

The Kingdom that Comes with Jesus: Premillennialism and the Harmony of Scripture

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CENTRAL TO CHRISTIAN faith and hope is the firm belief that Jesus is coming again. Jesus Himself predicted it before the cross (“I will

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come again,” Jn. 14:3). Angels proclaimed it after his ascension (“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven;” Acts 1:11). The earliest prayers of the church expressed the longing of *Maranatha*—“Our Lord, come” (1 Cor 16:22)!

When Jesus comes, the kingdom comes. Certainly, even now, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus (Matt 28:18). He is, presently, in His ascended position, seated at the right-hand of God (Acts 2:30-

36; Eph 1:20-23) as the head of all rule and authority (Col 2:10), and we who have placed our faith in Christ have already been “transferred” into His

kingdom (Col 1:13). Because of this, it is common to speak of Christ’s kingdom as having been inaugurated at His ascension. However, the Scripture is quite clear that the prophesied restoration of all things awaits the future coming of Jesus (Acts 3:20-21). This is why, for the most part, the New Testament speaks of the kingdom as coming in the future. Its coming is correlated with Christ’s future coming. When he comes, “He will sit on His glorious throne” and judge the nations (Matt 25:31). Our inheritance which is presently being kept in heaven (1 Pet 1:4) will be revealed at that time (1 Pet 1:7, 13), and in that future day, when he comes, he will welcome all who belong to Him into “the kingdom prepared ... from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). This is the focus of all our hope (1 Pet 1:13), *the appearing of Jesus and His kingdom* (1 Tim 4:1).

Premillennialism, the subject of this essay, is the belief that the future kingdom that comes with Jesus will undergo a two-stage fulfillment: first, a millennial phase, a one-thousand year reign of

Christ and his saints from the time of his coming to the time of the final judgment, and secondly, the final, eternal kingdom of God, extending from the time of the final judgment throughout all eternity, set within the conditions of God's new creation. The word *premillennial* refers to the order of Christ's coming in relation to the millennial phase of the kingdom: his coming is premillennial because he comes before the millennium.

The premillennial view can be contrasted with postmillennial and amillennial views regarding the three phases of the kingdom mentioned so far: the present inaugurated form of the kingdom, the millennial phase, and the final, eternal fulfillment. Amillennialists deny the existence of a future millennium, insisting that there are only two phases: the present inaugural phase and the final, eternal fulfillment.¹ Postmillennialists believe that the millennium is actually a part of the present inaugural form of the kingdom. They may see it as future or as already begun. But what makes them *postmillennial* is their belief that Jesus will come *after* rather than *before* the millennial kingdom.²

In what follows, I would like to summarize the primary biblical evidence for premillennialism.³ We will see that in the Bible, the coming of Jesus and His kingdom is in fact a premillennial hope. Furthermore, it is a premillennial hope that was revealed to the church explicitly by Jesus Himself, a revelation that harmonizes earlier biblical teaching on the nature of the kingdom and the manner of its coming.

OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COMING KINGDOM

As the future kingdom of God was being revealed in Old Testament prophecy, descriptions of the kingdom were given that indicate its establishment prior to the final judgment. Isaiah 65:17-25 describes the kingdom as a future new creation.⁴ The language is similar to what we find in Revelation 21 where a new heavens and new earth are foreseen. However, Revelation 21 places this new creation after the final judgment

(Rev 20:11-15), after sin and death have been done away. Isaiah, on the other hand, foresees new creation conditions in which death is still present (Isa 65:17-20).

It is not the case that the language of Isaiah 65 is a general metaphorical description of the eternal state. Isaiah knew that eternal kingdom conditions excluded death, and prophesied, in Isaiah 25:7-9, a reign of God subsequent to the day of judgment in which death would be no more. Consequently, the mention of death in the Isaiah 65 new creation prophecy is striking, raising the question of how the two visions harmonize.

A similar anomaly can be seen in Isaiah's description of the future rule of the messiah in Isaiah 9 and 11. Both underscore the blessed condition of his kingdom. However, Isaiah 11 also speaks of punitive judgment in that he "strikes the earth with the rod of his mouth." The language echoes words from the second Psalm that warn kings of the earth to submit to the Lord's messiah.⁵ It indicates the presence of rebellious activity not in keeping with the eternal kingdom order in which sin is absent. While it is possible that the use of the rod in Isaiah 11 refers to the definitive final judgment, more likely it is to be understood as a general feature within the overall description of the messianic reign, and the existence of parallel descriptions of coercive rule in the kingdom would seem to support this.

An explicit description of coercive kingdom rule is found in Zechariah 14. In this prophecy, Zechariah foresees the future day of the Lord in which God will judge all nations. Zechariah explicitly predicts that subsequent to this judgment, the Lord will reign over all nations on earth. Whereas Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 predict a peaceful kingdom scene in which all nations obediently submit to God's law and willingly come to worship the Lord in Zion, Zechariah prophesies a contrasting picture in which the nations are under compulsion to obey and worship him and are punished if they fail to come (Zech 14:16-19). A key difference between the two visions is the presence

of sin among the kingdom subjects in Zechariah's prophecy creating the necessity of coercive rule.

In summary, Old Testament prophecy describes the future kingdom of God as being in existence prior to the final judgment. At the final judgment, the conditions of sin and death cease so as to give way to conditions of everlasting peace and righteousness (e.g., Isa 9:7; Dan 9:24) in which there is "no death, no crying, no pain, for the first things have passed away" (Rev 21: 4). A number of OT prophecies speak directly of this final, eternal kingdom order. However, a number of prophecies, while highlighting conditions of blessedness in the future kingdom, also describe conditions of sin and death which can only precede the final judgment. This can only be true if the future, eschatological kingdom is first established some time prior to the final judgment, the final judgment, then, separating two phases of that kingdom, one temporary, the other eternal.

OLD TESTAMENT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD

The description of the coming of the day of the Lord in Isaiah 24-25 indicates a two-stage judgment process preceding the final elimination of death. This two-stage judgment overlaps the beginning of the future kingdom yielding a temporary phase of that kingdom before eternal conditions are fully realized. The first stage of this judgment is described in Isaiah 24 as the coming day of the Lord. While that judgment is catastrophic, it results in an "imprisonment" of some who are subsequently "punished" after "many days" (Isa 24:21-22). It is subsequent to this latter punishment that death is done away (Isa 24:23; 25:6-9). The imprisonment for many days must be included in the "rule" of Isaiah 24:23, under whose authority the imprisonment takes place. The latter punishment, then, separates two phases of the coming rule. Since the removal of death is relegated to the latter phase, death is still present during the earlier phase, the time of the imprisonment.

STAGES OF RESURRECTION IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Paul's teaching of stages of resurrection supports the possibility that the kingdom coming with Jesus will unfold in two phases, the final judgment marking the transition between the two. In 1 Cor 15:20-28, Paul describes the resurrection of the dead as taking place in stages, *τάγμα* (15:23).⁶ The stages are delineated in 15:23-24 by the grammatical structure *ἔπειτα ... εἶτα*: Christ, the first fruits, *then* (*ἔπειτα*) at his coming those who belong to Christ, *then* (*εἶτα*) the end (*τὸ τέλος*). The second *then* (*εἶτα*) does not transition to another subject, but is grammatically the third stage of the resurrection sequence, unfolding Paul's claim in 15:22 that "all will be made alive."⁷ This is reinforced in 15:24-26 where the third stage, *the end* (*τὸ τέλος*), is coordinated with the conclusion of another sequence, a coercive reign of Christ subjugating all authorities and destroying all enemies.⁸ The *end* (*τέλος*) of the resurrection sequence is consequent upon the destruction of the last (*ἔσχατος*) enemy. This last enemy to be destroyed is death (15:26). The destruction of death logically means two things: (1) no one dies after that point, and (2) any who had been dead up to that point must be raised. Elsewhere in biblical theology, this transition from a state of death to a state of no death is identified with the final judgment, and in this text it is also coordinated with a transition in the kingdom from the coercive subjugating rule of Christ to a situation in which God "will be all in all."

Paul's resurrection sequence does not specify a time period between the second and third stages (the resurrection of believers and the resurrection of the rest of the dead). However, due to the obvious temporal separation of the first and second stages (the resurrection of Christ in the past and the resurrection of believers in the future), it is not impossible that a period of time will intervene between the second and third stages as well. The coercive rule of Christ spoken of in this text would then be identified with the period that extends between Christ's coming and the final

resurrection, final judgment. Obviously, such a reign would be as distinct from the present inaugural phase of the kingdom as it would from the final, eternal form. Paul does not elaborate on this further in his writings. However, his structure contributes features to a growing pattern that will receive its explicit formulation in the Revelation from Christ to John.

Before leaving Paul, we should also note the distinction he makes between “resurrection of the dead” and “resurrection from the dead.” The latter phrase implies a partial resurrection—a resurrection of some, leaving others in a state of death. Paul accentuates the distinction in Phil 3:11 by attaching ἐκ as a prefix to ἀνάστασις, coining a new word and thereby doubling the use of the preposition in the phrase: ἐξανάστασιν τῆν ἐκ νεκρῶν, resurrection *out from* the dead. This indicates two stages of resurrection.⁹ Since both of these stages of resurrection are future, whatever interval transpires between them must also be future. For more information about that interval, we turn to the book of Revelation.

THE COMING OF CHRIST AND THE FUTURE MILLENNIUM IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Two things must be kept in mind as we look into the book of Revelation. First, the book presents a “revelation from Jesus Christ” to the churches. This point is emphasized at both the beginning and the end of the book (Rev 1:1, 17-18; 22:16). It is a word from Jesus himself, in fact, the last communication from Jesus that we have. Secondly, the focus of this word from Jesus is on his future coming, highlighted thematically at both the beginning (Rev 1:7) and at the end of the book (22:7, 12-13, 20). The event of his coming is described in detail in Rev 19:11-16. It is the climax, the hinge, in the apocalyptic narrative, which makes possible a transition in world conditions to the future kingdom of God.

The millennial kingdom of Christ is explicitly revealed by Jesus in Revelation 20:1-10. It is part of

the transition from the second coming of Christ to the final judgment and the eternal order. The transition is revealed in a sequence of visions beginning in Rev 19:11, all of which concern future events. Certainly, the first part of the sequence is the future, for it envisions the event complex of the second coming (19:11-16, 17-18, 19-21). Also, the last part of the sequence is future, for it reveals the final judgment and the eternal order (20:11, 12-15, 21:1f). The four millennial visions that appear in the middle of this sequence must also describe future conditions not only because they fit the sequence structurally, but also because of the features which they ascribe to that millennial order.¹⁰ These features do not exist prior to the advent; rather, they constitute a significant change from pre-advent conditions.

One such feature is the binding, imprisonment, and final judgment of the devil. The first millennial vision (Rev 20:1-3) describes this binding and imprisonment at the beginning of the thousand years. The last vision in the sequence (Rev 20:7-10) speaks of the release of the devil and his punishment after the thousand years are over.

Amillennialists generally follow Augustine’s interpretation of the devil’s binding and imprisonment suggesting a correlation between Rev 20:1-3 and Mark 3:27, where the Lord speaks of binding the strong man so that “his house” can be plundered. Augustine suggested that both passages are speaking of a binding of the devil that takes place on an individual basis during the pre-advent era. The devil’s authority over individual souls is broken, and he is “bound” with respect to them, when they are converted to Christ. The vision of Rev 20:1-3, then, would be looking back to the pre-advent era rather than describing post-advent conditions. Postmillennialists adopt this interpretation in general but typically view the binding in terms of a world-wide conversion that will precede Christ’s coming. However, this interpretation, correlating Revelation 20 and Mark 3 is clearly incorrect.

First, it is an incorrect interpretation of Mark

3:27. That passage is not talking about regeneration or salvation generally but specifically about exorcism. The parallel passage in Luke 11:14-26 warns that after such an exorcism demons may return to “the house” in greater numbers than before making “the last state of that person worse than the first.” Exorcism, like healing, was granted by Christ to those who sought him for it, but this was not the same thing as receiving salvation from him.

Secondly, Rev 20:1-3 is not describing the work of grace in an individual soul or even in many such souls. Rather, it is speaking of a complete cessation of the devil’s influence in the world contrary to and in reversal of his pre-advent activity. Consider the following NT descriptions of the devil’s present activity:

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world (1 Pet 5:8-9).

Resist the devil and he will flee from you (Jas 4:7).

The whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:1-2).

Particularly of concern in Rev 20:1-3 is the world-wide deception empowered by the devil just before the second advent. Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus and Paul had both warned of a time of great deception just before the second coming. Paul spoke of it as “the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception” working through a “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:9-10). This deception

is brought to an end by the coming of the Lord (2 Thess 2:8). Revelation 12-18 deals with this deception, enacted by Satan through a “beast” and a “false prophet” for a limited time prior to the second advent. Revelation 12:7-12 speaks of a war in heaven which sends the devil to the earth “in great wrath.” Knowing that “his time is short” (12:12), he is quite active making “war on ... those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (12:17). As “the deceiver of the whole world” (12:9), he empowers the “beast” and puts him in authority (13:2,4), and he speaks and acts through the false prophet (13:11-12). The deception of the devil, beast, and false prophet provokes the kings of the whole world to gather in opposition to Christ (16:13-16; 19:17-21).¹¹

Revelation 20:1-3 gives us a picture in stark contrast to this activity. An angel comes down from heaven to earth with a key and a chain to shut the devil down. The reader is expecting something like this because 19:20-21 tells us that the beast and false prophet had been seized at the second advent and cast into hell. Accordingly, we are told in Rev 20:1-3 and 7-10 what will happen to the devil: first, he will be imprisoned, and then later, he will be cast into hell. With respect to his imprisonment, five verbs halt his activity: the angel *seized* him, *bound* him, *threw* him in the bottomless pit, *locked* the pit, and *sealed* the pit over him. Compare the imagery here to Revelation 9 where *key* is used to release “locusts” from the bottomless pit so that they can torment people on earth. Their activity is only possible when they are released. As long as they are *locked* in the *pit*, they cannot hurt anyone on earth. Similarly, in Revelation 20, the binding and locked imprisonment takes place “so that he might not deceive the nations any longer” (12:3). The phrase “any longer” indicates the cessation of previous activity, precisely the previous activity of deceiving the nations of the earth, highlighted in Revelation 12, 13, and 16, leading to the war against Christ in 19:17-21 at his second advent.¹²

The length of the devil’s imprisonment is a

thousand years, repeated three times (20:2, 3, 7). Twice it is said that he will be released at the end of the thousand years (20:3, 7). The purpose of the release is “to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog.” Some have tried to argue that this is the same battle as that depicted in Rev 19:22-21.¹³ However, several differences can be noted in the descriptions of these two battles:

<u>Revelation 12:7-19:21</u>	<u>Revelation 20:7-10</u>
Devil expelled from heaven and cast down	Devil released from the bottomless pit.
Beast and false prophet active instruments of the devil’s deception and present at the battle.	Beast and false prophet in hell; not involved in the deception or the battle.
All kings of the whole earth.	Gog and Magog at the four corners of the earth.
Armies gather to resist the descent of Christ.	Armies surround the camp of the saints, the beloved city.
Enemies slain; bodies fed to carrion birds.	Enemies consumed to by fire.
Beast and false prophet seized and thrown into hell.	Devil thrown into hell a thousand years after the beast and false prophet are confined there.

Rather than recapitulating 19:11-21, the battle of 20:7-10 is a distinct event, a subsequent feature in an ongoing narrative, a feature which in fact resolves a problem left open in the earlier text. That problem is the punishment of the devil, the chief instigator of the conflict that comes to climax in 19:11-21. The seizure and punishment in

hell of the beast and false prophet in 19:20 rightly demands the same for the devil. Accordingly, the devil is seized in 20:2, and punished by being cast into hell in 20:10. By placing the seizure, binding, and imprisonment of the devil at the beginning of the thousand years and his punishment in hell at the end, it is clear that the thousand years is a post-advent era, contributing to the transition between the advent and the new heavens and new earth.

Another distinctive feature of the millennium which definitely characterizes it as a post-advent era is that it begins and ends with bodily resurrection. In Rev 20:4, at the beginning of the millennium, John sees “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.” The phrase “for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” connects to similar phrases used earlier in Revelation indicating a plot development in the apocalyptic narrative. These are believers who have died for their faith. In Rev 5:10, it was prophesied that the redeemed would reign with Christ on the earth. In Rev 6:9-11, we see a group of believing dead in heaven told to wait for those who were yet to join their company. We see these later martyrs beginning in Revelation 12 where it is said that they would overcome the devil who sought their death (Rev 12:11). It is fitting that in Rev 20:1-4, as the devil is sent into the bottomless pit, the believing dead are raised to reign with Christ, the resurrected One.

In addition to these believers, John sees “the rest of the dead” (Rev 20:5), a phrase that extends to those apart from Christ. In the narrative of the book, unbelievers die in various judgments leading up to the second advent (6:8; 9:18; 14:17-20) or at the second advent when they stand to oppose Christ (19:15-21). The narrative logically requires an explanation regarding their future as well.

Both groups are said to *come to life* in Revelation 20:4-5, but at different times. The believers *come to life* at the beginning of the thousand years.

The “rest of the dead” *come to life* at the end of the millennium. For this latter group, the point is expressed negatively: they “did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.” In the book of Revelation, the phrase “until ... were completed” (ἄχρι with a form of τελέω) always indicates a reversal of conditions (see 15:8; 17:17; 20:3 where the reversal is described in 20:7-8; 20:5 uses exactly the same phrase as 20:3), so that the meaning of “did not come to life until the thousand years were completed” is clearly *came to life when the thousand years were completed*.¹⁴

The verb translated “came to life,” ζάω in the aorist tense (ἐζήσῃ) refers here to bodily resurrection. We know this because (1) the only other uses of ζάω in the aorist in Revelation refer to bodily resurrection, (2) this is consistent with the use of ζάω in the aorist elsewhere in Scripture, (3) it is confirmed by the parallel use of *resurrection*, ἀνάστασις interpreting “came to life,” and (4) it is the only view that makes sense both in this context and in biblical theology.

On the first point, the only other uses of ζάω in the aorist in Revelation are found in 2:8, where Christ is identified as the one “who died and came to life again (ἐζήσεν),” and in 13:14 where the Beast appeared to receive a fatal wound yet came to life again (ἐζήσεν). The second point is demonstrated in Ezek 37:10 LXX and Luke 15:24, 32 (where ἀνέζησεν, *came to life again*, is used in parallel with ἐζήσεν). In every case in Scripture where ἐζήσεν or ἐζήσῃ is predicated of the dead, it refers to resurrection. It is never used to describe the existence of a disembodied soul. The third point observes the parallel between 20:4b and 20:5b-6 where *came to life* is interpreted by the word “resurrection,” ἀνάστασις. Ἀνάστασις, used in reference to the dead, always means bodily resurrection. It is never used to describe the continuing existence of a disembodied soul after death.¹⁵

Finally, bodily resurrection is the only interpretation that makes sense in this context and in biblical theology. *Came to life* cannot refer to regeneration, as traditionally claimed by amillen-

nialists and postmillennialists. Not only would this be odd lexically, as noted above, but it is nonsensical for both subjects of the verb. The martyrs who *came to life* in 20:4 were obviously already regenerate prior to their deaths. There is no subsequent regeneration for them either at the time of their deaths or afterwards. Furthermore, given the repetition of the verb in 20:5 and the logic of the syntax as noted above, interpreting *came to life* as regeneration in 20:4 would require that the rest of the dead in 20:5 be regenerated at the end of the millennium. However, since “the rest of the dead” is all inclusive, this would result in universalism, a view that is not only contradicted by Scripture generally, but also in the immediate context (Rev 20:11-15, where upon their resurrection, the dead are brought before the judgment and sentenced to the lake of fire).

As already noted, for lexical and literary reasons *came to life* cannot refer to the continuing existence of souls after death. This cannot be its meaning for the martyrs in 20:4, and it would be incoherent for the rest of the dead in 20:5. What would be the meaning of dead souls *not continuing to exist* until the thousand years were over?

Neither does *came to life* refer to some higher state of spiritual existence for the dead. There is no basis for such a notion in Scripture. It is foreign to the sense of ζάω used in this text, and it would be nonsensical for the rest of the dead in 20:5. In addition, such a view endangers the biblical doctrine of bodily resurrection by subverting the term ἀνάστασις in this passage.

In conclusion, the millennial kingdom transpires between two phases of bodily resurrection. It begins with the resurrection of the believing dead who are raised specifically to reign with Christ in that kingdom, and it ends with the resurrection of the rest of the dead for the purpose of judgment. Since the bodily resurrection of the believing dead will only take place at the time of the second advent, the millennial kingdom which begins with that resurrection must be a future, post-advent kingdom.

THE HARMONY OF SCRIPTURE

Jesus' explicit revelation of a post-advent millennial kingdom prior to the final judgment harmonizes the earlier revelation on the nature of the kingdom, the consequences of the day of the Lord, and the stages of resurrection. The Lord will come in the day of the Lord, executing judgment and establishing his kingdom. But Rev 20:1-10 explains the curious prediction of an imprisonment "in a pit" with punishment "after many days" in Isaiah 24:22. This imprisonment specifically involves the devil, one of the "hosts of heaven" and the "many days" of his confinement is revealed to be a thousand years. His punishment follows thereafter as Rev 20:10 foretells his expulsion into the lake of fire.

The time of the devil's imprisonment corresponds to a phase of the kingdom which still includes mortal conditions. Although the believing dead are raised to reign with the resurrected Jesus immediately after his advent, there is no indication of a change of state for mortal human beings who remain alive through the advent. Revelation 20:14-21:4 makes it clear that mortality as such ceases only after the thousand-year kingdom. This explains why some Old Testament texts, such as Isaiah 65, describe the kingdom in mortal conditions, while some, such as Isaiah 25, envision an immortal state. The continuance of mortality through the advent into a post-advent phase of the kingdom would also harmonize with the description in Matt 25:31-46 of a judgment on nations extant at the time of the advent. The "sheep" in that passage are nowhere said to be raised from the dead, but are gathered from the peoples alive at that time and received by the descended Lord into his kingdom. Such blessed conditions would lead to an eventual repopulation of the earth bringing in later generations who would be temptable in the manner described in Rev 20:7-10.

The mortal conditions of the millennial kingdom provide a harmonizing explanation for descriptions of a coercive, even punitive, kingdom rule in passages such as Isaiah 11 and Zechariah

14. Such descriptions pertain to the millennial phase of the kingdom which demonstrates yet again the truth that physical birth in itself does not lead to spiritual birth. With the devil imprisoned, outright rebellion would presumably be rather minimal within the expanding population. His release, however, will precipitate a crisis invoking swift judgment.

Finally, Paul's distinction of stages of resurrection (1 Cor 15:22-28; Phil 3:10-11), although silent on the duration of the interval separating them, is clearly harmonizable with the Lord's more specific revelation of a millennial kingdom separating the first resurrection and that of the rest of the dead.

ENDNOTES

¹Amillennialists, consequently, interpret the millennium of Revelation 20 as a reference to the present era between Christ's ascension and his future return.

²For contemporary presentations of amillennial and postmillennial views, see *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (ed. Darrell L. Bock; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

³For a more expanded treatment of premillennialism, see Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views*, 157-227, note also 72-80, 143-53.

⁴The prophecy of the new creation in Isaiah 65:17-25 is explicitly tied to the prophecy of Isaiah 11 regarding the future kingdom of a descendant of David by the repetition of language depicting the eschatological *shalom*: cf. 11:6-9 and 65:25.

⁵Compare Ps 2:9.

⁶On this passage, see Wilber B. Wallis, "The Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18 (1975): 229-42; also D. Edmond Hiebert, "Evidence from 1 Corinthians 15," in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus* (ed. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend; Chicago: Moody, 1992), 225-34.

⁷The universal extent of "all" in 1 Cor 15:22 is disputed by some because of the phrase "in Christ shall all be made alive." Because of the frequent Pauline use of *in Christ* to refer to believers, some have argued that

Paul only envisions the resurrection of believers in 15:22-28. A restrictive use would also seem to be corroborated by the Adam / Christ parallel in Rom 5:12-21. However, ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ or ἐν αὐτῷ is sometimes used in a broader sense as seen in Col 1:16-17 and Eph 1:9-10. Furthermore, a restricted sense in 15:22 would leave the third stage of resurrection in 15:24 without a satisfactory explanation, since the resurrection of believers is explicitly stated to be at the second stage, 15:23.

⁸This sequence is seen in the two ὄταν clauses in 15:24. See the argument of Wallis, "Problem of an Intermediate Kingdom."

⁹Note the argument of Moltmann inferring a future millennial order from Philippians 3:11 in his *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 195-99.

¹⁰The visions of 19:11-21:8 are connected together by means of the introductory phrase, καὶ εἶδον, and I saw, which, while not necessitating a chronological sequence, certainly lends itself to such. The repetitive and I saw together with the actual content of the visions clearly establishes the sequence. There is certainly no structural indication of any break in the midst of the sequence. See Blaising, "Premillennialism," 215. Robert Strimple's argument comparing Rev 12:1 to 20:1 is not valid since the introductory clause in 12:1, Καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὠφθῆ, is distinctly different from that used in the preceding and following visions. See Robert Strimple, "An Amillennial Response," in *Three Views*, 271. Also, Strimple's argument that a sequential interpretation must interpret the visions in Rev 20:4 as a second thousand years subsequent to that revealed in 20:1-3 cannot be taken seriously (see *ibid*). Revelation 20:4 depicts an event subsequent to the seizure, binding, and "locking-up" of the devil, not to the conclusion of his imprisonment. This is made clear by the repetition in 20:5 of the phrase, "until the thousand years were ended" used in 20:3 indicating that the reign of the saints is co-extensive with the imprisonment of the devil. Revelation 20:7 then addresses itself to the conclusion of all three visions, Rev 20:1-3, 4a, 4b-6. Καὶ εἶδον in 20:4 signals a natural sequence from

the devil's capture and "lock-up" to a resurrection of saints to reign with Christ, the reign and the confinement extending through the thousand years.

¹¹Considering the whole of the New Testament's teaching on the activity of the devil, one needs to note that the deception prior to the second advent is presented as an increase or escalation in activity, not as a contrast between activity then and inactivity at the present time. Both John and Paul underscore this by stressing the link between present and future activity: while the antichrist is coming in the future, many antichrists have already come (1 John 2:18-23). While the man of lawlessness is coming, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work (2 Thess 2:7-8). While there is a present restraint on that future full manifestation (2 Thess 2:6-7), it does not constitute the complete cessation of activity described in Rev 20:1-3. The latter is fittingly descriptive only of a post-advent situation.

¹²See Richard A. Ostella, "The Significance of Deception in Revelation 20:3," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1975): 236-38.

¹³See Meredith G. Kline, "Har Magedon [Armageddon]: the End of the Millennium," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39 (1996): 207-22; and R. Fowler White, "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Rev. 20:1-10," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51 (1989): 319-44. I critiqued several aspects of White's argument in "Premillennialism," 215-17, n. 86, and 220, n. 92. Robert Strimple attempted to defend White's claim that the battle at the descent of Christ described in Rev 19:11-21 results in the destruction of all the inhabitants of the nations except the redeemed by appealing to "flesh of all men" in 19:18 (Strimple, "Response," 273-74). However, the reference to "all flesh" in the listing of 19:18 is most naturally read as indicating the totality of the armies gathered in opposition to Christ. After "kings," "captains," "mighty men," cavalry ("horses and their riders"), the final reference to "flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great" concludes what is obviously a reference to the totality of the opposition force. This interpretation is confirmed by the repeat listing in 19:19: the beast, the kings of

the earth, and their armies. To read into this a global judgment of all unbelievers everywhere on the planet beyond the gathering of these armies is without support in this text. However, even if all unbelievers were destroyed at the second advent, this still would not be a basis for identifying the battle of 19:11-21 with that of 20:7-10. There is certainly no basis in 19:18 for arguing that mortal believers are slain by Christ at his coming. In fact, on the basis of Matt 25:31-46, premillennialists typically argue that among the mortals on earth at the coming of Christ, only believers enter the millennial kingdom. Through them, the repopulation of the earth takes place in accordance with prophetic descriptions of that kingdom. Since regeneration does not follow automatically upon physical birth, it is not unreasonable to expect a mixed population by the end of the thousand years—a situation capable of being provoked by the release of the devil. Finally, one can hardly put any credence in Kline's [and Stimpfle's] argument for an identity between 19:11-21 and 20:7-10 on the basis of the use of the Greek article with the noun for battle in 20:8, ignoring all the textual features that clearly distinguish the two texts!

¹⁴This point was acknowledged by Stimpfle (see "Response," 275). Stimpfle considers this paradoxical and tries to counter its force by arguing that since *death* is used in two different senses in 20:5-6, it is therefore appropriate to understand *come to life* in 20:4b-5a in different senses as well. However, this is a *non sequitur*. The two uses of ζάω in 20:4b-5a are in relationship to two groups who are both dead in the same way, that is, physically dead. The first group are physically dead because they had been "beheaded" (20:4a) or otherwise physically dead for not worshipping the beast (as indicated by 13:15 and 14:13). The second group are called "the rest of the dead" in 20:5 using *dead* in this same sense of physical death, the continuity of the two groups underscored by the word "rest," remainder. *Come to life* in 20:4b-5a is applied to both groups of the physically dead indicating a reversal for each by resurrection. The *second death* in 20:6 is repeated in 20:11-15 where an explicit distinction is drawn between the

two uses of the word *death*. No distinction is drawn for the phrases *come to life* or for the word *resurrection* in 20:4-6.

¹⁵The only place in Scripture where ἀνάστασις might not mean bodily resurrection is Luke 2:34. Two points need to be made, however: (1) neither in this passage nor anywhere else does ἀνάστασις refer to disembodied existence, and (2) bodily resurrection cannot be ruled out of the meaning of ἀνάστασις in this text. Certainly, in biblical theology, the claim "this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel" includes the bodily "rising" of many as recipients of the fulfillment of kingdom prophecies such as Ezek 37:1-28. To invest ἀνάστασις with a sense of disembodied existence in a text where it is applied to the physically dead, as it is in Rev 20:5-6, threatens to subvert its meaning everywhere else in Scripture, thereby constituting a threat to the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection generally.