

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
December 2021**

(added progressively for each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Revelation 20:1-15

The Earthly & Heavenly Aspects & The Great White Throne

per S Olyott

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

It is sometimes said that Revelation Chapter 20 is “controversial”. This is a misunderstanding. God’s Word at Chapter 20 (or anywhere else in Scripture) isn’t controversial. But there has been a great controversy concerning Chapter 20, for a little over 100 years and now and then in the past before that.

So the task this week and next week’s is to expound the Chapter as briefly and simply as possible.

In noting the meaning of all the symbols that have been vividly presented in John’s ecstatic vision in Chapter 3 to 19: the laying before us of the principles of God’s purpose for the universe and mankind. We should discover that the devil is active in the world in three ways. His activity is shown in the symbols of the Beast; the False Prophet; and the Harlot. And it is able to be recognised that each one of these ‘agents of the devil’ comes to his or her doom. [This is a most worthy principle for which we must thank God and rejoice in.]

But so far we haven’t heard in this Revelation about the complete overthrow of the devil himself!

So in Chapter 20 the principle which is revealed is the doom of the devil himself! We come to the overthrow of the deceiver. This is the main theme of the first 10 verses of the chapter: the overthrow of Satan.

Now to depict the overthrow of Satan, John is taken right back to the beginning of the Christian era. The time of our Lord’s first coming. Because the overthrow of Satan is something that occurred at the Cross. The overthrow of Satan is not something that is yet to take place! So it is quite natural then, in explaining the overthrow of Satan, to take us right back to that point.

This in fact has been repeated over and over again in the previous visions. It is able to be recognised that the Revelation is a series of seven parallel visions. When we get to the end of one vision and are about to start the next one, the one vision takes us almost to the end of history and then with the next vision we start at the beginning of the Christian era again. Sometimes even earlier and then we work through history part of the way. And in another vision back to the beginning again and then progress even further in the history. That’s how these seven parallel visions are developed.

So it’s quite normal that when John has been brought to the end of the sixth vision (Revelation 19) and to the start of the seventh, that we should be taken right back to

the beginning of the Christian era again.

Now most of the controversy has arisen, concerning 'the thousand years'!

There's a 'posh word' for the thousand years: the Millennium. This word has become the centre of a great deal of controversy. People will ask you to declare if you are an amillennialist, a premillennialist, or a post millennialist. But we'll keep the word out of it for awhile. It tends to confuse the issue. It just means a thousand years – so we explain that.

Now during this thousand years we read that Satan is bound. But at the same time the saints reign. There is an earthly aspect to this 1000 years – we look at this thousand years in terms of what is going on on earth. And there is a heavenly aspect at the same time. Where we can look at what is going on in heaven.

Verses 1-3 and 7-10: This tells us what is going on, in principle, on the earth, during this 1000 years.

Firstly verses 1-3: Here we notice that it talks about the 'binding of Satan'. The angel comes down with this chain in his hand, he lays hands on the devil and binds him a thousand years. Shuts him up in a bottomless pit where he stays for the 1000 years. But at the end of that time he is released a little.

Question: Is John here using literal or symbolic language. Well everything else, in the Revelation, has been symbolic. So it's very unlikely that he is now speaking literally! The point of view that we must oppose most directly, this morning, is the premillennialist – the advocates of the Scofield Reference Bible. They usually admit (verse 1) that the 'key' is symbolic; the 'pit' is symbolic; the 'chain' is symbolic, and in Verse 2 that the 'seal' is symbolic. They admit that these are all symbolic. But then they usually go on to try to make it plain to us that the 1000 years are literal!

If the 1000 years means literally 1000 years of 365 and a quarter sidereal (or even solar) days then it is the only time in the whole of the Revelation when a number is used literally. Every other time it is symbolic. The number 1000, in various combinations, occurs 20 times in the Revelation. It would be odd if 19 times it were symbolic, but only on this occasion it was literal.

You will find if you look at the 'seven' spirits of God¹ we find it's the 'complete', perfect Holy Spirit. When we look at the numbers 144000, 666 or even the 1600 stadia (furlongs) – 200 miles. We find that they are all symbolic.²

And so the 1000 years is not to be taken literally but as a symbol for something!

1500 actual years ago (millennium and a half) Augustine pointed out that there is a parallel between this passage and Matthew 12:26ff. Jesus has cast out demons and

1 See, Rev 3:1; 4:5; 5:6. An expression for the Holy Spirit (who is one Person of the one God) where the 'seven' denotes the perfect totality of his activities, expressions or virtues – which humans have listed as: Spirit of – the Lord, Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, fear of the Lord.

2 For a more thorough treatment of such examples (and others) listen to the 21, roughly half-hour long, recordings by Stuart Olyott: <https://www.knowyourbiblerecordings.org/revelation>

the Pharisees said that He could only do this because he had the power of demons. So Jesus replied: ²⁶ *And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?* ²⁷ *And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.* ²⁸ *But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

Here is the important point!

²⁹ *Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.*

Assume you are a burglar and you want to burgle the house of a very powerful owner, but you are a 'seven stone' weakling. In this case the easiest thing to do is to bind the powerful owner in some way. Then you would be able to spoil his house. Of course, in the parable the 'strong man' is the devil and the person who binds him and ruins him is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. The only reason our Lord Jesus Christ can spoil the domain of the devil is because He has first defeated him and bound him! It's precisely the same root word as is used here in Revelation.

We can stress that there is not a single New Testament verse, which tells us that the Second Coming is the time when the devil is overthrown. There is not one New Testament verse which tells us that we must wait for the Second Coming for this to occur. Rather, Scripture teaches that Christ overthrew the devil at His Cross. The 'strong man' was bound at the Cross! Jesus ruined Him there. The devil was bound at the Cross! Proof? Well look at these verses:

Colossians 2:15. ¹⁵*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* Namely the subject of the previous verse: He by His Cross³. He destroyed the power of the devil at His Cross.

Hebrew 2:14. ¹⁴*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,...* The devil's power was destroyed at the Cross.

John 12:31. Our Lord approaching His Cross and having spoken about the grain of wheat falling into the earth (12:24) and so on, He says: ³¹ **Now is the judgement of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.** Same word as is used in the Revelation.

John 16:11. ¹¹ *concerning judgement, because the ruler of this world is judged.* Present tense: He is judged, bound etc already!

Finally, 1 John 3:8. ⁸ *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* This is John again, now after the Cross, and he used the past tense. Christ has already appeared!

³ ¹⁴ ... by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

So the devil is bound. He's been bound – ever since Christ's Cross. But some find it hard to reconcile that the Devil is therefore now bound when they consider the world around them as it is now. Where there is increasing sin; increasing 'darkness'; all sorts of false sects arising; false religions – some posing as Christian – in the world. All sorts of oppressive powers persecuting the Church. So it's obvious that the devil is still very much at work! So how can we conceive of the devil being bound? But there is nevertheless nothing that is inconsistent in the idea that the devil though bound is active.

In the Gospel (Luke 10:18) Christ said, ¹⁸ ...*"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ..."* But a little later the devil was throwing everything he had against Jesus Christ. Then again Peter in 2 Peter talks about the angels being, committed ^{2:4} ... *to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgement;* but in 1 Peter he says: ^{5:8} *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

W J Grier says that the devil is like Al Capone: Who ruled Chicago from Chicago jail. Hendricksen says that he is rather like a dog on a long chain. His movement is very restricted. However he does have considerable movement within a restricted area. In that area he can do a lot of harm. None the less he is curbed. On a chain as it were.

The importance of all the previous, is that the devil is bound throughout all this symbolic 1000 years. 1000 is 10 x 10 x 10. 10 cubed. 10 as we find elsewhere in the Revelation is the 'number' signifying completeness. The divine number of 7 added to the divine number of 3. 10 is completeness. The Ten Commandments! Warfield said that 10 x 10 x 10 is the most impressive way of conveying the completeness of God's purpose and timing to the human mind.

That is: a certain complete time of a divinely ordained period of time entirely at God's choosing and will, is the time that the devil is bound.

The complete time that the devil is bound on earth – being the same period of time when something else is happen in heaven, as we will see next week.

Verse 3: If you look at it carefully, speaks of a very particular restraint, which has been put upon Satan. Let's stress that Satan has always been under restraint. Satan wanted to 'touch' Job. God said that Job's property could be touched but not him. The devil could do so much but no more. Later God allowed that Job could be touched but his life could not be taken away.

The devil has always been under restraint.

In Chapter 9 of Revelation it is shown that the devil unlocks the powers of evil, but the key had to be given to him! In Chapter 12 the devil is attacking the Church – symbolised as a woman. It looked as though she was to be completely destroyed, then something marvellous happened and God baffled all the devil's efforts. All the time the devil is under restraint.

But in verse 3, and taken up again in verse 8, he is under a particular restraint: ³ *and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive*

the nations any longer, ... Then when he is released, Verse 8: ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, ...

During God's perfect, divinely, complete time – symbolically called 1000 years – starting at the Cross the devil is under restraint. He is on a chain. He is bound in such a way as he cannot deceive the nations. When the restraint is lifted he is able to go out and deceive the nations. Throughout the period of the Christian era. Throughout Church history, except for a small little piece at the very end the devil is unable to deceive the nations. However at the very end of history *for a little while* (verse 3b) a *little season* (KJV) he will be allowed to go out and deceive the nations!

What does that mean? Hendricksen says, that the devil is not bound in every sense, he cannot destroy the church as a mighty missionary organisation heralding the Gospel to the nations, until the '1000 years' are finished.

However the rest of verse 8 and verse 9, foreshadow a gathering of the forces of evil in a concerted push against the true Church, and it will seem as though a great battle will occur. But Christ like a fire comes from heaven and consumes all the evil. Satan who has been released only *for a little while* is defeated absolutely and *is tormented day and night for ever and ever*.

[2300]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen.

Revelation 20:1-15

Earthly & Heavenly Aspects & The Great White Throne – Pt 2

per S Olyott

Revelation 20:6a

6 Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power,

We continue from last week regarding the ‘binding’ of Satan for a *little while* (v 3) or a *little season* as the KJV calls it. The meaning of this verse was briefly stated at the end last week, but we now add some more detail in confirmation.

The deception of the nations being suspended during the ‘1000 years’. Can be clarified in that: During God’s ‘perfect’ time – starting at the Cross – the devil is under restraint – he’s on a chain; he’s bound in such a way, so as not to deceive the nations; when the restraint is lifted he can deceive again. So throughout the era of the ‘1000 years’ – throughout Church history, except for a small little piece at the very end, the devil is unable to deceive the nations.

The devil is not bound in every sense. However, imagine if you lived in Old Testament days and were a world traveller, you would not find the true God anywhere except in a tiny nation in Palestine. The only place of Worship of the true God being in Jerusalem! But then the devil is bound in the sense that a world traveller in the time of the Apostle Paul would be able to find among the majority pagan and idol worshipping Counties around the Mediterranean Sea, nevertheless maybe a dozen or even thousands of places where the living God was worshipped.

And a world traveller today could go into almost every nation and clime, family and tongue, and there find little groups of believers, and maybe large ones – some very mixed up. Some ‘happy, happy, dance and clappy’ – and all sorts. But nevertheless there’s been a universal spread of the Gospel.

So from that point of view the devil doesn’t have the hold that he used to have.

However we need to consider further a little more about verse 8: *8 and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.*

Here we are told something that has already come up in Chapters 16 and 19.

That at the very end of history there will be a great, climactic attempt by the devil to seek to inspire a world-wide conflict. He will try to organise a mass attack upon the Church. All three references speak of a gathering together of the forces of evil. There will be a world wide persecution and a world-wide oppression of the church of Christ. Immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ. That’s why in verse 9 the church is described as a ‘camp’: under attack. As a city being besieged, with an enemy coming up as numerous as the sands of the sea. There’s this great unloosing of evil. The church undergoing such difficulties. Such troublesome, severe times that has never

been before. The work of the unbound devil. There's a united alliance of evil.

Then, of course, Christ comes with fire from heaven and devours them. What looks like it's going to be a great battle – isn't a 'battle' because Christ comes and simply destroys the evil, with the breathe of His mouth. (2 Thessalonians 2:8) It's, at the moment, the 'restraint' – the binding of Satan – which is keeping us from that! The devil is bound, but nevertheless very active, but kept by divine restraint from so organising the powers of evil, that would bring a world-wide oppression of Christ's church. We have not yet come to that time of the devil's '*little season*'. That is the chain that is on him now. He's bound in that sense.

Now you might ask: "Who's Gog and Magog? If you read the Old Testament genealogies, you'll come across them once or twice. But particularly they come in Ezekiel. (Chapters 38 & 39) What happened in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes from Syria, was tremendous persecution of Jews in Palestine. Which was prophesied in the prophesy of Ezekiel, under the names of Gog and Magog. Gog is the person, Magog is the place from where he comes.

That symbolism from Ezekiel is taken and used to describe this great alliance of evil immediately before the end of the world. Why? Well simply for this reason: Gog and Magog predicting Antiochus Epiphanes represents the last great persecution of God's people in the old dispensation. Therefore the same symbolism is used for the last great persecution of the Lord's people in the new dispensation. The armies of Antiochus Epiphanes were very numerous – an excellent parallel of world-wide opposition to the Gospel. The tribulation that the wicked man imposed on the Jews was unutterably severe – the same as the tribulation the Church will experience at the end of time.

Yet the defeat of that oppressing force was dramatic and sudden and unexpected. Just as the defeat of the powers of evil will be at the end of the world.

You'll notice in verse 8 that it talks about the nations that are in the four corners of the earth. Some of our premillennial 'friends', therefore think that there are going to be four nations at the end of time, who are going to be involved in some great military conflict, in the Middle East. They try to find the four furthest nations from Palestine. Finding all sorts of conclusions.

In fact the 'four corners of the earth' is simply a Biblical expression, which means the whole world. There is going to be a world-wide alliance of evil! The entire wicked world is going to persecute the Church. We have no New Testament evidence to identify any particular nations, that will be involved in this. There will be a last attack on the people of God, by the forces of evil. Hence the expression verse 9, *the broad plain of the earth*. This is the same Battle of Armageddon that has been talked about in previous chapters (16 & 19). The pictures of the church as a city and the church as a camp, with these great forces of evil coming up to attack. But (verse 9b) *fire came down from heaven and consumed them*,

So this sudden unexpected judgement has a direct parallel with 2 Thessalonians 2:8
⁸ *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.*

In fact there is no actual statement of Christ coming in Chapter 20. But surely verse 9 must imply the second coming of Christ which is mentioned in previous chapters. We have been told in previous chapters of this great alliance of evil, where the Lord Jesus Christ defeats them utterly and completely. Notice! The '1000 years' occurs first. The coming of Christ comes next! If you call the 1000 years, millennium, and use the prefix, post, to mean after – in that sense, alone – the Bible is postmillennialist.

The premillennialists preach that Christ comes first, then there is a 1000 years. But as we have seen Revelation 20 clearly teaches, that the '1000 years' – this symbolic period to describe the whole of the Christian era – comes first and Christ comes at the end of it! After Satan has had his '*little season*'.

It is evident that Satan tries to deceive the world. To convince the world that it's 'all up' with Christ's church and that it is possible to do battle with God and defeat Him. But the end of the story of history (*verse 10*) is that the devil who initially deceives the nations is *thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur* (brimstone KJV). Already, in earlier Chapters, it is found that the 'beast' and the 'false prophet' are said to be in the lake of fire. But not in the sense that they get there first and then the devil follows. But they are said to be there in the sense that John has already told us about them and now in a parallel vision tells us what is also happening to the devil at the same time. Because the beast, false prophet (and for that matter the harlot) don't actually have any separate identity. They are the symbolic agents of the devil and cannot exist independently from him. They are the means by which he works in the world. All of them are destroyed at the same point.

We further read in verse 10 that the devil's torment will be *day and night* – without intermission – for ever and ever. Without interruption or any end!

That's what happens in this symbolic portrayal, during the '1000 years', from the earthly aspect.

Next week we will consider verse 4-6: here we will find what is happening during 'God's perfect period of time', from the heavenly aspect.

[1472]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints today. Amen.

Revelation 20:1-15

Earthly & Heavenly Aspects & The Great White Throne – Pt 3

per S Olyott

Revelation 20:6

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

The true Christian church has always been a persecuted minority in a world of pagan sin: where the devil uses the corruption of human nature to create opposition to the church. Sometimes this is in the form of social and political ‘movements’. At others it is the action of earthly rulers like the Roman emperors and subsequent dictators. But also false teaching and traditions within the corrupted church itself, which John in his first letter called the ‘spirit of antichrist’.

In the Revelation, John is shown symbolic visions, which represent these forces of opposition to and persecution of the saints on earth. These are personified symbols called by the name of ‘beast’, ‘false prophet’ and ‘harlot’.

The value of the revelation is found in its overwhelming theme: despite earthly appearances, God through Christ is in charge and since the defeat of Satan has been accomplished at the Cross, everything will be resolved to God’s glory when Christ returns. Specifically, the devil and all his agents are dispatched to eternal torment. The new earth and heaven, completely free of any corruption, are introduced and the saints, body and soul, are received there for ever. Amen.

So far then, in Chapter 20 we see this theme being developed during a special period of time, which is perfectly chosen by God to be when the resolution takes place, symbolically called ‘a thousand years’. Verses 1-3 and then 7-10, refer to this resolution occurring on earth.

Look first at the end of verse 3: *After that he must be released for a little while.* Then note the beginning of verse 7: *⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released ...* That is, verse 7 takes up exactly the same thought as verse 3. Verses from 7 on continue the explanation begun in verses 1 to 3.

But between verses 3 and 7, we have verses 4,5 & 6! These three verses are a parenthesis (brackets). A separate section. They are telling us what is going on during the same ‘1000 years’ but, from the heavenly aspect.

Let’s ask the questions that the principal, reformed commentators (referenced earlier) ask, and then answer them.

The three verses refer to a reign. Where does this reign take place?

Then what is the character of this reign?

Who participates in it?

They are important questions to answer because our premillennialist ‘friends’ teach

that Christ will come and we will reign with Christ from an earthly Jerusalem over the physical people for a literal 1000 years!

- Where does this reign take place? Look carefully. You will find there is no mention of Palestine – no mention of Jerusalem. What we see (verse 4) is thrones and persons sitting on them. We get many mentions of ‘thrones’ in Revelation. On every occasion where the thrones are mentioned – except where they are ‘evil’ thrones – thrones in Revelation are in heaven! It would be extraordinary if these thrones were an exception. We can be confident then, that these thrones are in heaven.

Look again at verse 4: ⁴ *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the **souls** of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus ...*

This reign is taking place, where the disembodied souls of martyrs are to be found. John sees souls. He talks a bit about bodies in this Chapter in the context of physical resurrection, but here he is seeing souls. It is souls that are reigning. At this point some people contend that the word ‘soul’ can sometimes be used to mean ‘people’ in the Bible. That is so. But where the word ‘soul’ means ‘people’, you can take the word ‘people’ and drop it into the text, without the text changing its meaning. Try to do that with verse 4! *Also I saw the people of those who had been beheaded ...* It doesn’t make sense.

John saw souls. While all these other things were going on, on earth, the souls of God’s people reigned in heaven. But they only reign for those ‘1000 years’ – that ‘perfect’ period of time determined by God – as souls. Because after the resurrection there is no continuation of separation of soul and body. Hence they only reign as ‘souls’ for their duration of the ‘perfect’ time of God (symbolically described as 1000 years).

In other words we are being taught the truth of the ‘Intermediate State’. About those believers who have died; are with Christ; but have not yet been raised from the dead at the final resurrection. That is, all true saints who have died or will die before the second coming. This is confirmed at the end of verse 4: *They came to life and reigned with Christ ...* Now where is Christ, according to the book of Revelation? We’re told that in Chapter 5, and again dogmatically at Chapter 12. That Christ is in heaven!

The warfare of saints (who are alive on earth) have been portrayed to us in the other two sets of verses, but that is only part of the picture. The other glorious part of the picture is that during the same period: ‘departed’ saints, wait with Christ in heaven.

- What is the character of the reign? So far the warfare of the saints on earth has been taught to us over and over again in this book. But the last two chapters of the book are going to tell us about the bliss of heaven after the resurrection. We shouldn’t be surprised then to find this book also tells about the circumstances of the ‘intermediate state’. After all there are many believers known to us, who are no longer with us – they have died. Where their bodily resurrection has not yet taken place. Revelation 21 & 22 has not yet been fulfilled. What about them?

Can't we expect to have some mention about what happens to them. Their bliss and happiness!

This is what we find here. Looking carefully at the 3 verses we find that the people spoken about are said to be judging with Christ; living and reigning with Christ; and those who partake of the first resurrection!

Before we continue otherwise, we must now deal with this mention of *the first resurrection*.

The premillennialists contend, that there are two resurrections of the body, and that there is a space of 1000 literal years between them. They think that Christ comes, the saints are raised from the dead; reign with him for 1000 years and then at the end of that 1000 years the wicked are raised. They say that the saints have that first resurrection mentioned in Verse 5 & 6 (as a bodily resurrection).

But that cannot be true! Because the New Testament teaches only one physical, bodily resurrection.

John 5:28-29. Where our Lord Jesus says. ²⁸ *Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice* ²⁹ *and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement.*

If words have any meaning at all, our Lord is teaching that the just and the unjust are raised in the same hour.

Acts 24:15. Where Paul contends: ¹⁵ *having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.*

As a consequence we must all contend against the premillennial position! Because it teaches that there are two bodily resurrections which is a plain contradiction of the Word of God.

So what is the meaning of *first resurrection* as found in verses 5 & 6?

We find that the New Testament answers this question. This is a good 'case study' to remind us that we must always interpret Scripture with Scripture.

[In verses 5 & 6 we find mention of the *first resurrection*. We have discovered that the New Testament teaches that there will only be one physical (of the body) resurrection of both the justified, repentant (but not yet perfect) sinners and the unjustified at the one and only last day, by our Lord Jesus Christ. The first mentioned: to life; and the others, to a terrible judgement. We must reject the premillennial opinion that calls for two resurrections of the body, some 1000 years apart.

Therefore we must find the correct meaning of first resurrection used in verses 5 & 6! In fact we will engage in a 'case study' that demonstrates the principle that: where the text is not clear to us at a certain point, we must let Scripture be interpreted by Scripture, that is clear to us.

We will start with a few New Testament verses: ¹ *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* (Colossians 3:1) Christians are being spoken of as having been *raised together with Christ!*

⁵ *even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—* ⁶ *and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* (Ephesians 2:5-6)

We are *dead* in our sins; *made alive*; and *raised up*.

⁵ *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* ⁶ *We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* ⁷ *For one who has died has been set free from sin.* ⁸ *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* (Romans 6:5-8) The Apostle there is arguing in Romans 6, in that our union with Christ means that when He died we died with Him. When He rose we rose with Him and it's because we have risen with Him that we shall also rise.

The *first resurrection* is a spiritual resurrection. Unbelievers don't know anything about that! In this life they go through life spiritually dead and when their bodies die they are dead in every sense. (That doesn't mean they are unconscious. Doesn't mean that they cease to exist.) They are spiritually dead and are physically dead and they never have experienced any resurrection. A believer, hears the Gospel, he is effectually called (by the Spirit), spiritual life is given to him, so that he can 'see' and to hear and understand spiritual things. He is 'quickened', spiritually. He goes through life alive. Even when he bodily dies, he's still spiritually alive and is a person who has **already** partaken of a resurrection (a spiritual one). He's risen with Christ. Seated with Christ in heavenly places. He's enjoying union with Christ. The unconverted: they die and the only thing they will experience is torment in the intermediate state and when their bodies are raised from the dead. The only purpose will be for them to receive the second death. Which is spoken about in this chapter!

By and large, careful, informed consideration of the Revelation is not too difficult and need not be confusing. But unfortunately the misinformation generated by some commentators has caused confusion. We not only have to make a reasoned judgement of the passage, but we also have to contend against the misinformation.

Some people don't like the clear interpretation given above. So it is necessary to 'take time out' from a normal straightforward exposition to correct the misinformation. We will do this next week before we continue through to the rest of the passage.

[1970]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints today. Amen.

Revelation 20:1-15

Earthly & Heavenly Aspects & The Great White Throne – Pt 4

per S Olyott

Revelation 20:14

14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

We continue from last week with the need to 'take time out' to answer the confusion caused by the misinformation of some commentators. In particular those who deny the interpretation that the 'first resurrection' used in this chapter is a spiritual one and that there is therefore only one, bodily resurrection, for all and at the very same time! This is an outline of one of the eminent premillennialist's argument:

"If the first resurrection is spiritual, so is the second. But if the second is literal so is the first." (Dean Alford)

At first glance this may sound convincing. If the first resurrection is spiritual, so is the second, if the second is literal (bodily), so is the first. But it doesn't follow, because the Bible is full of passages where you get spiritual and literal together. Even in this very chapter. The second death is obviously spiritual and eternal. We don't therefore argue that the first death, which the saints died when they were beheaded is spiritual and eternal. One is spiritual the other is (earthly) physical. Even the premillennialists accept that! So why do they use the argument they do with respect to the resurrections?

Further, take the passage in Isaiah 40:3. ³ *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; (That is literally fulfilled by John the Baptist. But then in the same verse:) make straight in the desert a highway for our God. That was Spiritually fulfilled! Both appearing (the literal and the spiritual) in the same sentence. A prophesy with a literal and spiritual fulfilment. So it shouldn't be strange to find this in Revelation 20.*

The *first resurrection* is a spiritual resurrection which saints with Christ in heaven, awaiting the future resurrection of all bodies including their own, had already experienced, at their conversion, before their death by martyrdom, or otherwise, previously on earth. Which qualified them to be with Christ in that *intermediate state*.

Yet there is an even stronger argument, which we find in John 5. Where our Lord Jesus actually defines what is the first and what is the second resurrection.

He actually tells us. ²⁵ *"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.*

²⁶ *"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; (It's obvious! He's talking about spiritual life – an hour is coming, and is now here. The Son of God will speak – to those who hear – spiritual life: the resurrection.) Now on to verse 28 of the same passage: ²⁸ "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the*

evil deeds to a resurrection of judgement. (John 5:25-26, 28-29) Our Lord is obviously saying a resurrection – spiritual – followed later on by a resurrection that is physical. The just and the unjust in the same hour.

So we interpret that part of Revelation in this sense. There are those, right now, judging with Christ. Living with Christ; reigning with Christ, and partaking of the first resurrection (which allowed them to be there with Him). It doesn't say that they partake of the first resurrection and then spend the 1000 years in heaven. It says this is the first resurrection.

Now we move on to verse 6: ⁶ *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*

What is it that makes a man blessed and holy? Regeneration – the 'new birth' – or the second advent? Regeneration! What delivers a man from the second death? Salvation or the second coming? Salvation! What makes a man a priest of God and of Christ? Being saved or the Lord's second coming? Being saved!

So it's plain by every analogy which we use that the first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection. So that the theory that there can be a resurrection and a 1000 years' reign and then another resurrection, is not to be found in the Word of God.]

(We continue now with the third question we put about verses 4,5&6 that we started last week.)

- Who participates in this reign in heaven? We're told in verse 4. We are told of 'they' and of 'those'. We are not told there who they are, but then John goes on to say: *I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* John had seen his Christian friends go to the execution block. Did this mean the devil was winning? The devil wasn't winning these were immediately with Christ, which is far better! *Absent from the body – present with the Lord.* (2 Cor 5:8) And Jesus said to the repentant robber – on the Cross next to Him, ⁴³ *"Truly, I say to you, **today** you will be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:43).

There they are, these people mentioned. Living and reigning with Christ in heaven, throughout this period when the devil is bound on the earth. In this period of human history with all it's conflicts going on – they live and reign with Christ.

Not everybody is a martyr. Others also remain loyal to Christ and are never asked to be martyrs for Him. Are they to receive anything different? Scripture is quite clear: that if we die in the faith – we persevere to the end – we die saved, and we go immediately to the presence of Christ. What a tremendous comfort! This book of the Revelation is basically written for people in persecution (which in some measure comes to all Christians) in all times. A future millennium isn't much comfort to you. There is great

comfort to know that if you are to be absent from the body you'll be present with the Lord. That you will immediately be taken to be with Christ. You'll reign with Him, enjoying the bliss of the Saviour's presence.

That then clarifies for us the first 10 verses of Revelations chapter 20:

There will be a long period that will be God's perfect time. (Figuratively called 'the 1000 years'.) In this time the devil will be held back from participating in this world-wide display of an alliance of evil. In that time the saints as they die live and reign with Christ. This interpretation is completely in harmony with the rest of the New Testament. Nowhere in the new Testament can you responsibly argue that there is an interval, between Christ's coming and His eternal kingdom. Also this interpretation is completely in harmony with the symbolism in the book of Revelation.

Now we close by looking briefly at verses 11 to 15 which mention the great White Throne!

The end of verse 9 must inevitably refer to the coming of Christ. ¹¹ *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.* In this book this is a mention of God. From Him, Heaven and earth flee away. Scripture speaks of the elements of this universe being melted by a fervent heat. (2 Peter 3:10 KJV) Then there will be a regeneration of the universe, being the Lord's work. (Matthew 19:28⁴) And *it will be the restoration of all things*, to use Peter's words in Acts 3:19-21⁵. It will be that, ²¹ *the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

To use Paul's words in Romans 8:21. So there will be this great 'refashioning' of the universe. The destruction of it as we now know it, before the 'new heaven and the new earth'.

At this time in verse 12, John sees all the dead. Every individual who's ever lived. No exceptions! Look where he sees them: standing before the throne (verse 12). He sees the books opened. The record of every man and woman's life. Every record is consulted. And the 'book of life' opened. Already referred to twice earlier in the Revelation. It contains the names of believers. All the records of everyone are examined.

All the dead have to appear before God, emphasised by citing even the sea giving up its dead. (verse 13) Here is the 'estate of Death' itself giving up its dead as also does Hades. Where the judgement will be in proportion and appropriate to the works of the people involved. Which is constantly taught in Scripture!

Then we see, verse 14, that Death and Hades cease. Of course they do. What is death? Death is the separation of the body and soul. From the last day on, there will be no separation of body and soul. No more death, in that sense! Also Hell ceases. What is Hell or Hades? It is the state of being in separation. Those two things, Death and Hades, are now personified and in symbol they are thrown into the lake of fire.

4 ²⁸ Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world (Greek: *in the regeneration*), when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

The separation of body and soul, for all of us, will be ended. Because all of us will be body and soul reunited, throughout the eternal period. The wicked, body and soul, as Jesus said, will be punished in hell, (Matthew 10:28) but the believers, body and soul, will be gloriously in heaven. Where there (we find out later) will be no disease, curse or *former things* there.

There is a great division here, which can be seen earlier in the Revelation. The universe is divided into two: there are those that are listed in this book and the rest are judged by what is found in those earlier mentioned books. There is a great division: ¹⁵ *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* All who are not in Christ, the Lamb, are damned. What happens to believers is given in the next two chapters, but in Chapter 20, we deal with the unbelievers: they are **all** lost!

So we sum up: When we get to the end of this chapter the 'great passion of the ages', should be clear to us. Throughout the history of the world, the Gospel will be preached. All that time Christ's Church will continue its work of gathering in the elect by the proclamation of the Gospel. However towards the end of the world in a brief season there will be a great unleashing of evil – some believe that that will be headed up by a particular person. There will be a final rebellion against God and against His Church. It will be a time of awful and severe testing for the Lord's people. It also seems, from earlier in this book, that the Church itself, although it continues to exist, will no longer have a voice for that brief period.

Then entering into that situation, as all things seem to be 'all up' for the Church, our Lord will come. Bodily, visibly and gloriously! He will raise the believing dead and He will transform the living believers. There will be a great gathering together of the Lord's people. He will destroy, by the breath of His mouth, the 'man of lawlessness'. He will judge all men and angels to be consigned to their everlasting destinations. He will re-fashion the new heaven and the new earth, which will become the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed.

[1995]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we, may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints today. Amen.