the same sequence. St. Augustine, for example, set forth the doctrine of *recapitulio*, announcing that the book is written in several parallel sections that overlap, or recapitulate, one another. Reformed writers have taken this further, discovering what appear to be seven parallel narratives in Revelation, each narrative embracing the entire church age. Each of these seven sections is believed to start with the first advent and outline events that lead up to the second advent.

As Warfield has noted, the principle of *recapitulio*, or what modern scholars call synchronistic parallelism, has been used with varying degrees of judiciousness. There is an element of truth in the *recapitulio* principle, but an

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overly rigid approach (a hermeneutical prejudice, as it were) could unnaturally restrict attempts to penetrate the symbolism of John's visions.

Critique Of Current Millennial Perspectives

It is vitally important that the reader be aware of the serious defects in current millennial thought. These defects are current in virtually every system of eschatology. The most serious defect of these theories has gone undetected for centuries, for no one has considered the full implications of having the thousand-year reign come to an end. This has been true because the focus of discussion has been Satan, rather than the saints.

For example, in eschatologies that conceive of the 1000 years as being fulfilled on earth, we are taught that the saints sit on thrones and reign and judge with Christ for one thousand years. It is just as clear that this reign is of a fixed duration, and that at the point the thousand years end, the saints must abdicate their thrones, stop judging, and must cease reigning with Christ. And, depending on which exegetical approach is deemed valid, there exists the possibility that Christ Himself will abdicate His throne on the day after the thousand years is finished. There is no escape from this fatal flaw: the thousand years do definitely come to an end, and when they end, all that was taught to occur within their span must necessarily come to an end as well. Anyone who would seek to sidestep this conclusion has set himself the task of nullifying the word of God, for the sake of preserving a millennial theory.

Moreover, at the end of the thousand years, the saints will also cease to be priests of God and of Christ, and the judgment that was given to them must necessarily be withdrawn. The thousand years definitely end, and the powers given to the saints [and possibly Christ Himself] end when the thousand years run out. It is similar to the statement, "The President of the United States is the chief executive authority in America for a term of four years." After those four years are ended, the presidential authority is revoked. This example is analogous to the thousand year reign. And the conclusions drawn are inescapable. Thus, here we have a yardstick for determining how honest current Bible scholars are.

Think not that I have come to criticize only the premillennialists. This flaw is even more serious for the amillennialist, and it sends postmillennialism crashing to the ground. The change in status that Christians must submit to at the end of the thousand years (given current interpretations of Rev. 20) directly contradicts the clear teaching of the New Testament. This is Reformed thinking?

The only possible solution is that offered by Dr. Kliefoth, construing Rev. 20:1-6 as a symbol of the intermediate state. The development of this solution was furthered by the work of Dr. Warfield, and will be brought to a final form in the course of this thesis. The two elements of the final solution are these: that verses 1-6 symbolize the intermediate state, and that verses 7ff. are a

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recapitulation of Rev. 19:11-21, which is to say, that the transition from verse 6 to 7 is emphatically *not* chronological, but is indicative of a change in symbol, the appropriateness of which has been solidly shown by Warfield.

This is to say that the interadventual period is, in fact, the little season of Satan, wherein he is loosed. His hordes, that presently encompass the camp of the saints, even the holy city, are progressively being destroyed, and will be completely destroyed (the destruction being symbolized by fire from heaven) in time and history. Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire prior to the end of the world, which end is not only synchronous with the final judgment, but should be seen as *synonymous* with the final judgment. Hence, all of Christ's enemies, including his greatest enemy, Satan, will be destroyed prior to the second coming of Christ.

Keeping this essential overview in mind, we will proceed with a verse-by-verse analysis of the Biblical narrative.

A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPOSITION

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

John brings before us a glorious picture of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The details are pertinent to both the nature and actions of the Lord in time and history.

First, it is heaven that is opened. This is to say that what John sees would not be visible had heaven remained closed, as it usually is. We do not now see Jesus, for He sits at the right hand of the Father, where no human eye can pierce. However, John was allowed "behind the scenes" to see precisely what it is that Christ is doing from the Father's right hand. There is no indication that the scene ever shifts from heaven respecting the physical location of Jesus.

The rider of the horse is called Faithful and True, indicating that what He is given to do, He will accomplish because He is in fact faithful and true. It is therefore to be understood that the work He is to execute upon the earth was given to Him by another, namely, the Father.

Further, it is a *horse* upon which Christ is seated. Premillennialism sees the second coming in these verses, but such a notion would violate the statement of the angel in Acts 1:11, to the effect that Christ would return "in the same way" that the disciples "saw Him go." John himself was among those so addressed by the "men in white robes." John was specifically told that Christ would return in a manner identical to that in which He ascended. If

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John represents Christ as sitting on a horse in Rev. 19:11, there is but one conclusion: the passage makes no reference whatsoever to the second coming of Christ. John knew that the testimony of the angels was sure; Christ did not ascend on a white horse; He won't return on one. Therefore, if this vision depicts Jesus as sitting upon a white horse, the second coming is simply not in view.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses.

Once again, however one interprets the armies of heaven (whether angels or saints), the context simply cannot be the second coming. If Christ is not returning a second time (in these verses), it is only logical that the armies with Him are not accompanying such a second coming. The symbol of the horses is significant, primarily because they *are* symbolic: in heaven, equestrian locomotion is superfluous. The symbol is representative of the mission the armies are on, specifically, the mission of war.

The vision indicates that Christ's enemies are destroyed solely by the sword out of the Rider's mouth, and that therefore the armies with Him do not actually engage in literal destruction, in keeping with scriptures that indicate that "vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Thus, there is no obstacle in interpreting the "armies of heaven" as being either saints or angels, though the evidence seems to lean in favor of identifying the armies as the saints. This point will be developed further when the armies of the earth are considered.

From His mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; He will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

It is Christ's distinctive ministry as the One who holds the keys to Death and Hades (Rev. 1:18) to wield the sharp two-edged sword. Jesus identifies Himself as He "who has the sharp two-edged sword," (Rev. 2:12) which sword is clearly issuing from His mouth (Rev. 1:16). This sword is symbolic of death and destruction, for Christ's reign progressively fulfills the promise that "the transgressors shall be altogether destroyed, the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off." (Ps. 37:38). In other words, "all the wicked He will destroy." (Ps. 145:20).

This is consonant with the fact that the world is, in fact, a condemned world, and that Christ has been given two ministries to execute during His Kingship: to save the world, and to fulfill the terms of the world's condemnation. The process by which He takes a totally condemned world and makes it over into a saved world has been progressing now for twenty centuries. It is a miracle of the first order, so great that men's imaginations fail in the face of it. How astonishing that the condemned world is passing away (I John 2:17),

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being supplanted by the rock cut without hands that grows until it fills the whole world (Dan. 2:35). But just as surely as He came to save the world, He also is faithful in bringing righteous wrath upon the condemned portion thereof, to bring it to nought, to utterly destroy every principality and power opposed to God Almighty.

The many possible points of emphasis in the final clause teach us many things about the power and glory of our Lord. "*He will tread the winepress,*" indicates that the task is specifically given to the Son by the Father as part of the Messianic reign from the Father's right hand: the job is given to no other. And, "*He will tread the winepress,*" because He is Faithful and True to the mission appointed Him: there can be no question in the mind of any Christian that "the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will accomplish this." It is specifically *the fury of the wrath of God* that Christ has been entrusted to execute on the condemned world, and He does so because He judges righteously. Therefore, He declares war on the condemned world, the world of unbelief, the vessels of wrath predestined unto reprobation to show forth the glory and mercy of the Most High.

Christ executes this office continually, although the only direct revelation of it is in Rev. 19, wherein heaven stands opened for John to actually perceive Christ at work. This is the source of the blessings promised in the Apocalypse, that what was not visible to the naked eye of Christ's flock as they engage in battle against the enemy, is declared with power and authority by John to be the ground of the Christian's strength and courage. Specifically, it is with this vision that John himself is no doubt most comforted, for he was among those who heard Christ say, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20) Now, six decades later, John is allowed to see with his eyes exactly how Jesus is faithfully keeping His promise.

On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jesus Christ has many different designations in the Scriptures (cf. *The Lord of Glory*, B.B. Warfield), each significant in the context where used. The certain teaching of this verse is that Christ is king of kings and lord of lords NOW, and is in fact reigning in the totality of divine power given unto Him; any lesser formulation, restricted either in extent or in time, is guilty of impugning the sovereignty of the Risen Lord. The Father has given His Son ALL power and authority, and therefore Jesus shines forth as King of kings and Lord of lords, the root and ground of all authority and power. For this reason, He is fit to tread the winepress and destroy (kill) His enemies, for He is the sovereign omnipotent Lord over all, without exception.

Since He is thus endowed with such limitless sovereignty, who dares to claim that His power is insufficient to convert a condemned world into a saved world? Who dares to look at "world conditions" and teach that Christ

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has yet to fully exercise the office of King of kings? I ask, where is the debater of the age, that he may reprove John or soften John's plain assertion that Christ is NOW in full command of His realm?

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."

Dr. Rushdoony notes that there are two banquets mentioned in Revelation 19, the marriage supper of the lamb, and what he calls "the table of vultures." As Rushdoony notes, "This banquet of the vultures is an old story in history, and a new one daily." Precisely so. It is because the world is "condemned already" (John 3:18) that God has called the carrion-eaters to partake of their due. These verses speak of a totality of devastation (ALL men, both free and slave, both small and great) that can only speak of the passing away of the condemned world, the wicked proliferating in the welcoming arms of Death and Hades. The fate of every unbeliever is made manifest here, that Christ will see to it that they pay the wages of sin: they shall indeed die. The exact manner in which Christ exacts the wages of sin is unimportant. It is important to note that Jesus, as King of kings, is the one behind the scenes: He uses many instrumentalities over which He governs, but He will certainly carry out His appointed task, to kill all the wicked, to see that they pay the last penny.

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army.

The battle lines are drawn in stark relief. The condemned world loves death, and hates life, and the Author of life. The battle scene varies throughout history (from the subtleness of blasphemies and heresies to the literal torture and murder of the saints). However, the vision strongly suggests that, although gathered against Christ, the beast and the kings cannot see Him at all (for to John alone is Christ actually visible). The battles therefore occur on earth itself, and are but the death-throes of a condemned world lashing out at the Light that will, by its brightness, cause the darkness to completely pass away. Again, Christ is behind the scenes, and, excepting the extraordinary case of John, cannot be seen but with the eye of faith. The kings do not see their real Enemy, but they clearly perceive that there is an enemy of some kind; they just as surely will die at the hands of their actual Enemy, that is, He who sits at the right hand of power and authority.

The crucial point to be grasped in this verse is that the armies are deliberately gathered against an enemy. They are fitted with all the implements of

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war. The natural meaning is that they will wage literal war. Therefore, the armies against which they will wage war, with human weapons, must also be an army composed of men. The wicked armies have deliberately gathered themselves against an enemy they fully intend to conquer. Such a representation would be ridiculous if the second coming of Christ with angels in power and glory is in view for the following reasons: (1) Complete preparation for battle is implied by the wicked hosts gathering methodically against their enemy. (2) The actual return of Christ in glory would put any human army to flight for the utter terror of His glory. As Dr. Boettner has well said, if the beloved disciple John fell as one dead in the presence of the glorified Christ, how much more would His appearance strike wicked sinners with mortal terror? Would not these armies rather cry to the mountains to fall on them, to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, given this premillennial hypothesis? (3) The superhuman courage of the beast's armies simply does not square with what we know of the Lord's glory and terrifying power. The premillennial theory, and indeed any theory that relegates these verses to the second coming, asks us to believe that men will not so much as flinch at the terrifying return of the Lord in glory: they will rather fight the more bravely against impossible odds. Surely this scenario smacks of a fairy tale that glorifies fallen man over the presence of Him who dwelleth in eternal light, He that no mere man can even approach. Would that more Christians grasped this as well as Dr. Boettner does, that these theories seriously underestimate the terrifying glory of our Lord Jesus.

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image.

Of all the verses, this is the most compelling, for it represents the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy in II Cor. 10:3-5. "For though we live in the world, we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." Clearly, if the beast and false prophet are lies brought to manifestation by Satan in government and religion, respectively, it will be by illuminating these realms with Truth that they will be captured.

Additionally, in destroying EVERY proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, there can be no more obstacles, and no more deception. The fertile field with which Satan started, a world in darkness, under God's condemnation, has now become most unfruitful for him. What a stinging defeat, that Satan's children are all cut off from the living, and the beast and false prophet, who Satan used so effectively to attack the saints, have been captured by the army of Him who sits on the white horse.

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These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone.

Utter destruction is the warranted verdict on the captured enemies. This constitutes an amplification of the preceding verse, for the total fulfillment of this prophecy occurs when the last reprobate man dies. However, in the mean time, the prophecy is in process of execution as Jesus destroys ungodly governments and lying religions in His own time. Some may argue that the Lord is slow, as men count slowness, but this is more accurately a lapse in our faith, not a lapse in the trustworthiness of Him who is Faithful and True.

And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

This verse is virtually certain in meaning: all of Christ's enemies will be slain by the sword that issues from His mouth. The "rest" contrast with the beast and false prophet of the preceding verse, the antecedent clearly being "all men, great and small" that oppose Christ.

The implications of this verse are surely astonishing, for the verse teaches that the assured fate of all wicked, unsaved men, is to die by instrumentality of the sword of Christ's mouth. They must all die, and this death is occasioned by the slaying sword of the Lamb, who exercises this office by appointment of the Father. This is the special ministry God has purposed toward the wicked: it is a ministry of death. Isaiah says of Messiah, that "he shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked." (Isa. 11:4). Jesus literally dashes His enemies to pieces by killing them during His present reign (Ps. 2:9-11, I Cor. 5:23-26). Perhaps we see many wicked men dying "natural deaths," or dying of illness. But John sees the shrouds of heaven thrown upon to see the real avenger of God's wrath, He who renders full wages to those in sin. If God is the Author of Life, and the Lawgiver setting forth the laws of life, He must just as surely be the Author of Death against the wicked.

Hence, since all the wicked must die, there must come a time in history when the wicked have all passed into death, and all that will remain is a world populated by elect believers. Christ's victory over His foes will be totally complete, and the Devil will have nothing at the end of history. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and the glory thereof, but Christ will gain all these kingdoms righteously, being faithful to the tasks appointed Him by the Father. This then is the full issue of the mighty salvation wrought on the Cross, that the whole world might be saved through Him whom the Father sent.

As Isaiah said, "of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end" (Isa. 9:7). This can never be fulfilled unless Messiah fully exercises His government as it relates to the death of the wicked. Since "there

is no peace, saith the Lord, for the wicked," the wicked *must* perish: there existence forbids fulfillment of Isaiah 9:7. Therefore, John is seeing in the spirit the fulfillment of David's prophecy that "the transgressors shall be altogether destroyed, the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off." (Ps. 37:38). In other words, "all the wicked He will destroy." (Ps. 145:20).

CHAPTER TWENTY: A brief overview

Dr. Warfield made every effort to impress upon his readers that when apocalyptic symbolism is the object of our exploration, interpretation is more a matter of sympathetic imagination than the use of the fine scales of linguistic science. In other words, it is crucial for the interpreter to gain insight into the seer's method. It is clear from his textbook on New Testament Textual Criticism that Dr. Warfield possessed this remarkable talent, a gift that enabled him to enter into the thought processes of the inspired authors. It is hard to understand why modern expositors have taken a step backwards to tread old exegetical ground when they should have continued in Warfield's pioneering footsteps.

The opening verses of chapter twenty introduce a new symbol in the book of Revelation. Several different instrumentalities are depicted in symbolic language, and these instrumentalities correlate strictly with the 1000 year symbol. No element external to the great circle circumscribed by the 1000 year symbol can correlate with these instrumentalities. The "ministries" or instrumentalities spoken of here are of fixed applicability, applicable only within the intended span of the symbol.

It is for this reason that interpretations of the 1000 years that relegate them to a period of duration on earth are untenable. The full implications of such interpretations are truly unscriptural. Even postmillennial authors who speak of "a general defection from the truth" at the end of the church age are in serious error, for in their reading of Revelation 20, this defection must occur *after* the thousand years are finished. They have never fully understood that when the thousand years are "finished," the saints must abdicate their thrones, cease judging, cease reigning, and be stripped of their priesthood under God and Christ, because these activities are explicitly restricted to 1000 years in duration. Where in Scripture are we taught that the saints are to be deprived of any of these things while on earth? Where are we taught that while the saints yet live, God will strip them of any element of their co-regnancy with Christ as His heirs according to the promise? The answer is simple: the scriptures do not teach any such blasphemies. Therefore, the route all these interpreters have taken has actually led to a patently false conclusion, which is directly evident on the face of John's narrative. No need here to invoke *reductio ad absurdum* argumentation or like logical manipulation! The error has been staring saints in the face for twenty centuries, and we

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have been slow to perceive it! This is the sad truth: we have done very poor theological homework.

Even worse, attempts to rectify this problem (Kliefoth, Warfield) have been met with outraged cries of "violent allegorizing," "denying the literalness of Scripture," etc. Walvoord smeared Warfield with the charge of using the same hermeneutic that theological liberals use. Kliefoth was likewise criticized for his "nonliteral hermeneutic." Hence, the only tenable solutions wrought out by theologians have been suppressed for distinctly illegitimate reasons.

Kliefoth and Warfield believed the thousand years to be symbolic of the intermediate state, the blessedness of those Christians who, having died, have gone to be with the Lord. Warfield, in particular, developed an outstanding elaboration of this approach. Warfield made careful note that John has used a time symbol to represent the intermediate state, and that it is appropriate that anything that happens outside of the intermediate state must necessarily be represented as occurring either *before* or *after* the 1000 years. This is manifest in the nature of John's method in employing a temporal symbol in the first place. Thus Warfield teaches us that "it is exteriority, rather than subsequence, that is suggested." The symbol establishes an area (represented by a symbol of time) wherein Satan is completely restricted. The symbol also implies another area (outside the 1000 years = before or after the 1000 years) where Satan is not restricted.

Hence, the binding and loosing of Satan are not to be thought of as subsequent actions in a worldly chronology, but are with respect to spheres. Satan is bound with respect to one sphere (represented by the 1000 years) but loosed with respect to another (the little season after the 1000 years). It is important to understand that John would never have overlapped time symbols because the explicit nature of Satan's restrictions as contained in the narrative would have become meaningless. The use of consecutive time symbols is a completely natural consequence of John's approach. Hence, Warfield makes the crucial comment that "what happens, happens not to Satan, but to the saints, and is pictured as happening to Satan for the sake of the narrative." It is the saints that are removed from the sphere of Satan's assaults and placed inside the "1000 years." As Warfield correctly notes, "outside of their charmed circle," Satan's hideous work continues. In temporal-symbolic language, Satan is unbound (loosed) only before and after the 1000 years, which is to say, outside the perimeter of the intermediate state.

Of course, the narrative also mentions "the rest of the dead," the wicked dead. In whatever sense the Christian dead live and reign with Christ, the wicked dead do not, and they are therefore not to be found in the intermediate state in the same sense that the Christians are. This certainly is logical, for it is to be expected that if the Christian dead live and reign with Christ, what is to prevent the wicked dead from doing the same? John here explains that the

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Christians will have no such problem in the intermediate state. No wicked deadmen will harrass them when they go home to the Lord; to live and reign after death is the blessing solely of the elect. John here merely foresees and corrects the natural suspicion that would enter into the minds of Christians concerning the state of the wicked after death.

Significantly, the wicked dead live only in Satan's little season, which is their time here on earth. Therefore, the little season of Satan constitutes a recapitulation of chapter 19:11-21, but from a slightly different perspective. But the key point is that the destruction of both wicked men *and Satan himself* is taught to occur in time and history, hence offering the only complete fulfillment of I Cor. 15:24-26. If every enemy is to be destroyed while Christ still sits at the Father's right hand, this must include Satan himself, the pre-eminent Enemy of the Son. Therefore, Jesus will remain in heaven until all the wicked are destroyed, and He will remain in heaven until Satan is destroyed, and He will remain in heaven until Death, the last enemy, is destroyed, and *then*, and only then, will He return in glory to His world, because then, the kingdom will be ready to be turned over to the Father, that He may be all relations among all creations.

THE EXPOSITION OF REVELATION 20 Verse by Verse

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.

Much has been made of the geographical location of the angel, theologians being hopeful to pinpoint the locale of the entire vision based on such considerations. Nonetheless, the angel had to come down to get to Satan. This is because "down here" is the locale of Satan himself, and it is self-evident that the angel must *of necessity* descend to earth to take hold of the wicked one. The direction of locomotion corresponds to the purpose and subject of the angel's mission.

The angel is holding two distinct objects in his hands, the key to the bottomless pit, and the great chain. These two symbols represent two distinctively different instrumentalities, the application of which will be evident when the angel makes use of them.

And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended.

The angel first seizes Satan and bound him for a thousand years. This binding is accomplished with the great chain. It is clear that this great chain is adequate to bind Satan, so the remainder of the verse, far from being a

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curious "overkill," makes reference to a different symbol.

The intermediate state being in view here, it follows that the chain has reference to the saints. It is with respect to the saints that Satan is bound with a chain. This is to say that while Satan cannot assault the saints, the saints certainly can assault Satan, which they certainly do since they reign with Christ, and Christ is openly destroying the works of the devil.

However, after being bound, Satan is also thrown into the bottomless pit, and the door of the pit is shut and sealed over him. The reason is given, that he should deceive the nations no more. This action refers to Satan's relationship with the wicked upon *their* death, for the Devil's army is decimated by the death of its earthly hosts. Christ's army does not suffer any setback upon the death of its soldiers: they live and reign with Christ in heaven alongside Christ. Satan's armies are totally sealed off from their leader when they enter the grave: it is a dead end for them, and puts the hands-off seal on them.

It is important to see that Satan deceives because he has purposed an end: the end, of course, is related in verse 7-9, that his wicked hosts should seek to wage war against the saints, to destroy them. This purpose is, of course, impossible to implement upon the death of the wicked, who are thus seen as sealed away from Satan. Paraphrasing Warfield, what happens, does not happen to Satan, but to the reprobate: they are sealed in death where Satan has no power to deceive and arm them for battle against Christ. This contrasts with the destiny of the elect dead, who continue to wage war against their Enemy, the ancient serpent, even after death. It is tempting to speculate that those who die in Christ are wreaking more havoc on the devil than the church on earth has yet accomplished.

After that he must be loosed for a little while.

Warfield indicates that the two time symbols, the effulgent 1000 years, and the diminutive "little season," are contrasted in such a way by John as to make the correlation very clear: the time here on earth, that is the little season. John employs these two symbols and sets them against each other in chronological sequence. However, since time symbols are employed, a chronological conjunction (succession) indicates merely a change of symbol, not an actual progression of events. This verse is merely to say that the sphere of Satan's assaults are restricted to the little season, the time on earth. His wicked ministry is deprived of any power respecting the saints gathered in paradise.

Warfield noted that resistance to this interpretation is natural enough, since we are reticent to enter into the seer's method, into the "temporo-spatial machinery" being employed to symbolize the divine transactions God has appointed. It should be pointed out that precisely this same technique is invoked in Revelation 11 respecting the two symbols of 3½ years and 3½ days. The time periods are not consecutive, but symbolical of the probationary

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period man lives on earth, en masse and individually. The chronological conjunction is indicative of a change in symbol. The same is true here in Revelation 20.

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed.

This is clearly a reference to the elect. Whether these elect are to be found in the intermediate state or on earth is a more difficult matter. It should be noted that the fact that judgment is committed to these saints most naturally corresponds to the intermediate state. Paul asks his readers, "Know ye not that we are to judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3). The future perfective is employed; this commission unto judgment was not yet a present reality for Paul or his readers. But it was promised to them nonetheless.

The word "judgment" must certainly be emptied of this connotation (judging the angels) if the 1000 years are descriptive of the reign of the saints on earth. I see no warrant for so limiting the judgment committed to the saints. The thrones are not so much kingly thrones but correspond with the purpose for which the saints are seated on them: to judge. The thrones are thrones of judgment, and as such should not be limited in application. To not see the fulfillment of Paul's prophecy in John's inspired vision is to set Paul against John. How can Paul imply that judgment has not yet been committed, and John declare that judgment *has* been committed, to the saints? Of course, the inspired writers are not contradicting themselves. Paul is speaking to saints on earth, whereas John is describing the intermediate state, the estate of Christians after their death. The prophecies harmonize naturally given this hypothesis. Alternate theories must, in the nature of the case, equivocate on the meaning of the terms so forcefully employed by John.

The testimony of Rev. 3:21 is significant in this context, for we are told that Jesus will grant to those that conquer the authority to sit on His throne to judge, even as He had conquered and sat with the Father to judge. The obvious correlation here is that since Christ sits at the right hand of the Father to judge, the saints would sit with Him in judgment contingent on their having conquered all, apparently a reference to faithfulness unto death. The fulfillment of this verse is reserved for the intermediate state. The saints co-reign with Christ, and when He lays down the kingdom to the Father, the mediatorial reign thus ceasing, the saints also cease reigning, the eternal state being ushered in at that point. This is to say that whereas the singular throne of Christ is in view in Rev. 3:21, the promise that believers would sit with Christ in His judgment seat is fulfilled symbolically by a *multitude* of thrones in Rev. 20. Thus, reference Bibles that indicate that Rev. 3:21, I. Cor. 6:3 and Rev. 20:4 are parallel passages, are correct. They are parallel, but they refer to the intermediate state, not an earthly millennial reign of Messiah in Jerusalem.

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Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

Much has been made of the word souls (*psuchai*) employed by John. Its natural use is that of disembodied spirit, although Kik has cogently argued that the term is by no means restricted to this meaning. Premillennialists desiring to establish a bodily resurrection here must fight against the prepositional phrase John uses (souls *of them*); the weight of their argument is based on the subsequent phrase labeling this the first resurrection. Ladd is an outstanding exponent of this particular hypothesis.

It is the conviction of this writer that the natural meaning is the correct one: these are disembodied souls in the intermediate state. Ladd believes the subsequent "first resurrection" verse should condition our understanding of our interpretation of "*psuchai*." This is, I believe, untenable, for the progression of the narrative is exactly the opposite of Ladd's construction. If anything, the above verse should condition our understanding of the first resurrection, not vice versa.

Moreover, one had best keep track of all these deaths and resurrections. The first death, then the first resurrection (for the saints), then the second death for the reprobate. Those who die the second death have already died physically once, since the second death is subsequent to the final judgment, for which purpose the wicked are resurrected. Therefore, attractive though Kik's exposition is, the first death is not spiritual death, because the second death would need to be physical death, and this simply does not accord with John's representation.

The best aid in understanding John is to understand "death" in the sense of "stage of death," or "phase of death," or "period of death." Thus, the first death of the wicked corresponds to the stage in their existence when the wicked remain in the arms of Death and Hades. Death is thus not the actual moment of death, but the entire phase of existence encompassed by the term, death. The wicked pass through the fullness of the first death as they lie in the grave, and will pass into the second death, the full payment that God will exact from them after the resurrection.

There is the first death, the phase of existence which many the many millions of evil-doers are presently abiding in. There is the first resurrection, the phase of existence in which the elect live and reign with Christ in heaven. There is the second death, the phase of existence reserved for the wicked dead after the final judgment. We should understand John's declarations as being openly expository, rather than hunting through Greek concordances to bring John's highly symbolic use of these terms into harmony with the definitions used in the didactic portions of Scripture.

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They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This is the blessedness of those who have gone to be with the Lord. Though dead, they live and reign with Christ in the intermediate state, from heavenly thrones in accordance with Rev. 3:21. This is the purpose of the declaration, to impress on God's servants the glory that awaits those that die in the Lord. Only John sees this mighty truth, and he is bidden to reveal it to us. This is in complete harmony with the general analysis offered here.

Dr. Ladd would point out that a theory such as this "does not meet the demands of exegesis." Ladd is an able exegete, and so declares that "the verb translated "they came to life" (*ezēsan*, Rev. 20:4-5) is never in the New Testament used of life after death, *except in resurrection*...it is never used elsewhere of the soul living on after the death of the body." And of course, Dr. Ladd is correct. But, this in no way invalidates Warfield's thesis!

First, the pronoun antecedent of "they" is souls, that is, *psuchai*. Only here in the New Testament does the verb *ezēsan* correlate with the subject *psuchai*. This is, therefore, a unique instance, not subject to Ladd's critique. As an example, consider a book on business where the verb "capitalize" is used frequently: "the company was inadequately capitalized." It is not possible to insist that the verb always have this meaning, because the text may contain a statement such as, "for the entrepreneur, the word profit is always capitalized." Taking Ladd's approach, we would have to re-interpret the subject (word-profit) to fit the predetermined meaning of capitalize. Thus, we would interpret this last phrase to mean that the Word-Prophet (any minister of God) should be given adequate working capital. But this is not what the sentence means! The verb has changed meaning because the subject is different!

Therefore, the *psuchai-ezēsan* correlation in verse 4, a unique occurrence in the New Testament, is fully adequate to override Ladd's objection. Ladd's solution, to vary the meaning of *psuchai*, is inspired by a desire to force *ezēsan* to mean what it does when correlated with altogether different subjects. This approach is certainly to put the cart before the horse: *psuchai* should condition our understanding of *ezēsan*, and not vice versa, lest we do as much violence to John's text as we did to the hypothetical business textbook to force the verb to comply to our preconceptions.

Additionally, the *intermediate state is the subject of the symbol*. Since the topic of discussion is the elect who are *already* in the intermediate state, it would be *completely inappropriate* to use terminology descriptive of the *mode of entry* into the intermediate state! Ladd feels that exegesis would require the use of a different verb here to prove that the intermediate state is under discussion, but the unintentional absurdity that thus results cannot be ignored. The saints are already on thrones, and judgment already committed unto them, in the opening phrase of verse 4. The saints got there by being

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translated to heaven upon the death of their body. How could John possibly inject the translation to heaven at a subsequent point in the text, when it must have occurred prior to the time the saints sat on the thrones?

Therefore, the meaning of *ezēsan*, though clearly established elsewhere in scripture, is appropriated for an altogether different purpose in the symbolism of John. This is to say, that exegesis will not solve difficulties that proliferate when the overall symbol is misconstrued. Ladd believes another term should have been used by John, but the constraints of the symbol itself suggest that John employed the precise term he desired, and applied it to the estate of those who live and reign with Christ in heaven. Though dead, they live. Though buried in the ground, they reign.

Ladd must deny that *psuchai* refers to disembodied souls, and seeks support from *ezēsan* here. Ladd believes that if the 1000 years is symbolic of the intermediate state, John should have *explicitly said so*. John should not have used figurative language at such a crucial point. Therefore, *ezēsan* is taken hyperliterally, and not figuratively, by Ladd. The symbol thus is no longer a symbol, but is directly exegeted for a literal meaning. This is surely substituting the symbol for the reality. Although Ladd means well, he is unable to give himself over completely to John's method. As Warfield said, the nice scales of linguistic science are out of place here, precisely because direct exegesis does violence to the symbol. Moreover, the suggested reconstruction of the verse to force it to explicitly depict the intermediate state would shatter the entire symbol because of the resulting internal absurdities.

Finally, it should be pointed out that while living and reigning in the intermediate state, the elect are warring against Satan and his hosts as well, "judging angels," and exercise authority as co-reigning heirs of Christ. Satan is bound with respect to the saints; the saints do not waste this opportunity to smite the evil one in righteous judgment as they rule with Christ in heaven.

The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were ended.

This parenthetical observation is a restatement of verse 3. The reason the "nations" are not deceived by Satan, is because they are *dead*. John reiterates this because he foresees and thus desires to correct any possible misapprehension on the part of those reading his prophecy. The saints who read the prophecy may ask, if the elect live and reign with Christ after death, will not the wicked do so too? Is there thus more terrible battle to be waged in heaven after we die? John goes out of his way to answer this: fear not, beloved of God: only the saints will be alive to reign after death. The fate of the wicked is altogether different! This is to say that the intermediate state of the elect exhibits features unique to the estate of the saints, in which the wicked dead cannot share.

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Thus, the wicked dead are simply dead. They live only outside the intermediate state, which is to say, in the body. Do not misconstrue my use of the verb, live. John is merely saying that what is true for the saints that die, is not true for the wicked that die. There is almost nothing in the intermediate state of the elect that corresponds with anything related to the intermediate state of the wicked.

This is further hammered home by the earlier verse, that Satan was thrown in the pit, and it was sealed over him. This complete, two-way barrier, exists only between Satan and the wicked dead. With respect to no other constituted group of beings can this posited relationship with Satan exist. Clearly, the saints in heaven are not sealed away from Satan (which would, in fact, protect Satan from the saints). Satan is bound with respect to the saints, but not sealed away from them. But Satan is definitely sealed away from the wicked dead, or more accurately, they are sealed away from him. When Satan's children die, he can no longer deceive them into being his hands on earth. Satan's army is progressively being decimated. However, when the saints die, Christ's army gets even stronger, as they then sit on thrones to reign with Christ.

This then was the only oversight on Warfield's part, that he did not recognize the distinctions John made between the chain, and the sealed pit. Two distinct instrumentalities are at work here, one with reference to the elect dead, the the other being applied to the wicked dead, who are depicted as the nations that Satan can no longer deceive. What nations are these, but the millions of wicked men who now are dead, and are no longer to be deceived (which translates, used as tools) by the wicked one.

This is the first resurrection.

Following the parenthetical reference to the wicked dead and their position (or rather, lack of position) with respect to the intermediate state, John roundly declares of the estate of the saints in heaven, that this is the first resurrection. Again, this resounding note of triumph fulfills the prophecies of I Cor. 6:3 and Rev. 3:21, and John tells us that this is thus the first resurrection.

Resurrection, like death, is not to be understood as the actual transitory event of body reuniting with soul, but as a long blessed stage in the lives of the elect. The intermediate state as a whole is declared to be the first resurrection. This declaration encompasses the entire thousand year symbol, and cannot be limited to mean the transitory event upon which one enters the thousand years (e.g., Ladd and Kik. However, these two exegetes differ as to whether the "resurrection" is spiritual or physical). Thus, because of the expanse implied in the symbol, restricting the term resurrection to a pinpointed event in time is untenable: the term, "first resurrection" applies to everything that occurs within the 1000 year symbol. I repeat, it cannot refer to an alleged initiatory event that would necessarily precede the advent of the

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1000 years. The entire 1000 years is embraced by John's declaration, thus giving the exegetically-minded among us Excedrin Headache Number 666, but the symbolically-minded a clear sign that our hypothesis is still quite tenable.

Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection!

Again, those who *share* in the first resurrection are blessed and holy. Within the compass of the 1000 year symbol, the saints completely share in the first resurrection. John is not saying that benefits accrue to the saints after the resurrection has taken place, but that the blessings come upon those who are actively partaking of the first resurrection. That the sharing mentioned is continuous, against which the blessedness is contingent, establishes a firm foundation for our exposition of the preceding verse that the first resurrection encompasses the entire 1000-year symbol without restriction.

Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

This is to say, that the second death *now*, at this very moment, *has no power* over those who share in the first resurrection. But the second death does have power now over the reprobate, and will soon exercise that power in its fulness. The second death is clearly the lake of fire. The lake of fire, which represents full payment for sin, has no claim against the elect dead. Christ will destroy Death and Hades, but He will not destroy the Second Death: it is God's eternal penalty against the wicked.

The phrase is apparently explicatory, comforting Christians with the knowledge that although the Second Death is all-powerful, and mandated for all men, nevertheless it has no claim on those who died in Christ.

It may be asked, what of Christians who are alive at the second coming? At that point, death is swallowed up in victory. So complete is Christ's conquest, that the disembodied souls of the saints are united to resurrection bodies, and the men then living cannot die, being changed "in a twinkling of an eye." The living saints exchange the corruptible (over which the Second Death has power) for the incorruptible, and this occurs outside the scope of the 1000-year symbol, for the intermediate state closes at the Parousia.

Finally, the major preoccupation of the saints in heaven is again emphasized: they are to live and reign with Christ while in heaven (depicted chronologically according to John's symbolism with the phrase, "for a thousand years.")

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them

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for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

There is here no chronological succession whatsoever. This here is Satan's little season (cf. verse 3c), which is outside the scope of the 1000-years. It has reference to the time here on earth, the time of trial and tribulation wherein the militant church is in battle against the wicked one and his hosts. The element of chronological succession belongs to the symbol, not to the thing symbolized. Moreover, the use of the chronological succession establishes a shift in symbol only. In reality, the two spheres (the intermediate state and the little season on earth) are concurrent realities, that is, they transpire simultaneously from our vantage point.

This then is a recapitulation of the battle of chapter 19, but seen from the standpoint of Satan. Satan was not mentioned in chapter 19, but John here depicts the battle from his standpoint, with respect to his wicked ministries.

The little season is protensively conceived: the wicked are innumerable, and encircle the saints to destroy them. John sees the entire number of wicked men of all times in a single snapshot photograph, deceived by Satan into seeking to conquer the saints.

And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The destruction of the enemies of God is initiated and executed from heaven. Herein is taught the doctrine that all wicked men must die; none will remain when Christ returns to His redeemed world. Far from being an end-time event, the fire from heaven is smiting the earth daily, consuming the wicked, sending them into the waiting arms of Death and Hades. Significantly, the wicked, here depicted as being consumed, come on the scene again in verse 12 in the general resurrection. If we read this verse literally, this is certainly a rather short turn-around time for these armies: alive, dead, alive, dead, alive, dead; the last two cycles occurring in whiplash succession.

The devil himself is destroyed, but not by instrumentality of the fire from heaven, but because he is thrown into the lake of fire. This clears the way for Christ, who at this point is still reigning from the right hand of the Father, to destroy the last enemy, death, since all the preceding enemies (Satan included) have been made the footstool of His feet.

The fate of the devil is described that the saints may know that vengeance is the Lord's, and that He will be faithful to pay back the Deceiver in full. The symbols for anti-christian government and anti-christian religion are depicted as waiting for Satan to join them in the lake of fire. Of course, their deceiving power was destroyed prior to the complete overthrow of Satan, for

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their continued existence was contingent on the wicked retaining a posterity; this prerequisite being cut off by the Lord, the beast and false prophet, and what they symbolize, are depicted as being judged and already destroyed. They do not stand in front of the white throne, because they are not human beings: they are only symbols of aggregate man's rebellion and hatred against God as manifested in government and religion. (For further study, refer to Dr. Bahnsen's discussion of the beast in his book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*; also, Dr. Rushdoony's brief analysis of Rev. 13 in *Thy Kingdom Come*.)

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.

Here, at last, is the final judgment, complete with the Final Judge. The throne is white, symbolic perhaps of purity and righteousness (analogous to the white linen of Rev. 19:8). He who sits upon it is ready to judge, and thus the end of the world occurs, for the universe is declared to entirely disappear. Here is important confirmation of a crucial eschatological point, that the *end of the world* is seen by Christ to be both *synchronous* and *synonymous* with the final judgment. Thus, in Kik's discussion of Matt. 24, he unknowingly errs by referring the end of the world to verses 36-51. In reality, Christ does not touch upon the subject until Matt. 25:31; the intervening verses describe what the kingdom of heaven shall *then* be compared to (referring to the time of the Jewish War – Matt. 25:1.).

Kik makes much of the transition at verse 24:36, and there is indeed a transition at that point. But it is not a transition in subject matter, but of *concern*! No longer is Christ openly predicting the events soon to transpire, but rather impresses on His disciples the warning to watch carefully for these things. This is confirmed in the parallel passage in Luke. Jesus says (Luke 17:35-37) "There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left." And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

This last phrase concerning the eagles occurs in Matt. 24:28, and is clearly relegated to the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, Luke plainly indicates that the two sections of Matthew 24, vs. 4-35 and vs. 36-51, are inextricably linked to events that occurred 19 centuries ago. Moreover, there is no possibility of interpreting vs. 36-51 to the second coming, because the link Luke provides makes it clear that "all these things must be fulfilled before this generation passes away." If any portion of the prophecies was not completely fulfilled, which necessarily includes vs. 36-51 (based on Luke 17:37), then Jesus was in error. Thus, the continuous narrative of Christ from 24:4 through 25:46 is the complete answer to the disciples' question in 24:3. The end of the world is the final judgment.

This is hammered home even more by the Parable of the Wheat and Tares.