

THE MILLENNIUM



¹ And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, ³ And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20)

After the Lord descends from heaven and defeats the armies of Antichrist and the ten kings, it is time for Him to rule over (*poimaino* – shepherd) the earth with *a rod of iron* (Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).¹ The Antichrist and False Prophet have been sent directly to the Lake of Fire forever, their forces that were gathered in the Valley of Armageddon have been killed, and the birds of the earth have attended to the clean-up. The people of the earth, those who have survived the wrath of God expressed through the seven vials, are all unrighteous – they have either never accepted the Lord **and His truth** (i.e., they are pagans) or they have turned away from Him and are now apostate. I have included the words in bold very deliberately, for there are untold millions within the Evangelical community today who would adamantly claim that they have *accepted the Lord*, yet they continually reject His truth. They can, with great pride, point back in their lives to the specific time when they prayed to accept the Lord as their Savior – for them, that is the occasion upon which they hang their hope for eternal life. As a result, ever since that day, whenever they are faced with a truth from God’s Word that will require too much of them (in their estimation), they look backward to that day of *acceptance*, and turn away from the truth that has been placed before them. Jesus said: “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit [suitable] for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62); the context is Jesus calling people to follow Him, but they all had “reasons” for not doing so right away.² Jesus says that anyone making a commitment to follow Him and looking backward, instead of forward, is not suitable for His kingdom. Evangelicals offer a prayer of acceptance and then point to that moment whenever they face a “thus saith the Lord” that they really don’t want to do. Paul’s personal testimony was: “forgetting those things which are behind [for Paul this was his strict Jewish heritage, which was in keeping with what God gave to Moses], and reaching

¹ Strong’s Online, <https://onlinebible.net/>.

² Friberg Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13b-14); all that God had done for Paul to bring him to his present situation, he was determined to leave behind so that he could stretch forward toward the upward calling of God in Christ. What you don’t see is Paul looking backward and taking consolation that what had happened in the past negated his need to press forward with his eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 12:2; 2 Peter 3:18). One rationale that Evangelicals use for this backward focus is that, although they might lose a reward or two for not being obedient to that which they face, they are convinced that their salvation still remains intact – all because of that prayer so long ago. Another justification, which I learned as an Evangelical, is that you can accept Jesus as your Savior (providing that all-important *eternal fire insurance*) and you can go on to accept Him as Lord if you want to be someone who is super-spiritual – in other words, there are two levels of salvation, and you get to choose the level of commitment that you want. What they fail to realize, and what I was never told, is that Jesus never taught such heresy; as a matter of fact, if the Lord Jesus is to be our Savior, then He **must** also be our Lord (John 14:15). Let’s revisit this briefly just to be sure that we understand the matter thoroughly.

Jeremiah declared the words of Jehovah that a day was coming when He would establish a New Covenant and place His Laws (the Ten Commandments³) upon our minds and write them upon our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33); as Jesus met with His disciples for the last time before His crucifixion, He held up the cup and declared that through His blood, which was about to be shed, the New Covenant is established (Luke 22:20). Faith in the sacrifice that Jesus made for the sins of the world grants us entrance into that New Covenant; by such faith, the Spirit of God enters into us (Romans 8:9) and, in keeping with His words through Jeremiah, the Lord places His Laws on our minds and writes them upon our hearts. The first of these Ten Commands is this: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). What does this mean? Jesus explained it this way: “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple ... whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, 33). Jesus was not advocating a hatred for everyone who is dear to us – the point that He was making is that our love and commitment to Him must outshine all of the other *loves* in our

³ The Ten Commandments are uniquely God’s Laws because He wrote them upon tables of stone with His finger, thus signifying their permanence (Exodus 31:18); the rest of the laws that God gave through Moses were specifically for Israel, and it is these that were removed by Christ at the cross (Ephesians 2:11-17).

lives; unless everything and everyone is placed below our commitment to Him, we **are not** His disciples. This is the essence of the First Commandment; it's not about ensuring that I have no images of silver or gold, but whether the Lord holds that number one position in my daily living. This, alone, should make it abundantly clear that unless Jesus is the Lord of everything in my life, then He is not my Lord at all, I am not His disciple, and I have no claim to eternal life. It should be evident that there is no two-tiered salvation – it is all or nothing.

Furthermore, Jesus elaborated on this principle: “he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain faithful through trials] unto the end, the same [an emphatic pronoun: this is the one!] shall be saved [future tense]” (Matthew 24:13).⁴ *Endure* is in the active voice, which means that we must do the enduring, and, since it also includes the idea of hardships, we must have the commitment necessary to remain faithful to the Lord through the trials that will come our way.⁵ Notice that Jesus says that it is **ONLY** (by using the emphatic pronoun) the one who remains faithful to Him through all of life's trials who **will be saved** (future tense). Our entrance into the glories of heaven is not determined solely by a prayer of faith in the Lord Jesus, but by a life that has been lived in continual faithfulness to Him – the prayer of faith is the beginning of such a life, for anything less will not do. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [is doing – present tense] the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).⁶ Jesus also said: “If [introduces a conditional situation] ye love me [the expression of our faith in Him; the subjunctive mood identifies this as a choice], [then] keep [a command to attend carefully to] my commandments” (John 14:15).⁷ In other words, if we place our faith in Jesus (an expression of our love for Him), then we must live in obedience to His commands; to put it another way, if we are not obeying the commands of the Lord, then we do not love Him, and have no faith in Him even if we can identify a time when we offered a prayer for salvation. It is important that we follow Paul's instruction to the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves [test to ensure that our profession and living match (that we're not hypocrites)], whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves [examine to ensure that we are living Biblically – that our faith is genuine before God]” (2 Corinthians 13:5).⁸ If we permit our faith in the Lord to wane, then we are in jeopardy of becoming faithless: “Take heed, brethren,

⁴ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁵ Strong's Online.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁸ Strong's Online.

lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [faithlessness], in departing [falling away, becoming apostate] from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).⁹

When Jesus returns to establish His reign, the world will be inhabited only by the unrighteous. They rejoiced when the Lord’s two witnesses were killed by the devil (Revelation 11:9-10). They mourn when they will see the Lord come in the clouds of the air to harvest His righteous ones from the earth (Revelation 1:7); during this harvest, the spirits of the dead in Christ will be reunited with their bodies in the air (they will be raised in their glorified form), and the living faithful will have their bodies changed and join them (1 Corinthians 15:52). Those who are left behind will realize that they have missed their opportunity for salvation, and many will then know that they have been duped by the easy theologies of men – they mourn because they recognize that they no longer have any hope of eternal life. However, the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be there to lead them through a process of rationalization – things will be better now, the “problems” have been removed from the earth, so this will now be a time of *peace and safety* (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Those who will be left behind then experience the Day of the Lord: the seven plagues that fall as the expression of God’s wrath (His *thumos*) against sin and evil. Throughout the suffering of this time (the Day of the Lord calamities) the common response of those who feel God’s wrath is to blaspheme Him; they recognize the One Who sent the plagues, yet they refuse to acknowledge Him (Revelation 6:16-17). After the sounding of the sixth trumpet (which takes place at the time of the sixth vial), we are told that those who survived the plagues to this point “repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries [*pharmakeia* – magic arts, witchcraft], nor of their fornication [*porneia* – every kind of sexual experience that is contrary to God’s order], nor of their thefts [or fraud]” (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:11).¹⁰ You will recall that with the arrival of the Antichrist, people openly worshipped Satan whom they recognized as providing the Antichrist with his authority (Revelation 13:4); despite the forthright declaration of God’s truth by the two witnesses and having viewed the rapture of the saints of the Lord, there is not a shred of repentance in the hearts of those who remain on the earth – they had ample opportunity to repent, but they refused. However, this is not surprising when you consider that today the worldly take great pride in their open acceptance of every

⁹ Gingrich Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

¹⁰ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

kind of defilement; it is little wonder that they will wallow in their debauchery when every godly influence has been removed from the earth.

What seems very evident from the Scriptures is that when Jesus comes to establish His kingdom on earth, the unrighteous over whom He will rule, have not been passive sinners – they have actively and aggressively been doing all of those things that are an abomination before God (Revelation 9:20-21). Yet, we are assured that Jesus will shepherd (*rule – poimaino*) these people, albeit with a *rod of iron* (Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15) – there will be no question that they will live in compliance with God’s standards, but their inner chafing (still no repentance) will also be present.¹¹ Their acquiescence to the Lord’s *rule* will be because the saints of the Lord will be assisting Him in administering His Law and order, and Satan will not be actively working in the world to encourage open rebellion against the Lord.

After the Lord Jesus comes to earth to establish His reign, John sees an angel coming down from heaven who is holding the key to the abyss (*bottomless pit*; Greek, *abussos*).¹² You’ll recall that with the sounding of the fifth trumpet, Satan was allowed to use the key to **the access** (*pit*) to the abyss (*bottomless*), and that creatures from the abyss were unleashed against the unrighteous (Revelation 9:1). This angel has the key to the abyss itself, and a great chain that is able to bind spirit beings; he seizes the devil, binds him for a thousand years, and then tosses him into the abyss. The devil is then locked (*shut him up*) and sealed (not as a mark, but as a security measure) so that he should no longer deceive the peoples of the earth until the thousand years should be ended (*fulfilled*).¹³ During this time, while the Lord is ruling over the people of the earth, the devil is bound, locked, and sealed away from everyone on the earth; for someone who has always had the freedom to walk *to and fro in the earth* (Job 1:7), this will be a time of great misery for him.

We are not told anything about Satan’s demons being active during the Millennium. We are told that Satan is the commander and king over the bottomless pit (abyss or Hades – the dwelling place for all that is evil), and it is therefore very possible that, while Satan is bound, his demons will be bound with him. Further affirmation of this possibility is that we read nothing of the demons being cast into the Lake of Fire, but we are told that the Lord has prepared *everlasting fire* for the *devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41). It seems to be understood that when the devil is cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10), his demons will go with him. On

¹¹ Strong’s Online.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Friberg Lexicon.

that basis, it can be assumed that when the devil is confined for the thousand years, his demons are also bound and restricted; when he is released, his demons will spring forth as well.

At the end of the thousand years, we are told that it is necessary (*must*) for the devil to be loosed from the abyss and his chains for a short time (*mikros chronos*).¹⁴ The people who come through the outpouring of God's wrath (the seven vials) are unregenerate, and they cannot be saved because they rejected the only means of salvation (Jesus) while the door to saving faith was open. Coming into the Millennium, the entire population of the earth is unrighteous, and these people cannot change, even though Satan is out of the picture during this time.

What we can understand from this is that, even though Satan introduced sin into the lives of Adam and Eve in the Garden, from that point onward, everyone is born a sinner and, after the age of accountability, he remains unrighteous unless he comes to the Savior of mankind – we are sinners because that is how we are born, not because the devil makes us sin. When we sin, we are living in accordance with our sin-nature, and it is this that we are to account as being dead so that we may be alive unto the Lord (Romans 6:11); through a living faith in Christ, we are to put off the old man and put on the new man that is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth – i.e., Christ (Ephesians 4:22-24). *Truth* is central to living a life that is in keeping with God's desire (yes, God has a work prepared for us to do – Ephesians 2:10); as we have learned, God's Word is **truth** (John 17:17), Jesus is known as the **Truth** (John 14:6; Revelation 19:11), and, unless we accept a **love for the Truth**, we cannot be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10). Paul's exhortation is: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5) – this *faith* is a love for the Lord Jesus Christ (the **Truth**) that must be expressed in obedience to Him (John 14:15). The examination that the Spirit of God commands (through Paul) is this: when I am faced with a "thus saith the Lord" from His Word, do I bow in obedience to Him, or do I rationalize and make it into "yeah, hath God said?" (Genesis 2:16-17 vs. Genesis 3:1). The purpose of this self-examination is to uncover any rationalization that may be present, and then to repent of it immediately and return to faithfulness to the Lord; failure to repent will result in spiritual death, apostasy, and eternal separation from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12; 10:26-29). The elder (messenger/*angel*) of Sardis had a good reputation among men, yet the Lord called on him to repent immediately in order to avoid spiritual death (Revelation 3:1-3); his profession and his heart were not the same – he was a hypocrite. The elder of the

¹⁴ Strong's Online.

assembly in Ephesus was warned that he had forsaken his *first love* (this can be nothing other than a love for **the Truth** – Jesus and the Word of God) and, unless he repented, the whole assembly would be removed (Revelation 2:4-5). He was doing most things correctly, but because he had lost his passion for **the Truth**, this spiritual loss/neglect would ultimately permeate the whole assembly that he watched over so that they would all lose their position in Christ. Is it important that we accept God's truth and live by it? It is eternally important!! We simply cannot say that we love the Lord unless we are also living in faithful obedience to Him (John 14:15).

As the Millennium opens, the Lord Jesus, Who will be assisted by His saints who were harvested from the earth, will begin to shepherd the unrighteous – those who have despised Him and His message, and have cursed Him throughout the vials of wrath. To shepherd these people, Jesus will use an unbending *rod of iron* – there will be compliance; the will of God will be done on earth even as it is always done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). However, the rod of iron will not change the sinful hearts of mankind.



4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20)

Interestingly, even though this is the time when Jesus will shepherd (*rule*) the people of the earth, this passage tells us nothing about what it will be like. As we have noted before, this time of world peace was something that was uniquely spoken of by the OT prophets; we've looked at the tranquility that will exist (Isaiah 11:6) and have seen that it will be a time of unusual harmony among all creatures (Micah 4:3). None of that is mentioned here.

John sees thrones (he doesn't say how many) and that they are occupied by those to whom judgment has been given – i.e., they have been given the authority (by the

Lord Jesus) to judge. He then goes on to identify who these *judges* are: *souls* (*psuche*), in this case it must be understood to refer to the whole person – a living being.¹⁵ On these thrones, John sees those who have been beheaded for their *witness of Jesus* and *for the word of God*. Earlier, John saw some of them at the foot of the altar in heaven: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under [at the foot of] the altar the souls of them that were **slain for the word of God, and for the testimony** which they held” (Revelation 6:9).¹⁶ However, John now goes on to identify them more specifically: 1) they have not worshipped the beast (the Antichrist), nor his image, and 2) they have not received the mark of the Antichrist upon their foreheads or hands. These, who were overcomers in the face of the pressure mounted by the Antichrist and his False Prophet, *lived and reigned* with Christ for **the** thousand years (Revelation 20:4 – the Greek includes the definite article).¹⁷ This probably raises the question: is it only those who have been killed by the Antichrist who will reign with the Lord during the Millennium?

Paul, when writing to Timothy, said: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*” (2 Timothy 2:12); *suffer* is from the Greek word *hupomeno*, which means to endure faithfully through times of difficulty.¹⁸ This will find a time of great expression during the rule of the Antichrist, and many of the faithful will remain so at the cost of their lives; however, the qualification for *reigning* with Christ is not martyrdom under the Antichrist but an enduring faithfulness to the Lord in the face of the tribulations that will come our way (Acts 14:21-22). In order to demonstrate faithfulness to the Lord, we absolutely must live in obedience to His commands (John 14:15); everyone who remains faithful to the Lord is thereby qualified to *reign* with Him. In other words, those whom Jesus snatches away to be with Him (the *rapture*) will all be qualified to reign with Him; we will only be caught up to be with the Lord if we have remained faithful (obedient) to Him through all of the trials of life (Matthew 24:13).

It is then stated that the *rest of the dead* do not live again until **the** thousand years should be completed (again, a definite article is included). We need to place this within the correct framework, understanding what has taken place up to this time. Jesus has returned in the clouds, along with all of His angels, and the harvest of the righteous has been accomplished (the *rapture*); this left only those who are unrighteous living on the earth, and the spirits of the unrighteous dead in Hades.

¹⁵ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁶ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

¹⁸ Strong's Online.

Those from the armies of the Antichrist who are killed, will also find themselves in Hades – this is the temporary place where the unrighteous dead are held pending their day of judgment, albeit a place of considerable misery (Luke 16:23). At this time, there are no righteous (those who remained faithful to the Lord) who have not been resurrected into their glorified bodies – this was all accomplished at the time of the *rapture*. *This* (a demonstrative pronoun in the Greek that specifically refers to the resurrection of the righteous) is the *first resurrection*. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump:¹⁹ for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain [surviving under the rule of the Antichrist] unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [precede] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God²⁰: and the dead in Christ shall rise first [part of the first resurrection²¹]: Then we which are alive *and* remain [surviving, the same Greek word that was used earlier] shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).²² You will recall that during most of the Antichrist’s rule, the two witnesses will be proclaiming the truth of the Lord for anyone who will hear – yet very few will heed their message.

When the *rapture* is ended, no one who is the Lord’s will have been left behind; the day of salvation has been closed, and those who are left behind are eternally lost and without hope. Jesus spoke of this time: “But as the days of Noe [Noah] *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe [Noah] entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37-39). “In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah’s wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind ... and **the LORD shut him in**” (Genesis 7:13-16). Once everyone and everything were in the ark, the Lord shut the door; the day of

¹⁹ As noted before in this study, this is NOT to be confused with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, but rather as the sounding of a **single** trumpet, for the last time, that will call together those who are the *princes* of the Lord (Numbers 10:4).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ You will recall from our study of Revelation 14 that the *resurrection* of the OT saints is the *waive offering* – the first of the resurrection of the righteous; in other words, they are included in the *first resurrection*, even though it took place some time ago.

²² Friberg Lexicon.

salvation was ended for everyone outside of that closed door; Jesus says that it will be the same with His coming in the clouds – the door of salvation will be closed for all of those who are left behind.

Jesus also likened this time to ten virgins, with their lamps trimmed and lit, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom; however, when the trumpet sounded announcing his soon arrival, the lamps of five of these virgins had gone out and they had no more oil. As they went to the market to buy more, the bridegroom came, welcomed the five virgins who were ready, and closed the door on their celebrations. When the other five came back, having obtained additional oil for their lamps, they were not only shut out, but the bridegroom tells them that they are unknown to him. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:13). Evangelicals today, for the most part, appear to be eagerly anticipating the Lord’s arrival in the clouds of the air, yet the gospel to which they cling has lost its light, and they seem unaware and unconcerned. However, when the trumpet of God is sounded, they will not be among the faithful who are thereby called to meet the Lord in the air, they will find the door of salvation to be closed, and they will realize that they have been very wrong, but it will be too late. Little wonder that there will be such a great sense of sorrow when the reality of their situation sets in: “Behold, he [Jesus, the Bridegroom] cometh with clouds; and **every eye shall see him**, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds [peoples] of the earth **shall wail** [to beat one’s breast in a strong expression of remorse] because of him” (Revelation 1:7).²³ Paul quotes Isaiah to underscore the importance of attending to our spiritual welfare today: “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee [Isaiah 49:8]: behold [a command to look!], **now** [right now!] *is* the accepted time; behold [a command to look!], **now** [right now!] *is* the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).²⁴ In this life, we cannot be certain of anything except *now*; if we are not already *in Christ*, then the message is clear: make the decision to love the Lord and live in obedience to Him NOW!

John now takes a moment to expand on those who are included in the *first resurrection*. First of all, he uses two words to describe them: *blessed* and *holy*. *Blessed*, in its basic form, means to be happy, but, in this case, it is not simply a pleasant feeling because everything is going well; this is a happiness that is the result of having received the favor of the Lord.²⁵ *Holy*, on the other hand, means to be

²³ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Gingrich Lexicon.

separated unto God, sanctified by Him, and pure before Him.²⁶ Although both words (*blessed* and *holy*) are adjectives, and both are in response to what God has done for us, they are very different from one another. *Blessed* speaks of a state of **mind** due largely to what God has done for us; *holy* describes a state of **being** that springs from what God has done for us, but it is applicable only because of our willing commitment to pay the price of being separated unto the Lord – yes, there is a cost that we must willingly pay (Luke 14:33). When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God accounts us as being *holy* because we are *in Him*; what we must not overlook is that it is impossible to maintain this holiness unless we remain *in Him*. “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk [are living] ... after [according to] the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1)²⁷ – if we *are living according to the Spirit* of God, then we are living in obedience to Him and are continually being guided by Him. Jesus said, “If ye love me,” which requires the exercise of our faith, then “keep my commandments” (John 14:15); contingent upon the presence of our faith (*love*), we are commanded to attend carefully to His commands: complete obedience (i.e., living according to the Spirit).²⁸

These, whom John has identified as being a part of the *first resurrection*, are those who have received the favor of the Lord and have remained faithful to Him in their walk through life. Jesus expressed this so clearly: “And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – to remain patiently and faithfully steadfast through trials] unto the end, the same [from a Greek demonstrative pronoun – this is the one!] shall [will] be saved” (Mark 13:13).²⁹ *This is the one*, the one who remains faithfully resolute in the Lord unto the very end of his days on this earth, who will have part in the *first resurrection* – commonly called the *rapture*.

This is noted as being the *first* resurrection, which means that there must be, at the very least, a *second* one. Even though we have no reference made to a second one, we are assured that *the second death hath no power* over those who have part in the *first resurrection*. There seems to be some missing information here: we have a *first* resurrection, but no mention of another, and we have a *second* death, but no mention of a *first*. Let’s begin with the matter of the *second death*, for as we understand this more completely, the issue of a second resurrection will be resolved.

²⁶ Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, “holy.”

²⁷ Gingrich Lexicon.

²⁸ Strong’s Online.

²⁹ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

The writer of Hebrews states that “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27), which is in keeping with God’s promise to Adam that if he ate of that which was forbidden, then he would die (Genesis 2:17; 3:19; spiritual death came immediately, physical death later – Genesis 5:5). Paul noted that it was through Adam’s sin that death has *reigned* (Romans 5:14); death is the great equalizer, for all men die no matter what their station in life. The old adage is: Nothing is certain but death and taxes;³⁰ yet the certainty of death far outstrips the surety of taxes. From this it would seem that the *first death* is that which brings our physical life on earth to a close; so what is the *second death* that holds no authority (*power*) over those who have a part in the *first resurrection*?

At this point, it is necessary to revisit the words of Jesus that will enable us to understand this matter more fully: “And fear not [do not be filled with fear from] them [plural] which kill [are killing] the body [i.e., those who are bringing about the *first death*], but are not able [powerless] to kill the soul: but rather fear him [singular] which is able to destroy [to ruin utterly (not annihilation)] both soul and body in hell [*Gehenna*, the Lake of Fire]” (Matthew 10:28).³¹ Jesus states unequivocally that we are to *fear* the One Who is able to sentence both body and soul to *Gehenna*, that place of eternal torment. If we look ahead just a little, we read this: “And death [the ultimate payment for sin (Romans 6:23)] and hell [Hades, the place where the ungodly dead are held (Luke 16:23)] were cast into the lake of fire [*Gehenna*, the place of unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43-44)]. This [a demonstrative Greek pronoun] is the second death” (Revelation 20:14). *Death*, being the foremost evidence of sin, is forever removed and cast into that place of eternal fire – sin, and everything that is attached to it, will be confined to *Gehenna* for all of eternity. Too often we think of death as being the end, but it is not – it is the door to an eternity beyond; it is during our life on earth that we must prepare for what is inevitably coming next. If we are a part of the *first resurrection*, numbered among the *blessed and holy*, then we will spend an eternity with the Lord; however, we are told very explicitly that if we miss the *first resurrection*, then the *second death* (an eternity in the Lake of Fire) is our lot.

At the moment of his act of disobedience, Adam died spiritually, but that does not mean that his soul (his eternal element) ceased to exist; rather, it now existed in a state of separation from the Lord Who was its creator.³² Adam’s communion with

³⁰ <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/proverbs.html>

³¹ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online; Vine’s “destroy.”

³² Vine’s “death.”

God was broken (spiritual separation) and his soul now related to Satan, to whom he had submitted through his disobedience. Therefore, without God's intervention (through shed blood) to restore man's communion with Him, Adam would have physically died in that state of spiritual separation. When an ungodly person dies, his soul (which is in a state of separation from God) enters Hades; Jesus' account of the rich man makes this abundantly clear: "the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:22-23). The soul of the rich man was conscious in Hades, a place of spiritual torment, and it still bore his essence – it was not generic, but was identifiably his. Hades is a temporary place for the souls of those who are separated from God when they come to the end of their earthly days; their individuality does not cease to exist – it continues unabated in a state of separation from God. On the other hand, Paul tells us that those who remain faithfully **in Christ** are "willing [think it good] rather to be absent [away] from the body, and to be present [at home] with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). The Psalmist declared: "Precious [highly valued] in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints [holy ones]" (Psalm 116:15). Why? Because their death establishes their eternal presence with the Lord Who made a way for them to have their communion with Him restored. The difference is not that the unrighteous will eventually be annihilated (as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses teach), but that they will continue for eternity in a state of separation from God – a separation that will take place in the Lake of Fire (the *second death*).

Those who are a part of the *first resurrection* do not fall under the authority of the *second death*. Those who remain faithful to the Lord unto the end of their earthly life will be among the *blessed* who will be transformed at the coming of the Lord in the air; the dead *in Christ* will be resurrected with new, immortal bodies, and those who have survived on earth to that day will be changed in an instant and will be gathered with them to be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). As we have seen, the *second death* is for those who remain separated from God at the time that they die physically (the *first death*); we will look at this more a little later, as well as see the link to the unmentioned *second* resurrection.

Everyone who remains faithful to the Lord to the end of his time on earth, is a participant in the *first resurrection* (Matthew 24:13). Being raised with a glorified body like unto the Lord Jesus Christ, all of the participants in the *first resurrection* will be *priests of God and of Christ*, and will *reign* with Him for *a thousand years* (Revelation 20:6). *Christ* means anointed, and He is God's anointed High Priest Who

made atonement for the sins of mankind when He entered into the heavenly presence of God (Hebrews 9:12; 1 John 2:2).³³ Christ is our High Priest and Mediator with God and, as we remain *in Him*, He continues to intercede with God for us (Romans 8:34). The Lord Jesus Christ **is** eternal God Who took on a body of flesh, paid the price for the sins of mankind, and entered the heavenly Holy of Holies to make atonement for all of mankind – an atonement that is effective only for those who are *in Him* by faith.

The writer of Hebrews makes this observation: “If therefore perfection [complete cleansing from sin; ultimate fulfillment of the sacrifices] were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another [*heteros* – another of a different kind] priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?” (Hebrews 7:11).³⁴ The point being made is that because spiritual cleansing could not be completed under the Levitical system of sacrifices (hence, the sacrifices were required on a continual basis), there was a need for a different priest to come – One Who would come according to Melchisedec – a priest of God to whom the patriarch Abraham paid tithes, and, being without ancestry, he stands as a priest forever (Genesis 14:18-20). It is through the Lord Jesus, a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec (Hebrews 6:20), that an eternal cleansing is possible (Hebrews 9:12). The writer also states: “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Hebrews 7:12). Under which Law did the Levitical priesthood function? It was the Law of Moses that carefully delineated the responsibilities and roles of the priests (including that of the high priest); even though it was based upon the Ten Commandments, it was the Law of Moses that was foremost within the culture of Israel. With the institution of the New Covenant, under what Law does the new priesthood function? It is the Law of God, the Ten Commandments that are now, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, placed into our hearts and written upon our minds (Hebrews 10:16). Notice that the writer does not say that with the change in the priesthood (from the Levitical priests to the Lord Jesus Christ) that the Law is removed – he says that it is transposed (*change*, one replaces the other); the Mosaic Law of ordinances was fulfilled in Christ and removed (Ephesians 2:13-16), and in its place stands the Law of God (the Ten Commandments) as prophesied through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-33).³⁵ Therefore, under the New Covenant, we do not follow the Mosaic traditions (for they are ended in Christ), but the Spirit of God has

³³ Strong's Online.

³⁴ Vine's “perfection”; Strong's Online.

³⁵ Vine's “change.”

come in order to guide us in the application of the Ten Commandments to our daily living – it's not that we are without Law, for God places His Commandments into our hearts, it's simply that the Spirit will **seek to** open our understanding to His truth (John 16:13). Remember, we are created in the image of God, and, as such, we have the ability to reason and to choose; the Spirit of God will not force us to obey the Commands, but if we choose to rationalize away the truths that He brings before us, then we can be assured of reaping eternal condemnation (Galatians 6:7). “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1); the reality is this: if we walk according to the leading of the Spirit (which means obedience to the Commands of God), then we do not abide under the Lord's condemnation. However, the reciprocal is also true: if we do not walk according to the Spirit, then we are abiding under God's condemnation – we are not showing *love* for the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:15) and, without early repentance, we will be without hope: faithless and apostate (Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-6).

Jesus, as eternal God, took on a body of flesh to become our High Priest forever (Hebrews 2:14-15; 8:1). As the eternal High Priest of the righteous, Jesus has *made us ... priests unto God and his father* (Revelation 1:6); this is a statement of fact (*made* is in the indicative mood).³⁶ This is reiterated in the song of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Revelation 5:10) – Jesus has made those who are cleansed through His shed blood to be priests to God. Jesus is an eternal High Priest to those who are *in Him* by faith; He, as eternal God, took on the body of flesh so that He could, through one sacrifice, make cleansing from sin available to everyone (Hebrews 9:11-12). A priest is a mediator between God (or a god) and man – he stands in the gap in an effort to facilitate communication.³⁷ Jesus, having taken on a body of flesh, stands as our Mediator – He bridged the gap between holy God and sinful men by being both eternal God and human (1 Timothy 2:5). Even though He remained completely free of sin (as holy God, Hebrews 4:15), He bore our sins so that we might be delivered from sin to *live unto righteousness* (1 Peter 2:24). Under the Mosaic Law, it was the high priest who would once each year make atonement for the sins of the people (and his own) before the presence of God in the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:25); however, on a daily basis, the many Levitical priests would make sacrifices for the sins of the people, thereby permitting them, through individual faith, to restore a right relationship with God. Jesus, as our High Priest, is

³⁶ Strong's Online.

³⁷ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/priest>

the Mediator of the New Covenant through the blood that He shed once to bring cleansing from sin; we, as His priests, must proclaim His truths and thereby fulfill our role in the world at large – we have been given a *word of reconciliation* (the Gospel) that we must proclaim (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

Yes, our role as *priests* begins now for we are “a chosen generation [elect (*chosen*) in Christ (Ephesians 1:4)], a royal priesthood [priests of the King], an holy nation [people], a peculiar people [an *acquired* people, bought by the Lord]; that ye should shew forth the praises [excellence] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).³⁸ Jesus said: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works [works of holiness and righteousness (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24)], and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16); these are not deeds that we do to feel good about ourselves, but must be works of obedience to the Father – if they are not, then we will be turned away as workers of iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23)! Jesus also said: “If ye love me [expressed faith in Him], [then] keep my commandments [obedience]” (John 14:15); if saving faith is present, then there must also be obedience to His commands. To *obey* means to follow the commands of another, and this is what Jesus expects of those who claim to love Him; the common accusation is that this is legalism, which is defined as a strict, literal, and often excessive adherence to a law.³⁹ However, the focus of obedience is on the one who gave the command (Jesus said that if we are loving Him, then our obedience must be there – the focus is on Jesus!); the focus of legalism is on the command given – it’s how to carry out the letter of the command so that **we** can meet the perceived standard. John explained: “By this [what follows] we know [are coming to understand] that we love [*are loving; agapao**] the children of God, when we love [*] God, and keep [*are keeping/obeying* (this is in the subjunctive mood, which means that it is a possibility but not a certainty – we have a choice)] his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep [*are keeping; although keep is in the subjunctive mood, being part of a purpose clause, it is not expressing a possibility but the reason for God’s love: our obedience*] his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [burdensome]” (1 John 5:2-3).⁴⁰ We show love for the children of God (fellow believers) when we are loving God **and** choosing to live in obedience to His commands; as we love and obey the Lord, we demonstrate a life of faithfulness to our fellow pilgrims (that is our love for them). Jesus stated very clearly that we cannot love Him without obeying His

³⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/obey>; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/legalism>

⁴⁰ Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

commands (John 14:15). Unfortunately, this is strangely absent from most Evangelical teaching today.

Our obedience is never without inadvertent failures; after all, we carry about with us the body of flesh that we are called upon to continually account as being dead (Romans 6:11). John tells us: “if we confess [*should be confessing* (present tense, subjunctive mood)] our sins, [then] he is faithful and just [righteous] to [so that He will] forgive us *our* sins [this is also a purpose clause with subjunctive verbs (*forgive* and *cleanse*) that declares the response from the Lord for our confessed sins], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [every unrighteousness]” (1 John 1:9).⁴¹ This also contains a conditional statement: as long as we are confessing our sins to Him, the Lord will extend His forgiveness and cleansing; if our acknowledgement of sin stops, so does His forgiveness and cleansing. However, what we must not miss is that there is **no** cleansing for a **deliberate** turning away from what the Lord has asked of us; such an act is one of apostasy, from which there is no recovery (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29).

Those who are included in the *first resurrection*, the *rapture* of the saints of God, will be active priests for the Lord during the Millennium, and will also *reign* with Him. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that we are living today without hypocrisy and that we are genuine in the light of God’s Word: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith [are our profession and living in agreement]; prove your own selves [are we genuine according to the Scriptures]. Know ye not your own selves [do you not have a thorough understanding], how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [unless] ye be reprobates [failing to meet the test]?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).⁴² Do not miss the fact that our standard is the Word of God and **not** the theologies of men; the one who measures himself against another man’s opinion is not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).



7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10. And the devil that

⁴¹ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

⁴² Friberg Lexicon.

deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20)

The thousand years of peace, prosperity, order, and the will of God being done on earth will come to an end; it is the Lord Who controls the exact timing as to when this millennial reign should come to a close (*are expired*; passive voice).⁴³ Satan's confinement to the abyss was for the duration of the Lord's 1000-year reign, and then it is necessary for (*must*) him to be freed for a short time (*little season*, Revelation 20:3). Remember that the abyss is not the final destination for Satan (Matthew 25:41), and so it is necessary for him to be released. Upon the Lord's determination, Satan is *loosed*, and he immediately goes out to do what he has been doing since Eve in the Garden of Eden: deceive (lead astray from the truth) the people of the earth.⁴⁴

Consider this: the people of the world have been under the rule of the Lord Jesus Christ for a thousand years – this has been a time of peace, favorable weather, abundant provisions, and obedience to the will of God. Those who come into this time, after having experienced the calamities of the vials of God's wrath, will have a firm understanding of the contrast between what existed during the time when Satan ruled (through the Antichrist) for a short time, and the earth as it has been under the Lord Jesus for a thousand years. Despite the peace and prosperity that will have become the norm, it does not follow that the sinful hearts of mankind will be filled with love for the Savior. Recall that when the plagues of God's wrath were being poured out upon the earth, the people of the earth blasphemed the Lord and refused to *repent of their deeds* (Revelation 16:11). From the people's response to the calamities associated with the sixth trumpet, we learn that they worshipped *devils* and *idols*, and their *deeds* were *murders, sorceries, fornication, and thefts* (Revelation 9:21); of these, even today we can recognize the obsession of the worldly with sexuality – not how God created it but more along the lines of the acronym LGBTQIA+.⁴⁵ Earlier we noted that *fornication* (*pornea*) is any form of sexual experience that is contrary to what God has ordained; society today is filled

⁴³ Strong's Online.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ L – Lesbian, G – Gay, B – bisexual, T – transgender, Q – Queer (not heterosexual and/or cisgender [identify with the gender given at birth]), I – Intersex (both male and female), A – Asexual (no sexual identity or desire), and + for everyone who doesn't fit any of the previously noted classifications; notice that sexuality as God designed is not included.

to the brim with every form of deviance, and they are militantly laboring to make sure that everyone is accepting of their lifestyle (tolerance is no longer sufficient). Under the Lord's rule throughout the Millennium, there will be no evidence of LGBT-anything; this will be a time when the will of God will *be done in earth, as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10). Considering the numerous, well-attended rallies that take place today in an effort to demonstrate how acceptable their perverted lifestyles are within society, this will be a very long and painful Millennium for these people.

As Satan springs from his prison into the world, his purpose will be to *deceive* – he will set out to convince everyone that there is something better than what they have enjoyed/tolerated for the past one thousand years. He will motivate his demonic hordes and, together, they will criss-cross the globe planting seeds of open rebellion into the hearts of those who have lived in compliance with the Lord's *rod of iron* for so long; he will go to the *four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog* – there will not be a region of the earth that he does not touch. To what do *Gog* and *Magog* refer? We really don't know. *Gog* (which means *mountain*) was a descendant of the tribe of Reuben (1 Chronicles 5:4), but there is no definitive way of knowing where he would have settled to thereby be able to identify a region of the earth by his name at the end of the Millennium.⁴⁶ The name is used by the prophet Ezekiel of someone who was an enemy of the Lord (Ezekiel 38:3) but there is no correlation to this reference. *Magog* is the grandson of Noah (Genesis 10:2), and is also an area that is identified with *Gog* in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38:2) – again, there is nothing to draw these ancient references to the time of Satan's release. Perhaps these are areas in the world where there is an increased inner rebellion against the rule of the Lord – places where Satan and his hordes will find a greater acceptance.

As Satan traverses the earth, he gathers those together who are tired of doing the Lord's will. Perhaps Satan will promise them freedom, and, with the world being a place of lasting peace and prosperity, they will be convinced that they can exercise their *rights* under Satan and still enjoy the benefits that have been theirs during the Millennium. That is not a stretch considering that Satan convinced Eve, who had no sin nature, to eat the fruit of rebellion in order to become wise (Genesis 3:5); it will be far easier for him to convince sinners, who have lived under forced obedience, to rebel. The people whom Satan will gather to do battle against the Lord Jesus Christ are *as the sand of the sea*: it will be an innumerable host. These are all people who have enjoyed up to one thousand years of tranquility and abundance under the Lord's rule, yet, in an instant, they will turn to follow Satan against the One Who has

⁴⁶ Strong's Online.

ensured their peace and provided their prosperity – they have had to suppress their rebellious nature, and that has been too much.

Satan and his deceived followers come from all over the earth and surround the encampment of the saints and Jerusalem (*beloved city*). What kind of an encampment will this be? There are several possibilities. First of all, it is possible that we, as the glorified saints of God who will be ruling with Christ, will dwell with Him in a special encampment at Jerusalem. Secondly, since we, as the glorified saints of God, are also His priests during this time, it is very possible that a remnant of people who are born during the Millennium will forsake their sinfulness and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Much like the Lord's disciples during His first earthly ministry, these faithful ones may seek to be with their Lord and settle into a camp by Jerusalem (since Jesus will be ruling from that city). It is also possible that this *camp of the saints* will be made up of both the glorified saints and the millennial faithful.

The intent of the devil and his troops is to destroy; by surrounding the Lord's saints and Jerusalem, they are determined to eliminate everyone and remove the center of righteousness from the earth. However, we are told that God sends *fire* from heaven that consumes them. We have noted before that God is described as a *consuming fire* (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29); the Lord went before Israel as a *consuming fire* as they claimed the land of Canaan, yet it is equally clear that, although the Lord prospered their hand when they were faithful to Him, it was the armies of Israel who did battle to gain the land (Deuteronomy 9:3). I believe that this will be the time when the Lord will tread the winepress *without the city* so that the blood of the vanquished will run for miles (Revelation 14:19-20).

At this moment, earth shattering events will take place as the Lord draws the end of all ages together. First of all, the devil, who assembled this vast crowd, will be thrown into the *lake of fire and brimstone* (Gehenna) where the Antichrist and the False Prophet have been for a thousand years (Revelation 20:10). The devil is now in the place that was prepared for him: “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41). This is the fulfillment of the words of the angel to John: “The beast [Satan, who is carrying the false religious system] that thou sawest was [his influence has been felt since the Garden of Eden], and is not [he was defeated at the cross]; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit [*abussos*, abyss; after being confined there for 1000 years], and go into perdition [*apoleia*; the place of utter ruin

(the Lake of Fire)]” (Revelation 17:8).⁴⁷ We are not told when Satan’s demons will join him, but it could very well be at the same time that he is thrown into the eternal flames; they were cast out of heaven together (Revelation 12:9) so it is only fitting that they should arrive at their eternal destiny together.



11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. **13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.** **14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** **15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20)**

John now sees a great, white throne and the One Who is sitting on it, from Whose face (*presence*) the earth and the heaven flee (*vanish*), and they are found no more.⁴⁸ Peter wrote: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7; cp. 3:10); this is the time when Peter’s words find fruition: the white throne *judgment* is prepared, and it will deal primarily with the *ungodly*. As John sees the Lord sitting upon a gloriously white throne for judgment, the heaven and the earth will be forever removed. We are not told specifically what the *heaven* includes, but it seems that it will take in all of the created heavens, for we are told that the Lord will make *all things new* (Revelation 21:5); with the removal of all of the heavenly lights designed to mark time, it is clear that eternity has begun.

With the earth and heavens gone, John sees *the dead*, all of them, whether their lives seemed to be insignificant (*small*) or of great importance (*great*), standing in front of (*before*) *God*.⁴⁹ Remember that, prior to the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the earth, the saints of God who were re-born into the New Covenant were

⁴⁷ Strong’s Online.

⁴⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁹ Strong’s Online.

resurrected into their glorified bodies when the Lord Jesus came in the clouds, along with His angels, to harvest the earth of all those who were His (*first resurrection*); from this we learned that it is only the unrighteous who go through the time of God's wrath, and, therefore, it is only the unrighteous who are on the earth when the Lord returns with the armies of heaven to establish His kingdom. This is in keeping with Jesus' words: "when the Son of man cometh, shall [*ara*] he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8); the Greek *ara* (translated as *shall*) requires a negative response to the question – in other words, **NO**, the Lord will not find faith on the earth when He comes back.⁵⁰

Knowing that it is only the unrighteous who enter the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus, as we now come to the end of His reign on the earth, who are the *dead* – are they all unrighteous, or will there be some who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus? During the Millennium, the saints of the Lord who were resurrected into their glorified bodies during the *first resurrection* will have been exercising the Lord's authority (as *kings*), and carrying out their responsibilities as His priests (Revelation 20:6). Would it not be fitting that during a period of one thousand years that these glorified priests would be able to point someone to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? We know that for the unrighteous who entered the millennial kingdom, salvation is closed – their eternal destiny has been sealed. However, during the Millennium, these unrighteous ones will have children who have never rejected the Lord – the first generation will be brought up by those who cursed the Lord during the days of His wrath (Revelation 16:9, 11), and, because death will be virtually unheard of during this time (Isaiah 65:20), their influence will be multi-generational. However, those who are born during the millennium still hold the freedom to choose the Lord Jesus, and it will be the same faith that was exercised by the OT and NT saints, even though its context will be different. You will recall that the OT saints placed their faith in the Lord's promise of the Savior Who would come; NT saints place their faith in the Lord Jesus Who came and paid the price for the sins of all of mankind; millennial saints will place their faith in the Lord Jesus Who paid for their sins and Who is now ruling the earth from Jerusalem. Since death will be very uncommon during this time, these millennial saints will rarely face physical death (unlike the OT and NT saints) and will be alive on the earth until God removes the heaven and earth after the destruction of the hordes of Satan (Revelation 20:9, 11). Therefore, the *dead*, who will stand before God at this time, will be made up of these millennial saints, the unrighteous who were on the earth but did not follow Satan's final

⁵⁰ Strong's Dictionary, *ESword*; <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/ara-3.html>.

deception, and the unrighteous from all ages whose souls have been waiting in Hades for this day (including the hordes of Satan who surrounded Jerusalem).

Let's look at some statistics to better understand the possible scenario at the end of this thousand years. Consider that the estimated population of the world in 1000 AD was 275 million, and the population one thousand years later was over 6 billion – that's a growth of just under 6 billion people!⁵¹ It is impossible to estimate how many unrighteous will enter into Jesus' kingdom on earth, but let's consider what we do know. We know that the rider of the pale-green horse will reduce the world's population by 25% (Revelation 6:8) and that the army from the east will reduce the population by another one-third (Revelation 9:15); these two alone will diminish the world's population by one-half – add to this the Antichrist's and the False Prophet's slaughter of those who oppose them (Revelation 13:7, 15), the Lord's destruction of the armies of the Antichrist when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth, and it is clear that the population of the world entering the Millennium will be a fraction of what it is today. However, there are other factors to consider, as well. Between 1000 and 2000 AD, the world experienced over 300 famines, hundreds of major wars, massacres, and acts of genocide, deadly earthquakes and pandemics, which all served to remove over 1.8 billion people from the earth.⁵² In our modern era, we also need to make provision for the abortion industry; during the 1990s some 10 million abortions were carried out each year worldwide;⁵³ today the world estimate has risen to 40-50 million abortions each year.⁵⁴ During the Millennium, there will be no pandemics, no wars, no famines, no abortions, and no deaths from "natural causes"; therefore, it would be a logical projection to assume that the population of the world will grow much more significantly during the one thousand years that Jesus will rule the world. There will be much work for the priests of the Lord during this time; it may begin very slowly, but it will grow dramatically. When Satan is released from the abyss at the end, he will have many billions of people to influence.

Stand is very interesting in the Greek; we might think that the dead will be made to stand before their Creator (which would be the passive voice), yet the Greek word is in the active voice, which means that it is the dead who carry out the action⁵⁵ –

⁵¹ <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/world-population-by-year/>

⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_famines;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_natural_disasters_by_death_toll;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_anthropogenic_disasters_by_death_toll#List_of_wars_by_death_toll

⁵³ https://abort73.com/abortion_facts/worldwide_abortion_statistics/

⁵⁴ <http://www.worldometers.info/abortions/>

⁵⁵ Strong's Online.

many among them may have ignored or cursed God in life, but they know their place before Him now. Matthew wrote of this time: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory [*a great white throne*]: And before him shall be gathered all nations [peoples]: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit** the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, **ye cursed**, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ...” (Matthew 25:31-34, 41). A cursory reading of the entire passage (particularly vs. 35-40 and 42-45) may leave the impression that good deeds will get some people into heaven; however, we know that that does not align itself with other very clear passages of Scripture, and, therefore, we must take the time to look closer at Jesus’ teaching here to be sure that we understand exactly what is taking place. We know that those who have received their glorified bodies (the OT and NT saints) have already gone through a separation process: as the OT saints died, they were separated from the unrighteous and dwelt in Paradise while the OT unrighteous were in Hades pending their day before the Lord; likewise, the NT saints, upon death, go to be with the Lord while the unrighteous dead go to Hades; of those who are alive at the time of the Lord coming in the clouds of the air, the righteous will be caught up to be with the Lord and the unrighteous will be left behind. In each case, it is evident that a parting of the righteous from the unrighteous has already taken place, or will take place.

When the Lord comes to sit upon the *white throne*, Jesus says that *all the holy angels* will be with Him (Matthew 25:31); the angels of heaven will join the Lord at this time and it would seem that their task will be to check the opened books, which have the record of everyone’s works, and the Book of Life. Jesus says that *all nations* (*ta ethnos*) will be gathered before Him; the Greek phrase, as it is used here, is in the plural and, therefore, speaks of those who are foreigners (within a Jewish context, it typically refers to the Gentiles). The *foreigners*, in this case, are all of those who are standing before the Lord – those who have not yet been separated; everyone else is in bodies that are fit for heaven – both the angels and saints are pure and holy. Jesus goes on to say that He will *separate* the sheep (metaphorically speaking of the righteous) from the goats (the unrighteous). After this separation has been completed, Jesus will say to the sheep (the righteous): “Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit** the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34); He then goes on to speak of the righteous deeds that they have

done (vs. 35-36). However, the key to understanding what is taking place here is the word *inherit*. Within a worldly application, an inheritance is considered to be something that is passed down from a deceased family member (e.g., from a father to a son), and, within the spiritual, it speaks of a gift that is given by the Lord (i.e., everlasting life is the inheritance of the faithful [Matthew 19:29] – a gift that the Lord purchased for us through His death).⁵⁶ Therefore, what we must be careful to understand correctly is this: what does it take to *inherit* the kingdom of God, which has been made ready from the *foundation of the world*?

Let's begin by looking at two things that Jesus said that have a bearing on this matter: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Jesus makes it very clear that no one will enter His kingdom simply by calling on Him; rather, it is the one who is doing the will of God. This immediately eliminates anyone who prays for salvation and then proceeds to completely ignore what God desires of him – this is not an inheritance that is obtained by simply praying a prayer. Jesus also said: "... he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13); the one who will be saved (future tense) is the one who remains faithful to the Lord unto the end (his death or the Lord's return), through the trials of life.⁵⁷ The unsung implications of what Jesus said is this: if we do not remain faithful to the Lord, then we will not be saved and the inheritance will not be ours; faithfulness is characterized by a prayer of faith followed by a life of obedience to the will of God – living in accordance with the leading of His Spirit (Romans 8:1; James 2:26). It becomes very clear that the one who will *inherit* God's kingdom is the one who has placed his faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation, and then, very importantly, lives out his days in keeping with the commands of the Lord. Therefore, when Jesus welcomes the separated *sheep* into His kingdom, He is opening the doors of heaven to those who have been His faithful followers. The delineation of acts of kindness are simply illustrations of what is pleasing to the Lord, and we must not look at them as being saving works, for *the just shall live* [have real life] *by faith* (Galatians 3:11) – faith is the foundation upon which obedience to the Lord is built.⁵⁸

By contrast, those on His left are destined for the *second death* – the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41). Jesus describes them as being *cursed*; they are accursed by God –

⁵⁶ <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/inherit>

⁵⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁸ Strong's Online.

they abide under His condemnation. The Greek word is in the perfect tense showing that this has taken place in the past, and the results of that past action are ongoing; at the time of their death, they were **not** *for* the Lord (Matthew 12:30), and this affirms that their eternal status before God was sealed at that time and it cannot be changed.⁵⁹ What does it take to be *accursed* by God? It is written that all men have sinned (Romans 3:23), that the just recompense for sin is death (Romans 6:23), and this is the state of being into which we are born because, through Adam, death has come to all people (1 Corinthians 15:22). Although Jesus broke the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), anyone who does nothing to deal with their spiritual death sentence during their lifetime will be destined for the second death – an eternal separation from God. However, there are two other groups that the Lord identifies in His Word who also abide under His condemnation. The first includes those who have a superficial spirituality that might even make them appear to be followers of Jesus; “Many will say to me in that day [a reference to the day when they stand before the Lord as their Judge], Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied [spoken the words of God] in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works [the power to perform miracles]? And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**: depart from me, ye that work iniquity [wickedness]” (Matthew 7:22-23).⁶⁰ These people have done many things in the name of the Lord, yet they were never known by Him; their appearance of spirituality was entirely the works of the flesh, which are as worthless as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 8:5-8). The second group is made up of those who, through faith, began a life in the Lord, but, like the Seed that fell on the rocky and weedy soils, in the face of trials and the pressures of life, they die. “*There is* therefore now no condemnation [a negative judgment] to them which are **in Christ Jesus** [entered by faith], who walk [live] not after [according to] the flesh, but after [according to] the Spirit [a life of faithfulness]” (Romans 8:1); *no condemnation* comes **only** through being *in Christ and* living according to the leading of the Spirit (obedience to the Lord’s commands).⁶¹ John the Baptist declared: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not [*apeitheo* – is disobedient to] the Son shall not see life; but the wrath [*orge* – an abiding anger against sin] of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).⁶² What we see from Scripture is that these *goats* (those separated to the Lord’s left) are pagans, the religious, and the apostate – those who have never

⁵⁹ <http://www.ntgreek.net/lesson23.htm>

⁶⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁶¹ Gingrich Lexicon.

⁶² Friberg Lexicon.

had anything to do with the Lord, those who have placed their faith in an empty false religion, and those who began a life with the Lord but fell away when a time of testing came along. We must note that God's Word is equally clear about what it takes to avoid the Lord's condemnation: live in accordance with the leading of the Spirit of God Who comes into the child of God for the purpose of leading him into the truth (Romans 8:1; John 16:13).

As we consider those who are standing before the Lord, Who is seated upon His glorious throne, we must recognize that He will separate them into two groups: 1) those who have placed their faith in Him during the Millennium (on the right), and 2) everyone else on the left – pagans, the religiously deceived, and apostates (those who knew the truth, but turned away from it). This separation will take place on an individual basis according to the record of their works in the opened books, and whether their name is in the Book of Life.

You will recall that those who are a part of the *first resurrection* are called *blessed* and *holy* (Revelation 20:6); even though it is not called the *second resurrection*, by default that's what this is – the millennial faithful and the unrighteous dead from all ages will now *stand* before their Creator. Is this a true resurrection (i.e., soul and body reunited), or is it just their souls that appear before the Lord? The evidence is clear: these multitudes will stand before the Lord with their bodies and souls reunited. Let's consider the evidence. We see here that special mention is made that the *sea gave up the dead* who were in it (Revelation 20:13), and we know that the sea is not the dwelling place of the souls of the dead – that is exclusively Hades for the unrighteous, while the righteous are with the Lord. *Dead* is from the Greek word *nekros*, which is an adjective describing a corpse; although the word (*nekros*) can be used metaphorically to describe someone who is spiritually dead, it does not fit in this case.⁶³ Therefore, the sea must be relinquishing the bodies that are in it. Furthermore, we are told that *death* (*thanatos*) and *hell* (Hades) also give up the dead (same Greek word) who are in them. *Death* (*thanatos*) is a direct result of sin: “the wages [the payment due] of sin *is* death [*thanatos*]” (Romans 6:23);⁶⁴ God's word to Adam was: “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [dying thou wilt die]” (Genesis 2:17).⁶⁵ We are told that it is the devil who held the power of death; Adam chose sin and became subject to the devil and death, but Jesus, through His sacrifice, sealed the devil's destruction and broke the power of death (Hebrews

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Strong's Online.

⁶⁵ BDB.

2:14-15). However, death is only broken for those who place their faith in the Lord Jesus (a living faith that must be evidenced by a continual obedience), and yet physical death is still a reality (it is the **power of the second death that is broken**); for the unrighteous (the pagan, the religious and the apostate) death has not lost its power and, even while they are alive, they are subject to receiving the just recompense for their sin – death! We are told that *death* (the product of sin) will give up the *dead* who are in it; this would mean that there will be those whose souls did not depart before they came to stand before God. The millennial saints and the unrighteous who did not join in Satan's final rebellion, are nonetheless subject to physical *death*, and will be numbered among the *dead* when the earth vanishes – those whom *death* will release to stand before God; they will go from life on earth to standing before the Lord Who is seated on His glorious throne. Also, the souls of all of the unrighteous who have been held in Hades will be reunited with their bodies to stand before the Lord.

There is more evidence: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 1:26a; 2:7). Man was created by God in His likeness, and, even after his fall into sin, man continues to bear that image (Genesis 9:6); from the moment of creation, man has been both physical and spiritual, therefore, it is only fitting that the unrighteous should appear before their Creator as they were created. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of this matter very specifically: “And fear not [have no fear from] them which kill [are killing; *apokteino*, put to death] the body, but are not able to kill [*apoktieno*] the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy [*apollumi*; ruin utterly, but not annihilation] both soul and body in hell [Gehenna, that final lake of fire]” (Matthew 10:28).⁶⁶ The *fear* that we are to have is for the Lord God Who is able to bring complete ruination to **both body and soul** through a final condemnation to the Lake of Fire. There can be no doubt that the unrighteous dead, with body and soul, will stand before God at the time of their final judgment – this is the unidentified *second resurrection*.

As this multitude stands before God, *books were opened*, and *another book* is opened, and this one is the book *of life* – the books will provide evidence for the separation of the *sheep* from the *goats* that will take place at this time. The Book of Life contains the names of those who are *in Christ* by a living faith (Revelation 13:8) and will be used to affirm the names of the millennial saints. For the unrighteous

⁶⁶ Strong's Online; Vine's “destroy.”

who are now standing before God, their judgment will be based upon the evidence in the opened books, which contain a record of all that they have done (*works*). *Judged* comes from the Greek word *krino*, which primarily means to separate (the thrust of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:31ff); the focus will be on the separation of the *sheep* from the *goats*.⁶⁷ Within the human judicial system, mistakes are made from time-to-time: a guilty verdict is sometimes given to an innocent person. However, within God's system of judgment, there are no mistakes, so why are the record of deeds and the Book of Life being referred to as this multitude faces the Lord's separation?

James has written: "Ye see then how that by works [*ergon*] a man is justified [being declared righteous]" (James 2:24); to the Galatians Paul was very forthright: "by the works [*ergon*] of the law shall [will] no flesh be justified [declared righteous]" (Galatians 2:16). Is this a contradiction? If we consult the context, we will then see that this is not an inconsistency at all, but merely two sides of the same argument. James is making the case that faith without works is dead (James 2:17); in other words, if we say that we have faith in the Lord, then it follows that we must be living according to the Lord's commands regardless of the price that we might have to pay to do so. These are works of obedience that flow out of our faith in the Lord (as we have noted earlier, you cannot believe and disobey at the same time). The Galatians, on the other hand, were being influenced to add certain Jewish traditions to the requirements for salvation – it was not just faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but was now faith plus circumcision (Acts 15:1). It is stated unequivocally that *works of the law* (even things that God had prescribed) cannot make anyone righteous; we are told that Israel heard the Gospel of God yet it *did not profit* them because it was not *mixed with faith* (Hebrews 4:2). Isaiah wrote of Israel multiplying sacrifices to the point that the Lord was being sickened by them, yet their *hands* were *full of blood* – they were keeping the Law meticulously yet they had no cleansing (they were not justified) before Jehovah (Isaiah 1:11-15). For Israel, it was faith in the Lord that was missing. Here are the two errors that we are prone to fall into: 1) faith is all that we need in order to be declared righteous before the Lord, and 2) doing what God has commanded is all that is needed to be accepted by the Lord. Paul and James are both teaching the mid-point between these polar opposites: faith leads the way into a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and living in faithful obedience to the Lord's commands will ensure our acceptance one day. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17), and works without faith is equally dead

⁶⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

before the Lord (Matthew 7:22-23). The Evangelical doctrine of eternal security is an effort to claim that faith, exercised at some point in time, is all that is necessary for salvation – God’s required working out of that faith is ignored; the devil has used this lie to instill *delusions* of heaven into many who face hell. On the other hand, there are many who still think that heaven can be gained if their good deeds outweigh their bad; the devil uses this lie to keep many fully occupied doing their utmost in an effort to gain eternal life. Jesus said that if we have faith in Him (love Him), then it is imperative that we be occupied with doing what He has commanded; it is always faith, then works out of that faith, but both are required. Jesus said: “And ye shall be [indicative mood, this is a fact] hated of all *men* for [on account of] my name’s sake [literal: the name of Me; *my name*]: but he that shall endure [*hupomeno* – remain steadfast *in Christ* through difficulties] unto the end [either our death or the Lord’s return for His own], the same [a demonstrative pronoun meaning, this is the one!] shall be saved [future tense]” (Mark 13:13).⁶⁸ Faith and faithfulness are both required!

As this multitude stands before God, it is not that God is double-checking His records to be sure that there are no mistakes; rather, He is ensuring that everyone who receives His judgment will understand exactly why. The millennial saints will hear their names being read out of the Book of Life and they will be separated to the right. The *books* that will be used to judge the unrighteous, are, in fact, a record of their offences against God; for those who are *in Christ* by faith, this record has been nailed to the cross and is no longer evidence against them (Colossians 2:14), and so they are without *condemnation* before God (Romans 8:1). Indeed, the record of our indebtedness, because of our transgression of God’s laws, serves to condemn us unless it has been removed by Christ. However, for those who stand before God in unrighteousness, this record of offences will condemn them; they will come to see that they had no faith in Him, or that they lost their faith in Him despite how wondrous some of those recorded works may have been, and, of course, their names will not be in the Book of Life. No one, who is separated to the left, will enter their eternal punishment without a full understanding of the reason why their judgment is fitting.

Death (thanatos) and *hell* (Hades), having now given everyone up who was in their grasp, are thrown into the Lake of Fire: *this is the second death*. This comes from a demonstrative Greek pronoun that identifies the Lake of Fire that burns with *fire and brimstone* (Revelation 21:8) as being *the second death (deuteros*

⁶⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

thanatos).⁶⁹ Earlier we were told that the *second death* would have no authority over those who are a part of the *first resurrection* (Revelation 20:6); from this it is evident that those who are not in the *first resurrection* will face the *second death*. However, the assurance that comes through is that for those who have their names recorded in the Book of Life, the second death will not be their fate; in contrast, it is with the Spirit's declaration that everyone whose name is not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire (the *second death*). The millennial reign of the Lord ends with His final judgments upon mankind; for eternity, the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated – the former with the Lord in Whom they trusted, and the latter with the devil. There are only two destinations for all of mankind, and Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me..." (Matthew 12:30) – it is in this life that we establish our eternal destiny and can have our names recorded in the Book of Life.

Our names are entered into the Book of Life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who paid the price for our sins (death); that has been the same for all ages, and will remain the same into the future for God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). However, as we are so frequently reminded in God's Word, unless our faith produces a life of obedience to the Lord, it is a delusion and not faith at all (John 14:15; James 2:17). Therefore, unless we are willing to live in obedience to the commands of the Lord (and the Ten Commandments are a good place to begin since they are written upon our minds ready for the Spirit of God to access), then our expressed faith in the Lord has failed, and our names will be removed from the Book of Life. Jesus tells us, "He that overcometh [*is prevailing* (presently living in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord)] ... I will not blot out [erase] his name out of the book of life ..." (Revelation 3:5).⁷⁰ However, when such a person is no longer prevailing, then his name will be removed from the Book of Life and, once it has been removed, it cannot be entered into the Book again. "For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened [saved by the Lord] ... If they shall fall away [*and having turned away*; *if* does not appear in the Greek], to renew [restore] them again unto repentance [the state of having turned from sin to God]; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh [again], and put *him* to an open shame [hold up to contempt]" (Hebrews 6:4-6).⁷¹ Foundational to this is the understanding that Jesus died once, and only once (Hebrews 7:27); therefore, the apostate shows contempt for the Lord if he thinks that he can account Christ to have been crucified a second

⁶⁹ Strong's Online.

⁷⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁷¹ Friberg Lexicon; Vine's "repentance."

time for him. Christ died once, and we can appropriate His sacrifice by faith only once; if we have accepted His sacrifice, and then turn from it (through willful sin), there is absolutely no sacrifice that will cover this sin (Hebrews 10:26-29). After outlining the qualifications for His disciples, Jesus provided illustrations that show that we are to count the cost of following Him before we make the commitment to do so (Luke 14:26-33). If we begin and fail, then we have closed the door forever on the salvation that He offers; as it has been said, being a Biblical Christian is serious business – it must not be entered into lightly.