



THE REVELATION OF JOHN

Bible Study 48

Text: Rev. 20:7-15

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1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀγίου καὶ τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος τοῦ ἀποστόλου καὶ προφήτου Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἀποστόλου. 2 Ἐπεὶ ἔβλεπον τὸν ἄγγελος οὐρανὸν εἰσελθόντα καὶ ἐκείνην τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἰησοῦ λέγοντος ὅσα εἶδεν. 3 Μακάρι οἱ ἐκράζοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τὰς λέξεις τῆς προφητείας τῆς βιβλίου τούτου. 4 Ἡ λέξις τῆς προφητείας ταύτης ἐστὶν ἡ γεγραμμένη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς προφητείας ταύτης. 5 Ἐὰν τις ἐπιθήσεται ἐπιθεῖν ἐπὶ τὰς λέξεις τῆς προφητείας ταύτης, ἐπιθήσει ὁ θεὸς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς πληγὰς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς προφητείας ταύτης. 6 Ἐὰν τις ἀφαιρήσεται ἀπὸ τῶν λέξεων τῆς προφητείας ταύτης, ἀφαιρήσει ὁ θεὸς τὸ μέρος τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου ἀπὸ τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης, καὶ ἡ πόλις καὶ οἱ οἰκοῦντες ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ οἱ ἐκράζοντες καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τὰς λέξεις τῆς προφητείας ταύτης, ἐπιθήσει ὁ θεὸς ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τὰς πληγὰς τὰς γεγραμμένας ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς προφητείας ταύτης. 7 Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ. 8 καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν τῷ τέρματι τῆς γῆς, τὸν γῶγ καὶ μαγῶγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης. 9 καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. 10 καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. 11 καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν, οὗ ἄπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη αὐτοῖς. 12 καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα

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QUICK LINKS

Exegesis of the Text:

- A. [God's war with the nations, vv. 7-10](#)
- B. [The white throne & God as Judge, v. 11](#)
- C. [Damnation of all evil people, vv. 12-15](#)

1. What the text meant.

Historical Aspects:

External History

Internal History

Literary Aspects:

Genre

Literary Setting

Literary Structure

2. What the text means.

The End of All Evil

Greek NT

7 Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ. 8 καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν τῷ τέρματι τῆς γῆς, τὸν γῶγ καὶ μαγῶγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης. 9 καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. 10 καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

11 καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ' αὐτόν, οὗ ἄπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη αὐτοῖς. 12 καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα

Gute Nachricht Bibel

7 Wenn die tausend Jahre um sind, wird der Satan* aus seinem Gefängnis freigelassen. 8 Er wird ausziehen, um die Völker an allen vier Enden der Erde zu überreden – das sind Gog und Magog. Sie sind so zahlreich wie der Sand am Meer, und der Satan wird sie alle zum Kampf sammeln. 9 Sie zogen herauf von den Enden der Erde und umstellten das Lager des heiligen Gottesvolkes und die von Gott geliebte Stadt. Aber es fiel Feuer vom Himmel und verbrannte sie alle. 10 Dann wurde der Teufel, der sie verführt hatte, in den See von brennendem Schwefel geworfen, in dem schon das Tier und der falsche Prophet waren. Dort werden sie in alle Ewigkeit Tag und Nacht gequält.

11 Dann sah ich einen großen weißen Thron und den, der darauf sitzt. Die Erde und der Himmel flohen bei seinem Anblick und verschwanden für immer. 12 Ich sah alle Toten, Hohe und Niedrige, vor dem Thron stehen. Die Bücher wurden geöffnet, in denen alle Taten aufgeschrieben sind. Dann wurde noch ein Buch aufgeschlagen: das Buch des Lebens. Den Toten wurde das Urteil gesprochen; es richtete

NRSV

7 When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison. 8 and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. 9 They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. 10 And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged

NLT

7 When the thousand years end, Satan will be let out of his prison. 8 He will go out to deceive the nations from every corner of the earth, which are called Gog and Magog. He will gather them together for battle -- a mighty host, as numberless as sand along the shore. 9 And I saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people and the beloved city. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them. 10 Then the Devil, who betrayed them, was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. 12 I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books,

αὐτῶν. 13 καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. 14 καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. 15 καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.

sich nach ihren Taten, die in den Büchern aufgeschrieben waren. 13 Auch das Meer gab seine Toten heraus, und der Tod und die Totenwelt* gaben ihre Toten heraus. Alle empfangen das Urteil, das ihren Taten entsprach. 14 Der Tod und die Totenwelt wurden in den See von Feuer geworfen. Dieser See von Feuer ist der zweite, der endgültige Tod. 15 Alle, deren Namen nicht im Buch des Lebens standen, wurden in den See von Feuer geworfen.

according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; 15 and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

according to what they had done. 13 The sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them. They were all judged according to their deeds. 14 And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death -- the lake of fire. 15 And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

INTRODUCTION

For God's people being persecuted on earth and for those who have been martyred and are in heaven with God, the end of all evil as a force to harm and hurt and contaminate is indeed a most welcomed day. Rev. 20:7-15 pictures just such a day. The end began to be pictured in the first depiction of the great battle between God and evil in 19:17-21. In this description both beasts, the kings of the earth and all evil people on the earth are taken care of by the victorious Christ. The two beasts, i.e., the two human leaders of evil on earth, are defeated and banished straight into the lake of fire for eternal torments. The rest of evil humanity is simply killed on the battlefield. This is part one of the depiction of the battle of Armageddon.

The completion of this destruction of evil is now resumed in 20:7-15, after the encouraging message of hope in 20:1-6, with John describing the defeat by God of Satan and his banishment into the lake of fire to be tormented forever along side the two beasts (vv. 7-10). This is followed by the white throne judgment depicting the resurrection of all evil humanity, which was killed in the battle so that they can now be judged and condemned to the same lake of fire for eternal torments as well (vv. 11-15). The final capstone action is that Death and Hades, personifications of the realm of the dead, are then also thrown into the lake of fire thus signaling the end of death itself. This is part two of the battle of Armageddon. This sets the stage for the new heaven and the new earth for God and His people as described in 21:1-8. Everyone in the new order is not subject to death and will exist forever, both the people of God and those in the lake of fire as well.

Thus we can shout with the heavenly multitude (19:6):

ἀλληλουϊά, ὅτι ἐβασίλευσεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς [ἡμῶν] ὁ παντοκράτωρ. **Hallelujah! because the Lord our God reigns, the Almighty One!** They celebrated this victory in ad-

vance and so should we, for it is certain and sure.

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

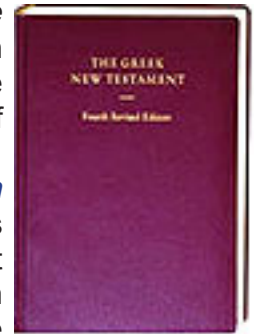
As usual, the literary considerations will play a more important role than the historical side in this passage.

Historical Aspects:

External History. The history of the hand copying of this passage prior to the printing press in the late 1400s reflects how the text in part was understood by the way it was copied. Often variations in wording at different places will reflect different understandings of meaning by the various copyists.

The text apparatus of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed), designed mainly for Bible translators, lists only one place of variation in our passage.

20:9 ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, from heaven, {A}.¹ The issue here is identifying the source of the fire that consumed those opposing God in the great battle. The variations are rather interesting: text, ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, **out of heaven**; 1st variant, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, **from God**; 2nd variant, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, **from God out of heaven**; 3rd variant,



¹{A} ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ A 2053^{com} vg^{ms} cop^{bomss} eth Augustine^{2/3} Primasius // ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ 1854 vg^{ms} // ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κ² (κ* homoioteleuton) P 1006 1611 1841 2050 2053txt 2062 vg syr^h Jerome Apringius Beatus // ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (051 omit first τοῦ) 205 209 Andrew // ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (see 21.2, 10) 2030 2329 Byz [046] it^{ar, gig} vg^{ms} syr^{ph} cop^{sa, bo} arm eth^{mss} Augustine^{1/3}

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).

ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *out of God from heaven*; 4th variant, ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, *out of heaven from God*. Fluctuations between the two prepositions ἐκ, which designates separating movement from within, and ἀπὸ, which designates separating movement away from, is the first issue. And then is this fire coming down τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, *from heaven*, or τοῦ θεοῦ, *from God*, or a combination of both.² The external evidence is somewhat evenly distributed but the internal evidence clearly favors the text reading of ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. The essential meaning is the same regardless of the specific reading that is adopted.

But more than just this one variation surfaces when the vast majority of now existing ancient manuscripts are compared. The text apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th rev. ed.) reflects some 26 places where variants surface.³ Although not



^{2c}Among the seven variant readings, ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ has superior manuscript support. The reading ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ (from heaven from God) appears to be an expansion introduced by copyists in imitation of 21:2 and 10. The other variants involve deliberate or accidental changes of the preposition(s) or the order of words, but the meaning is the same.” [Roger L. Omanon and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 549.]

³7

* μετα 046. 2030 *M*^K (ὅταν τελεσθῆ is replaced)

8

* παντα κ 2053^{com}. 2062^{com} sy^{ph} (παντά is inserted before τὰ ἔθνη)

° κ 1854. 2053. 2062. 2329 (τὰ after ἔθνη is omitted)

* κ* (τῆς γῆς, τὸν is omitted)

* τον κ2 046. 1006. 1841. 1854. 2030. 2053. 2062. 2329 *M*^K (τὸν is inserted before Μαγώγ)

*1 και κ 051 *M*^A sy (και is inserted before συναγαγεῖν)

°1 051. 1854 *M*^A (τὸν before πόλεμον is omitted)

°2 051. 1611 *M*^A (αὐτῶν is omitted)

9

* εκυκλωσαν κ 051. 1854. 2050. 2053. 2062 *M*^A (ἐκύκλευσαν is replaced)

* και την πολιν των αγιων 046 (sy^{ph}) (και την πόλιν τῶν ἁγίων is inserted before και την πόλιν)

* απο του θεου 1854 vgms (ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ is replaced)

| απο του θεου εκ του ουρανου κ2 P 2053txt lat

| εκ του (-051) θεου απο του ουρανου 051 *M*^A

| εκ του ουρανου απο του θεου 2030. 2329 *M*^K sy^{ph}

| txt A 2053^{com} vgms bo^{mss}; Aug

10

* και του κ 1006. 1611. 1841. 2329 (και before θείου is replaced)

| του 2053. 2062

° κ 051. 2050. 2053. 2062 *M*^A ar vg^{mss} sy^{ph} co; Apr (και before τὸ θηρίον is omitted)

11

* επ (επανω κ) αυτου κ A 1006. 1611. 1841. 2053. 2062. 2329

every manuscript that has been discovered is included, the vast majority are included.⁴ Careful study of these variations reflect the fact that isolated copyists most attempted stylistic changes in order to ‘bring up to date’ the text with a more natural expression of Greek in their particular regional dialect.

We can exegete the adopted reading with full confidence that it does represent the most likely original wording of the text.

Internal History. The reference to τὸν Γώγ καὶ Μαγώγ, *Gog and Magog*, is found only here inside the NT. Although John’s use of the terms is subject to endless debate, some historical background for the terms does exist and is important to understand in the effort to figure out what John means by these two terms.

In the LXX, Γώγ mainly translates the Hebrew גִּיג primarily surfacing in Ezek. 38:2, 14, 18; 39:1, 11, 12. A variation in the Hebrew also translated by Γώγ is גִּיג יַמְנִי נִיג usually translated as the *Valley of Hamon-Gog* in Ezek. 39:11, 15. The Greek word Γώγ is a loanword from the Hebrew via transliteration. In 1 Chron. 5:4ff.; Ezek. 38:2, he is the chief of a mountain tribe north

(ἐπ’ αὐτόν is replaced)

| επ αυτω 1854

| txt P 046. 051. 2030. 2050 *M*

° 046. 051. 1854. 2053. 2062 *M* (τοῦ before προσώπου is omitted)

| txt κ A P 1006. 1611. 1841. 2050. 2329

12

* 2030 *M*^K (τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικροὺς, is omitted)

* ηνοιξαν 1854. 2030. 2329 *M*^K; Ambr (ἠνοιχθησαν is replaced)

| ηνεωχθη κ

* ταις βιβλοις κ (τοῖς βιβλίοις is replaced)

13

* 3 4 1 051. 1854 *M*^A (different sequence for νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ)

* εδωκεν A (ἔδωκαν is replaced)

* 3 4 1 051. 1854. 2030 *M*^A (different sequence for νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς)

* κατεκριθησαν κ (ἐκρίθησαν is replaced)

*1 αυτου 046 *M*^K sa^{mss} (αὐτῶν is replaced)

14

* 051. 2053txt. 2062txt *M*^A ar sin sy; Aug (οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δευτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός, is omitted)

* και κ (και is inserted before ὁ θάνατος)

* δευτερος θανατος κ (*M* 1611) (θάνατος ὁ δευτερός is replaced)

15

* τω βιβλω 046. 1006. 1841. 2030. 2377 *M*^K (τῇ βίβλω is replaced)

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 782–783.]

⁴Because new discoveries of ancient manuscripts continuously are happening today, periodic revision of the text apparatus becomes necessary in order for it to remain current with all the known and analyzed manuscripts.

Thrones in the ancient middle eastern world varied in design and construction considerably via culture, individual preferences etc. Solomon's elaborate throne receives detailed description in 1 Kings 10:18-20 and 2 Chron. 9:18. But the throne was above all a symbol of a monarch's power and sovereignty. This is the primary point of the throne in Rev. 20:11. The white color, in line with objects such as robes etc. uniformly being white in heaven, signals is heavenly location in the purity of God Himself.

Literary Aspects:

Here we gain several helpful background insights into the understanding of the passage.

Genre: This passage continues the apocalyptic vision literary form with John permitted to 'see' heavenly perspectives reflecting God's way of looking at reality, over against a limited human vantage point. To be sure, he reaches deep into his Jewish religious heritage to find the necessary picture language in order to communicate what he has seen in terms comprehensible to humans on earth.

The two basic subunits of vv. 7-10 and 11-15 reflect OT images, particularly the first one. The Gog and Magog scenes of Ezekiel 38-39 provide John with a wealth of imagery that he then reformulates according to his own visionary experience. This scene in Ezek. 38-39 was commonly employed in the Jewish apocalyptic writings as well with individualized modification

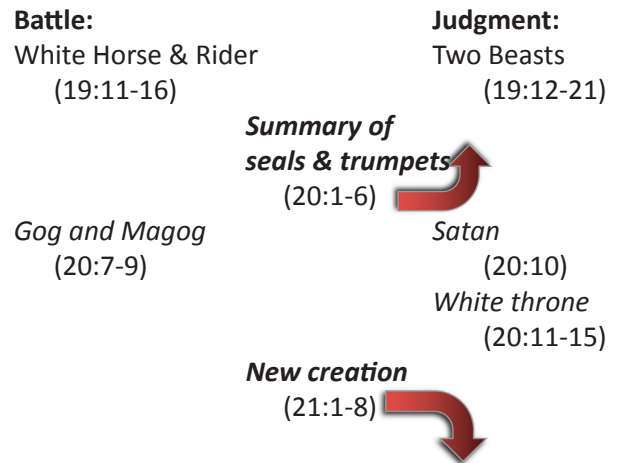
the heads and feet of different animals; it had wheels and it moved; and the likeness of the appearance of the glory of Yahweh was seated above the throne (Ezek 1:26-28). Ezekiel's description of the chariot throne is clearly related to the description of the ark of the covenant with the winged cherubim on each side. Yahweh is several times described as being enthroned (lit., seated) above the cherubim, once specifically related to the ark (1 Sam 4:4). Once the ark is called the footstool of God (1 Chr 28:2). One could say Yahweh is depicted on a throne like a human monarch or that the human king is depicted sitting on a throne like Yahweh (and other gods).

"The NT references to throne parallel those of the OT. The NT has few references to human thrones (e.g., Luke 1:52), instead primarily referring to God's heavenly throne (Rev 4). Most occurrences are found in the book of Revelation (forty-seven of sixty-two times in the NT) and refer to the throne of God (Rev 7:15) or the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 22:1). Christologically, the risen Messiah/Christ is depicted as sitting on a throne along with God. There are also references to the thrones of the twenty-four elders (Rev 4:4), which surround the throne of God, and to the throne of Satan (Rev 2:13) and the throne of the beast (Rev 16:10). These references recognize that Satan and the beast have some power, but ultimate power resides in God and the risen Messiah whose throne alone is found in the new Jerusalem (Rev 22:3). See KING, KINGSHIP."

[Joel F. Drinkard Jr., "Throne," ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006-2009), 5:590.]

to suit the interests of the individual Jewish writers.⁹ Additionally 20:7-10 has previous parallels in 16:12-16 and 19:17-21. Together these three individualized depictions present a more detailed presentation of John's understanding of the final great war of evil with God. The judgment scene in vv. 11-15 is more distinctive to Revelation and no previous depictions are presented although numerous allusions to the final destiny of evil people on earth are given earlier. A few somewhat similar judgment scenes are given in [1 Enoch](#) 90:20-38 and the [Testament of Abraham](#) (recension A) 12. All three judgment scenes take their starting signal from [Dan. 7:9-12](#).

Literary Setting: The collection of units in 19:11 through 21:8 focus on the great battle between God and evil that leads to the new creation in 21:1-8. John presents this apocalyptic event in striking parallels for the most part:



The twin themes of battle and judgment are presented multiple times with first a summarizing look back to human history as the past in 20:1-6¹⁰ and then a summarizing look forward to eternity in the future in 21:1-8. The second set of depictions in 20:7-15 focus first on the capture and banishment of Satan. Then the destruction of evil humans first described in 19:21

⁹"The assembly of the heathen and their concerted attack on the people of God constitute an episode or type scene that occurs frequently in early Jewish eschatological tradition. The presence of the names Gog and Magog suggests that this textual unit is patterned in part after the Gog and Magog oracle in Ezek 38-39 (as is the textual unit in Rev 19:17-21). Hartman has labeled this motif "The Tumult and Assault of the Heathen" (Prophecy, 77-101), a motif that can consist of indiscriminate wars and misery in the last days (1 Enoch 99:4; 4 Ezra 13:30-31) or of antagonism toward an apostate Israel (Jub. 23:23; 1 Enoch 90:13-19). The author of Revelation has taken this traditional eschatological scene and adapted it to a larger narrative of eschatological events that is essentially his own creation."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1079.]

¹⁰The particular focus of this looking back is to the seven seals and seven trumpets with their 4 + 3 structure emphasizing both limitation of evil and protection of God's people on earth.

20.12 And
579 I saw the dead,
the great and the small,
standing
before the throne.

And
580 scrolls were opened,
and
581 another scroll was opened,
which is of life,
and
582 were judged the dead
out of the things written
in the scrolls
according to their deeds.

20.13 And
583 gave up the sea the dead
in it
and
584 Death and Hades gave up the dead
in them,
and
585 they were judged
each one according to their deeds.

20.14 And
586 Death and Hades were cast
into the lake of fire.
587 This death is the second one,
the lake of fire.

20.15 And
if anyone was not found
written in the book of life,
588 he was cast
into the lake of fire.

Analysis of the Rhetorical Structure

John's standard topic marker *Καὶ εἶδον*, *And I saw*, shows up in statements 577 and 579, signaling a dual shift in emphasis. However, the sentence prefield location of the indefinite temporal dependent clause ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, *whenever the thousand years have been completed*, in # 569 signals also a topic shift and at the same time links it to the preceding vv. 1-6. This second pattern is very much a Hebrew thought expression, which the Jewish scribes called 'chaining' ideas together.¹¹ Thus two basic, and possibly three, subunits are signaled by John in his structuring of his ideas here.

First in #s 569 - 576 the focus is on Satan's gathering together a massive army to fight God after being 'turned loose. In paired statements, the devil is turned loose to gather his army (#s 569-570), which encircles

¹¹In the NT, the very Jewish oriented writing of James makes heavy use of this pattern, more so than anywhere else inside the NT.

the saints of God on earth (#s 571-572) but fire from heaven descends on them in total destruction (#s 573-574). Satan is then cast into the lake of fire (#s 575-576).

Second, #s 577-578 introduce the awesome white throne and God sitting upon it striking fear in all.

Third, #s 579-588 depict the resurrection of all the dead to face judgment before God. Their judgment was based upon their deeds (#s 580-582). All of the dead are thusly judged (#s 583-585). Death and Hell is then tossed into the lake of fire (# 586) which is identified as the second death (# 587). This banishment includes everyone who is not listed in the heavenly register of citizens (# 588).

Exegesis of the Text:

In light of the above analysis either two or three

outline divisions are legitimately understood as arising from within the passage itself. The second and third units are very closely linked, although their separation into two units suggests that the judgment of evil people is but one aspect of the divine judgment taking place. Within John's purpose of highlighting the defeat of evil, he only stresses the judging of the evil people.

We will follow the more precise three fold division of the text.

A. God's war with the nations, vv. 7-10.

7 Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ 8 καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτούς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης. 9 καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἀγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. 10 καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτούς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὄπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

7 When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. 9 They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. 10 And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The unit has three centers of emphasis: Preparation for battle (vv. 7-8); the battle (v. 9); and the punishment (v. 10).

Preparation for battle, vv. 7-8. The first Greek sentence in vv. 7-8 ties the two core verb actions, λυθήσεται, *he will be loosed*, and καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, *and will go out*, to the symbol of τὰ χίλια ἔτη coming to an end. That is, at the end of time beginning with creation and Adam and Eve in Gen. 1-2. Note the repetition of τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη in 5b with 7a. A strong emphasis is set upon the completion of human history that sets up the gigantic battle with evil at the end. With both ἄχρι τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη (v. 5b) and ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη (v. 7a), the aorist subjunctive verb τελεσθῇ with both ἄχρι and ὅταν sets up an undefined point at the end of the cycle with both dependent clauses being indefinite temporal expressions.

The first main clause with expansions λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ, *Satan will be loosed out*

of confinement, underscores the relaxing of divine control over Satan. The idea is that evil will become more dangerous at this point than it has previously been.¹² His place of confinement is here referenced as ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ, *out of his confinement*. In v. 3, it is labeled εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον, *into the abyss*.

The second main clause καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, *and he will come out...* receives the greater expansion.

First, his coming out of confinement means πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ, *to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog*. This aorist purpose infinitive phrase sets the intention of Satan from the moment of the relaxation of divine control over him. This sets up the idea of the giant war depicted especially in 19:15-16. The referencing of τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ, Gog and Magog, brings Ezekiel 38-39 as a background picture.¹³ Yet John goes his own direction. For example, John see Satan as deceiving the nations while Ezekiel saw Gog, the human prince, as the deceiver of the nations (Ezek. 38:10). In spite of the hugely diverse and often contradictory ways -- were interpreted, they came to signal mostly an large invading army coming over the Fertile Crescent and down into the territory of the Jews seeking to destroy the people of God.¹⁴ The very Jew-

¹²“According to a widespread ancient tradition, demons released from the place of their confinement are much more dangerous than they were before (Luke 11:24–26; Adullent, Defixionum Tabellae, no. 25; Minucius Felix Oct. 26; Lactantius Div Inst. 2.16.4; see Eitrem, Demonology, 16–17).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1093.]

¹³“The judgment of Gog and Magog is referred to cryptically as lasting just twelve months in m. ‘Ed. 2:10, and judgment is also predicted for Gog and Magog in Sib. Or 3.512. In rabbinic sources the eschatological war is called ‘the war of Gog and Magog’ (b. Sanh. 97b; Str-B, 4:831–40). In Tg. Ezek. 39:16, Gog is equated with Rome: ‘There, too, shall be flung the slain of Rome, the city of many boisterous crowds’ (Levey, Tg. Ezek., 108); see also Pesiq. R. 17:8; S. H. Levey, *The Messiah*, 86; P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1907) 26.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1094–1095.]

¹⁴“In the OT and early Jewish tradition, Gog and Magog are understood in a bewildering variety of ways. In Ezekiel, Gog is the name of the prince of Meshech and Tubal (Ezek 38:2–3; 39:1–16), whose land was called Magog; the names Meshech and Tubal are also found associated with Magog in the table of nations in Gen 10:2 (see 1 Chr 1:5; Jub. 7:19). Elsewhere in the OT, Gog is a personal name (1 Chr 5:4), while Magog refers to the eponymous ancestor of a people (Gen 10:2; 1 Chr 1:5).

“In Jub. 8:25 Gog is used in a strictly geographical sense. In Rev 20:8 Gog and Magog serve as symbols for the hostile nations who will make war on God and his people. In Sib. Or 3.319 Gog and Magog are names for the Ethiopians or Nubians who accompanied Antiochus IV when he captured the temple in Jerusalem. In Josephus Ant. 1.123 Magog is regarded as a name for the Scythians (see Herodotus 1.103, 107; 4.1). In early Jewish literature, Gog and

16:12-21	19:17-21	20:7-10
<p>12 Καὶ ὁ ἕκτος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν μέγαν τὸν Εὐφράτην, καὶ ἐξηράνθη τὸ ὕδωρ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ἐτοιμασθῇ ἡ ὁδὸς τῶν βασιλέων τῶν ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου. 13 Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ δράκοντος καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ ψευδοπροφήτου πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα ὡς βάτραχοι. 14 εἰσὶν γὰρ πνεύματα δαιμονίων ποιοῦντα σημεῖα, ἃ ἐκπορεύεται ἐπὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος. 15 Ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης. μακάριος ὁ γρηγορῶν καὶ τηρῶν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μὴ γυμνὸς περιπατῇ καὶ βλέπωσιν τὴν ἀσημησοσύνην αὐτοῦ. 16 Καὶ συνήγαγεν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν καλούμενον Ἑβραϊστὶ Ἀρμαγεδών.</p> <p>17 Καὶ ὁ ἕβδομος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ἀέρα, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν φωνὴ μεγάλη ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου λέγουσα· γέγονεν. 18 καὶ ἐγένοντο ἀστραπαὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ βρονταὶ καὶ σεισμὸς ἐγένετο μέγας, οἷος οὐκ ἐγένετο ἀφ’ οὗ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τηλικούτος σεισμὸς οὕτως μέγας. 19 καὶ ἐγένετο ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη εἰς τρία μέρη καὶ αἱ πόλεις τῶν ἐθνῶν ἔπεσαν. καὶ Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη ἐμνήσθη ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ δοῦναι αὐτῇ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ. 20 καὶ πᾶσα νῆσος ἔφυγεν καὶ ὄρη οὐχ εὐρέθησαν. 21 καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη ὡς ταλαντιαία καταβαίνει ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὸν θεὸν ἐκ τῆς πληγῆς τῆς χαλάζης, ὅτι μεγάλη ἐστὶν ἡ πληγὴ αὐτῆς σφόδρα.</p>	<p>17 Καὶ εἶδον ἓνα ἄγγελον ἐστῶτα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ καὶ ἔκραξεν [ἐν] φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων πᾶσιν τοῖς ὀρνέοις τοῖς πετομένοις ἐν μεσουρανήματι· Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ 18 ἵνα φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων καὶ σάρκας χιλιάρχων καὶ σάρκας ἰσχυρῶν καὶ σάρκας ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων.</p> <p>19 Καὶ εἶδον τὸ θηρίον καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτῶν συνηγμένα ποιῆσαι τὸν πόλεμον μετὰ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου καὶ μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος αὐτοῦ. 20 καὶ ἐπιάσθη τὸ θηρίον καὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης ὁ ποιήσας τὰ σημεῖα ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, ἐν οἷς ἐπλάνησεν τοὺς λαβόντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ· ζῶντες ἐβλήθησαν οἱ δύο εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης ἐν θείῳ. 21 καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου τῇ ἐξελθούσῃ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα ἐχορτάσθησαν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῶν.</p>	<p>7 Καὶ ὅταν τελεσθῇ τὰ χίλια ἔτη, λυθήσεται ὁ σατανᾶς ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ 8 καὶ ἐξελεύσεται πλανῆσαι τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γῶγ καὶ Μαγῶγ, συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης. 9 καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. 10 καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὄπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων.</p>

Three Depictions of the Great Battle at the End

Rev. 16:12-21. 12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up in order to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. 14 These are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 15 (“See, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and is clothed, not going about naked and exposed to shame.”) 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.

17 The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” 18 And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth, so violent was that earthquake. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God remembered great Babylon and gave her the wine-cup of the fury of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; 21 and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

Rev. 19:17-21. 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, 18 to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders—flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.” 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. 21 And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Rev. 20:7-10. 7 When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. 9 They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. 10 And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

ish phrase τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, those in the four corners of the earth, is a common OT image of the nations hostile to the people of God.¹⁵ With these images of the evil people on earth, John sees them at the intentional target of Satan's deception.

What is his deception? The second present active infinitive phrase συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον, to gather them for war, states the nature of his deception of the nations. He convinces them that together they have a chance to defeat God in battle. The labeling of this as πλανῆσαι, to deceive, clearly suggests that Satan knows better but still sets out to gather the people of the earth for a futile battle with God.

A parallel statement to the same effect occurs in 16:14.

12 Καὶ ὁ ἕκτος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν τὸν μέγαν τὸν Εὐφράτην, καὶ ἐξηράνθη τὸ ὕδωρ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ἐτοιμασθῇ ἡ ὁδὸς τῶν βασιλέων τῶν ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου. 13 Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ δράκοντος καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ ψευδοπροφήτου πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα ὡς βάτραχοι· **14 εἰσὶν γὰρ πνεύματα δαιμονίων ποιοῦντα σημεῖα, ἃ ἐκπορεύεται ἐπὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης συναγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος.**

12 The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up in order to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from

Magog are leaders of the gentile nations who will attack Israel in the eschaton (3 Enoch 45:5; Sipre Deut. 343; b. 'Abod. Zar. 3b; b. Ber. 7b); for an overview of rabbinic views of Gog and Magog, see Str-B, 3:831–40; Kuhn, TDNT 1:789–91. In Tg. Neof. Num 11:26 (Macho, Neophyti 4:540; McNamara-Clarke, Tg. Neof. Num., 74; a parallel version occurs in M. L. Klein, Fragment-Targums 2:66, 152), there is a prophecy by Eldad and Medad about the future messianic war.¹⁶

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1094.]

¹⁵“The motif of hostile nations at the four corners of the earth, i.e., the nations of the world, is found in OT prophecy. The attack of the Gentiles on Israel and Jerusalem was also a stock motif in the OT (Isa 5:26; Jer 25:32; 50:41; Zech 14:2–5; see Comment on 16:14). 4 Ezra 13:5 speaks of gathering an innumerable multitude ‘from the four winds of heaven’ to fight the man from the sea (see 4 Ezra 13:33–34). Rissi’s argument that the phrase ‘the four corners of the earth’ indicates the location of entrances to the underworld from which a demonic army is summoned is forced (Future, 35–36).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1095.]

the mouth of the false prophet. **14 These are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.**

The three depictions of this battle in 16:12-21; 19:17-21; and 20:7-10 are all tied together as a triple depiction of this great battle as can be seen from the above listing. The image of a large battle to destroy God's people is very common in both the OT and Jewish writings.¹⁶ The general feeling among Jews and early Christians as a minority group in their world was that evil would build to a point where it would seek to utterly destroy God's people off the face of the earth. John builds off that background understanding to communicate to his readers in the church of Asia that indeed such would happen particularly as the last ditch effort of Satan before his destruction.

The forces of evil assembled for this battle is numbered as a add-on tag with the relative clause ὧν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν ὡς ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης, regarding whom their number as the sand of the sea. **The background of the sand of the sea as a point of comparison for great abundance is relatively common in the ancient world.**¹⁷

¹⁶“The motif of the gathering of the hostile nations for an attack on Israel, and particularly on Jerusalem, is a stock motif in Jewish apocalyptic, though it is used in a variety of ways (Joel 3:2; Zech 12:1–9; 14:2; 4 Ezra 13:5, 34–35; 1 Enoch 56:7; 90:13–19; Sib. Or 3.663–68; 1QM 1:10–11; 15:2–3; Lactantius 7.17.10–11; see Comment on 16:14). However, in Ezek 38:14–17 and Jub. 23:22–25 it is God who motivates the gathering and advance of Israel's enemies. In 1 Enoch 56:5–8 a group of angels incites the Parthians and Medes to attack Israel. In 1QM the force opposed to the sons of light is sometimes called היל בליעל *hēl bēliyya 'al*, the ‘army of Belial’ (1QM 1:1, 13). In Lactantius 7.17.10–11 a wicked king gathers together forces hostile to the people of God. This motif occurs several times in Revelation (16:14, 16; 19:17, 19; 20:8; see Comments on 16:14, 16).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1095.]

¹⁷“The sand of the sea is used in biblical tradition as a metaphor for great abundance (Gen 41:49; Job 29:18; Ps 139:18; Jer 15:8; Hab 1:9; Pr. Man. 1:9; Jos. As. 1:2; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 2:32; 3:2) and is frequently used, as here, for an enormous army (Josh 11:4; Judg 7:12; 1 Sam 13:5; 1 Macc 11:1). On the analogous comparison of an invading army with a plague of locusts, see Comment on 9:7. In biblical tradition the simile “like the sand of the sea” is particularly associated with God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable, like the sand of the sea and the stars of the heaven (Gen 22:17; 32:12; Pr Azar 1:13; Rom 9:27; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 3:10; T. Abr. [Rec. A.] 1:5; 4:11; 8:5). The ‘sand of the sea’ is used as a metaphor for the population of Israelites (2 Sam 17:11; 1 Kgs 4:20; Isa 10:22; 48:19; Hos 1:10) or the descendants of David (Jer 33:22). The motif of an innumerable hostile

The battle, v. 9. καὶ ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκύκλευσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἁγίων καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἡγαπημένην, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. **They marched up over the breadth of the earth¹⁸ and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them.**

Here with the Gog and Magog image in the background the battle is situated as the gathering of God's people in Jerusalem following the Old Testament influence. In the chap. 19 only a gathering of this army is indicated without locating it at any specific spot. In 16:16 this army assembles at Harmagedon: καὶ συνήγαγεν αὐτούς εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν καλούμενον Ἑβραϊστὶ Ἀρμαγεδών. **And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.** The image of a hostile army surrounding a city reflects the depiction of wars commonly found in the OT.¹⁹ For the Jewish Christians in these

army that attacks Jerusalem or Israel in the eschaton, based on the Zion traditions reflected in Pss 46, 48, 76 and the Gog and Magog oracle in Ezek 38–39, is also found in 4 Ezra 13:5, which refers to 'an innumerable multitude of men [multitudo hominum]' who were 'gathered together from the four winds of heaven' to fight the man from the sea (the phrase 'innumerable multitude' is repeated in v 34a: multitudo innumerabilis). Ezek 38:15 speaks of 'you and many peoples with yo ... reat host, a mighty army.' [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1095–1096.]

¹⁸“The phrase τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς, ‘the breadth of the earth,’ is a problematic phrase found three times in the LXX (Hab 1:6 [ἐπὶ τὰ πλάτη τῆς γῆς; var. lect. A: τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς]; Dan 12:2; Sir 1:3), but the phrase as used here in v 9 is not demonstrably an allusion to any of these passages. It is often suggested that the author really means ὁ ὀμφαλὸς τῆς γῆς, ‘the center of the earth,’ alluding to the enemy attack on Jerusalem narrated in Ezek 38:11–12 (Loisy, 356; Kraft, 259; Rissi, Future, 35). Since the nations hostile to God are assembled from the four corners of the earth, they must march a very long distance to besiege the camp of the saints. For this reason the phrase ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς very probably means ‘across the breadth of the earth,’ emphasizing the distance that must be traveled. There is also a close parallel in 1 Enoch 56:6 (tr. Knibb, Enoch), ‘And they [the Parthians and Medes] will go up and trample upon the land of my chosen ones, and the land of my chosen ones will become before them a tramping-ground and a beaten track.’ [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1097.]

¹⁹“The term κυκλεῖν, ‘to surround,’ reflects the central strategy of ancient warfare, to surround a city and besiege it until it surrendered (2 Kgs 6:14; Isa 29:3; 36:1–3; Jdt 7:19–20; 1 Macc 15:14; Luke 19:43; 21:20). The story of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib of Assyria during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13–19:37; Isa 36–37) appears to have become a model in later apocalyptic literature for the eschatological defeat of hostile nations intent on destroying Jerusalem. The Assyrians attempted to force the surrender of cities by starvation or conquer them through the use of battering rams, scaling ladders, and undermining of the walls. The attempt of kings with their armies to surround and conquer Jerusalem and the temple is a motif also found with some frequency in the OT, early Jewish literature, and early Christian literature (Joel 2:1–11; Ps 2:1–3; Ezek 38–39; Sib. Or 3.657–68; 1

churches of Asia, it sounded frighteningly similar to the way the Romans had surrounded the city of Jerusalem and then destroyed it in 68–70 AD. But this time the outcome would be completely different.

The picture of God's people completely surrounded by millions upon millions of evil people intent on killing off every last believer was a horrifying picture.

The ‘mother of all battles’ turns out to not be much of a battle: καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς. **And fire descended out of heaven and devoured them completely.** The image of divine destruction of this army of evil people resembles what God did to Ahaziah's army of 50 in 2 Kings 1:9–12.²⁰ In 19:21 the Enoch 56:5–8; 4 Ezra 13:5–11, 33–38; Luke 19:43–44; 21:20). Jesus' prediction in Luke 21:20 of the time just before the end when Jerusalem will be surrounded by army camps is usually thought to be a historicizing interpretation of Mark 13:14 in light of the events of A.D. 68–70, the Roman siege and conquest of Jerusalem (Fitzmyer, Luke 2:1343; see Jos. J.W. 5.47–97; 6.93, 149–56).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1097.]

²⁰“This passage combines allusions to the Gog and Magog oracle in Ezek 38–39, where God judges Gog by sending torrential rains, hailstones, fire, and brimstone down upon Gog and his host (Ezek 38:22; 39:6), with the punitive miracles performed twice by Elijah in which fire fell from heaven and consumed the troops sent by Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:9–12; here the phrase ‘fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty’ occurs twice). These phrases are verbally similar to Rev 20:9 in the LXX 4 Kgdms 1:10, 12, 14, καὶ κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς πεντήκοντα αὐτοῦ, ‘then fire came down from heaven and devoured him and his fifty.’ The traditional character of this eschatological scene is suggested by Zeph 3:8 (see Zeph 1:18), where Yahweh decides to gather the nations together on the day of judgment and consume them and the earth with fire. Allusions to 2 Kgs 1:10, 12 occur elsewhere in Jewish and Christian literature (T. Abr. [Rec. A] 1:11; [Rec. B] 12:3–4; Jos. As. 25:6; Vit. Proph. 21.12; Sir 48:3; Luke 9:54). The same motif is also found in Job 1:16, where it says that ‘The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them’ (alluded to in a fragment of the lost work by Aristeas, Concerning the Jews, quoted in Eusebius Praep. evang. 9.25.431a; see Holladay, FHJA 1:261–75). According to Luke 12:49, Jesus claimed that he came ‘to cast fire upon the earth,’ a metaphor for judgment (for other versions of this saying, see Gos. Thom. 10, 16, and Stroker, Extracanonical, 183).

“The author of Revelation links this allusion to the punitive miracle of Elijah with Ezek 39:6, ‘I will send fire on Magog [see Rev 20:8 where Gog and Magog are named] and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands; and they shall know that I am the Lord.’ According to Ezek 38:22, fire and brimstone are rained on Gog and Magog, perhaps an allusion to the brimstone and fire that rained upon Sodom according to Gen 19:24 (see also Comment on v 8a and the quotation from Tg. Ps.-J. on Num 11:26, which mentions fire from the throne of God destroying Gog and Magog). Fire, hail, and blood are said to rain upon the earth in Rev 8:7 as the result of the sounding of the first trumpet. In 4 Ezra 13:8–11 an innumerable hostile force has come to wage war with the man from the sea, who burns them up with a stream of fire from his mouth (see Comment on Rev 11:5); this vision is interpreted allegorically in 4 Ezra 13:21–56, where fire is said to represent the Law. In

army under the leadership of the two beasts “were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth,” ἀπεκάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ ἵππου τῆ ἐξεληούση ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ. In 16:21, destruction was through powerful forces of nature being turned on the evil people: “and huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, dropped from heaven on people, until they cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague,” καὶ χάλαζα μεγάλη ὡς ταλαντιαία καταβαίνει ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι τὸν θεὸν ἐκ τῆς πληγῆς τῆς χαλάζης, ὅτι μεγάλη ἐστὶν ἡ πληγὴ αὐτῆς σφόδρα. Through these images, all traditional symbols of divine wrath and judgment, John graphically portrays the destruction of evil people in this attempt to attack and destroy His people.

The punishment, v. 10. καὶ ὁ διάβολος ὁ πλανῶν αὐτοὺς ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου ὄπου καὶ τὸ θηρίον καὶ ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. **And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

This supernatural being goes directly into the lake of fire since suffering death and then judgment is not a option for him, as it is for the evil people. The two beasts, however, are also thrown alive into the lake of fire thus by-passing death in spite of being humans: ζῶντες ἐβλήθησαν οἱ δύο εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης ἐν θείῳ. **These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (19:20b).** The symbol of beast, τὸ θηρίον, representing them puts them on the stage with supernaturally endowed powers beyond those of most humans. Their evil partnership with Satan dooms them to the same fate as his.

Hell and eternal damnation continue to be pictured by John primarily in terms of a volcano crater bubbling up molten lava.²¹ For folks in the ancient world, this was

several passages in the Sibylline Oracles, a cataract of fire from heaven destroys the enemies of God (Sib. Or 2.196–205; 3.84–87, 543; 4.175–78; 5.274, 377–78; 7.119–25; 8.225–26), e.g., Sib Or 3.53–54 (tr. Collins, OTP 1:363), ‘All men will perish in their own dwellings / when the fiery cataract flows from heaven.’ According to Justin Apol. 1.20, ‘both Sybil and Hystaspes declared that there will be a destruction of corruptible things by fire’ (Oracles of Hystaspes, frag. 6; Bidez-Cumont, Mages 2:361); that coheres with the Stoic view of ἐκπύρωσις, ‘[cosmic] conflagration,’ as Justin indicates (a view of Heraclitus, according to Diogenes Laertius 9.8, and a part of early Stoic doctrine; see Arnim, SVF, vol. 1, §§ 97–114; vol. 2, §§ 596–632). According to Commodian (Carmen 995–96, 1008–41; Instr. 45), God will judge the world with fire, which will destroy only the sinners and not the righteous.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1099–1100.]

²¹“Hell, an English word used to translate Heb., Sheol; Gk., Hades; and Heb., Gehenna. In Christian tradition it is usually associated with the notion of eternal punishment, especially by fire.

the hottest, most painful place imaginable on earth. Hell, pictured as such, is often qualified, as it is here, with references to its torments lasting forever without any end to them.²² For Satan and his cohorts who are

This idea appears in Isa. 66:24, but it is not clearly associated with a place. Jewish writings from the third century B.C. onward speak of places of punishment by fire for evil spirits and the wicked dead (1 Enoch 18:11–16; 108:3–7, 15; 2 Esd. 7:36–38). The book of Revelation describes a lake that burns with fire and brimstone in which the wicked will be eternally punished (Rev. 19:20; 20:14–15; 21:8). See also Gehenna; Hades; Punishment, Everlasting; Sheol.” [Paul J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 382.]

²²“Hell, a place of eternal punishment for the wicked. In the NRSV, the word ‘hell’ is only used in the NT, where it translates Greek *gehenna*. It is thus distinct from Sheol and Hades, names for the realm of the dead that the NRSV simply transliterates from Hebrew and Greek respectively. Some English translations, including the KJV, use ‘hell’ to translate *sheol* and *hadēs* as well as *gehenna*.

“The Greek word *gehenna* is derived from Hebrew *gehinnom*, meaning ‘valley of Hinnom,’ also known as the ‘valley of the son of Hinnom’ (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Neh. 11:30; Jer. 7:31–32; 19:2, 6; 32:35). Located west and south of Jerusalem and running into the Kidron Valley at a point opposite the modern village of Silwan, the valley of Hinnom once formed part of the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Neh. 11:30). During the monarchic period, it became the site of an infamous high place (called ‘Topheth’ and derived from an Aramaic word meaning ‘fire place’), where some of the kings of Judah engaged in forbidden religious practices, including human sacrifice by fire (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 32:35). Because of this, Jeremiah spoke of its impending judgment and destruction (7:32; 19:6). King Josiah put an end to these practices by destroying and defiling the high place in the valley of Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10). Probably because of these associations with fiery destruction and judgment, the word ‘Gehenna’ came to be used metaphorically during the Second Temple period to refer to a place of punishment by fire for evil spirits and the wicked dead (1 Enoch 18:11–16; 108:3–7, 15; 2 Esd. 7:36–38).

“The concept of hell is different from Sheol (in the Hebrew Bible) and from Hades (in most Greek literature) in three ways: (1) only the wicked enter hell, whereas good and bad alike occupy Sheol and Hades; (2) the wicked are sent to hell after a final judgment at the end of time, whereas people were thought to enter Sheol or Hades immediately upon death; and (3) hell involves eternal torment, whereas Sheol and Hades were characterized only by absence of life, not enhanced suffering. In the NT, however, some references to Hades appear to have been influenced by the concept of hell, so that Hades also can be described as a place of torment reserved only for the wicked or those condemned in the judgment (Matt. 11:23; Luke 16:23).

“In the NT, virtually all references to hell (*gehenna*) occur on the lips of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Hell is variously described as a fiery furnace (Matt. 13:42, 50), an unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43), or an eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). The book of Revelation likewise describes a lake that burns with fire and brimstone in which the wicked will be eternally punished (19:20; 20:14–15; 21:8). Jesus warns his disciples about committing sins that will lead to hell (Matt. 5:22, 29–30; 23:33; Mark 9:45; Luke 12:5). They should fear God, who can de-

not subject to dying in such a place, the picture becomes very clear. Evil people, however, undergo physical death first, and then a resurrection into an eternal existence also not subject to dying. Thus their torments continue eternally matching those of Satan and his cohorts. Jesus depicts this in Mt. 25:31-41 and summarizes it in v. 41: *καὶ ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. And these [the unrighteous] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*

B. The white throne and God as Judge, v. 11.

11 Καὶ εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ’ αὐτόν, οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη αὐτοῖς.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them.



The use of the standard *καὶ εἶδον, And I saw...*, introduces a new scene in the vision of the end. The

stroy body and soul in hell rather than people who can kill only the body (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5). They should take drastic measures to get rid of anything that causes them to sin, for it is better to go through life maimed or blind than to be thrown into the fires of hell (Matt. 18:7-9; Mark 9:43-47). The scribes and the Pharisees will not escape being sentenced to hell (Matt. 23:33), and those they convert become twice the children of hell that they are (Matt. 23:15).

“Aside from these references, the word *gehenna* is used only once in the Bible. James decries the human tongue’s potential for causing hurt by saying it is ‘set on fire by hell’ (3:6); here ‘hell’ seems to be a circumlocution for ‘the devil,’ much as ‘heaven’ is elsewhere a circumlocution for ‘God’ (cf. Mark 8:11; 11:30-31; Luke 15:18; 20:16). The NRSV also uses ‘hell’ in 2 Pet. 2:4, where the actual reference is to *Tartaros*, another name for the realm of the dead in Greek mythology. Here the author seems to have merged that concept with the Christian notion of hell, so that angels who rebelled against God (Gen. 6:6-8; 8:18) have been cast into *Tartaros*, where they are chained in deepest darkness awaiting judgment. Thus, *Tartaros*, like Hades, is a waiting room, but one into which the wicked are cast and, in some sense, punished (darkness, chains). See also Hades; Hinnom, Valley of; punishment, everlasting; Sheol.”

[Werner E. Lemke and Mark Allan Powell, “Hell,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated) (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 373-374.]

challenge here is primarily with the quick repetition of this standard phrase in verse twelve which immediately introduces another scene. To be sure it continues the final judgment theme introduced in v. 11. So what goes here with these two scene introductions?

The best understanding is that the first *καὶ εἶδον* introduces the broad theme of final judgment, and the second *καὶ εἶδον* introduces one facet of that judgment pertaining to the judging and condemnation of the evil people, all of whom by this point are dead.²³ All evil humanity alive at the great battle are killed, as is made dramatically clear in the depictions in 19:17-21 and 20:7-10. Their death is but the first stage of divine punishment. Now the wrath of God comes down upon them through being raised to a resurrection existence to face God in judgment that banishes them to the lake of fire along with Satan and his cohorts.

Some of the pictures of final judgment depict all of humanity, both the people of God and the wicked, standing before God in final judgment. In the NT the term “Day of Judgment” and related terms surfaces mostly in the teachings of Jesus.²⁴ But the apostolic writers of the NT also speak of a general judgment of God as well.²⁵ What must be remembered is that the

²³“This unit of text is a type scene, which consists of two sub-units, v 11 and vv 12-15, each introduced with *καὶ εἶδον*, ‘then I saw.’ The first introduces the entire vision unit (vv 11-15), while the second emphasizes the focus on a particular scene within the vision. The first unit in v 11 is an abbreviated example of the ‘theophany form’ (Theophanie-Gattung), which consists of two elements: (1) the coming of the deity and (2) the reaction of nature. Examples of this form are found in both the OT (Judg 5:4-5; Pss 18:7-15; 68:7-8; Amos 1:2; Mic 1:3-4) and early Jewish literature (Sir 16:18-19; 43:16-17; Jdt 16:15; T. Mos. 10:3-6; 1QH 3:32-36).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1081.]

²⁴“According to the first three Gospels, Jesus spoke frequently of the coming judgment. The term ‘day of judgment’ appears in Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36. Often, reference is simply to ‘the judgment’ (Matt. 12:41, 42; Luke 10:14). Related expressions include ‘that day’ (Luke 21:34-35), ‘on that day’ (Matt. 7:22; Luke 17:31), and ‘in those days’ (Mark 13:17, 19, 24). Sometimes, these terms also refer to the expected time of tribulation. Many of Jesus’ parables (Matt. 18:23-35) and other sayings (Mark 10:17-25) call his hearers to repentance, so that they might, at the judgment, be found fit to enter the kingdom of God. The classic passage is Matt. 25:31-46, where the Son of Man or ‘king’ sits in judgment, judging the nations of the world as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. According to Matt. 19:28, the twelve disciples of Jesus are to join in judging Israel. In John’s Gospel, Jesus speaks of a future judgment (5:28-29; 12:48), but more often emphasizes his own authority as judge (5:22, 30) and suggests that judgment is already taking place (9:39; 12:31).” [Richard H. Hiers, “Judgment, Day of,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (Revised and Updated) (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 504.]

²⁵“The term ‘day of judgment’ also appears in 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; and 1 John 4:17. That God will judge the world on a certain future day, often designated as ‘that day’ or the ‘day of the Lord,’ is also

clause is attached to the One sitting on the throne. It repeats the earlier depiction in the sixth seal in 6:12-17,

12 και εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἕκτην, και σεισμός μέγας ἐγένετο και ὁ ἥλιος ἐγένετο μέλας ὡς σάκκος τρίχινος και ἡ σελήνη ὅλη ἐγένετο ὡς αἷμα 13 και οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔπεσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν, ὡς συκὴ βάλλει τοὺς ὀλύνθους αὐτῆς ὑπὸ ἀνέμου μεγάλου σειομένη, 14 και ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπεχωρίσθη ὡς βιβλίον ἐλισσόμενον και πᾶν ὄρος και νῆσος ἐκ τῶν τόπων αὐτῶν ἐκινήθησαν. **15 Και οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς και οἱ μεγιστᾶνες και οἱ χιλιάρχοι και οἱ πλούσιοι και οἱ ἰσχυροὶ και πᾶς δοῦλος και ἐλεύθερος ἔκρυψαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὰ σπήλαια και εἰς τὰς πέτρας τῶν ὀρέων 16 και λέγουσιν τοῖς ὄρεσιν και ταῖς πέτραις· πέσετε ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς και κρύψατε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου και ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου, 17 ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν, και τίς δύναται σταθῆναι;**

12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. **15 Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”**

That experience will be the ultimate horrifying moment for the evil people of this world. Their denials and hostility toward God will be replaced by the undeniable reality that the God of this universe will now hold them fully accountable for all their evil. The day of repentance is long past and their fate now is eternal damnation. They followed Satan and his cohorts on earth; now they will follow him straight into the lake of fire.

C. The damnation of all evil people, vv. 12-15.

12 και εἶδον τοὺς νεκροὺς, τοὺς μεγάλους και τοὺς μικροὺς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. και βιβλία ἠνοιχθησαν, και ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοιχθη, ὃ ἐστιν τῆς ζωῆς, και ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. 13 και ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ και ὁ θάνατος και ὁ ἄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, και ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. 14 και ὁ θάνατος και ὁ ἄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. 15 και εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς

γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; 15 and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

This second scene identifier και εἶδον, and I saw, shifts from the general picture of final judgment to the specific focus on divine judgment of the evil people. The direct objects of εἶδον define the focus: τοὺς νεκροὺς, τοὺς μεγάλους και τοὺς μικροὺς, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, the dead, the great and the small, standing before His throne. The remainder in vv. 12b - 15 are elaborations of this referencing of the dead standing before God in final judgment.

First, τοὺς νεκροὺς are defined as τοὺς μεγάλους και τοὺς μικροὺς, the great and the small. Found four times previously, 11:18; 13:16; 19:5, 18, this specifies total inclusiveness of absolutely everyone.³⁰ No one skips this meeting with God.

Second, ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου, standing before His throne. Though not mentioned directly, it is assumed by John that τοὺς νεκροὺς have been brought to life in an eternal existence in order to stand before the throne of God. In the background stands Dan. 12:2, και πολλοὶ τῶν καθευδόντων ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ἀναστήσονται, οἱ μὲν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ εἰς ὄνειδισμόν, οἱ δὲ εἰς διασπορὰν και αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον. *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* This is reaffirmed by Jesus in Mt. 25:46, και ἀπελεύσονται οὗτοι εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, οἱ δὲ δίκαιοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. *And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.* Most of the NT discussion of resurrection quite naturally centers on the believer’s experience modeled on that of Jesus after His crucifixion (e.g., 1 Cor. 15). But universally assumed in the many passages on the day of judgment is that the wicked will also be brought to life in an eternal existence in order to face God in judgment and sentencing to eternal damnation. This text is in line with that pattern elsewhere in the NT.

³⁰“While the idiom ‘small and great’ occurs more than thirty times in the OT, ‘great and small,’ which deviates from the normal order, occurs nine times (Gen 44:12; 1 Sam 20:2; 2 Chr 31:15; 2 Chr 34:30; Esth 1:5, 20; Jer 6:16; Jonah 3:5; Amos 6:11).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1101.]

Third, καὶ βιβλία ἠνοίχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοίχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. *and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.*

In the background here of books being opened on judgment day stands Dan. 7:10, καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ποταμὸς πυρός, χίλια χιλιάδες ἐθεράπευον αὐτὸν καὶ μύρια μυριάδες παρειστήκεισαν αὐτῷ· *καὶ κριτήριον ἐκάθισε καὶ βίβλοι ἠνεώχθησαν. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.* Early Jewish tradition held that two heavenly sets of book were kept, one recording the deeds of the righteous and the other the deeds of the wicked.³¹ John plays off this rather common image in Jewish apocalyptic writings.

But he adds a modification that is repeated several times in Revelation: 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον ἠνοίχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, *and another book was opened, which is of life.* In the contemporary tradition of a town registry containing a listing of all the official citizens of the town, this book contains the names of all the people of God. In 13:8 and 17:8, the phrase ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, *from the foundation of the world*, is added to indicate that all the citizens of the eternal heavenly city were entered into the book before God created the earth. In 13:8 and 21:27, the book is labeled τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου, *the book of life belonging to the Lamb.* The Lamb of God has a special responsibility for entering the names of the citizens and for protecting the integrity of the book.

Out of the first set of books, οἱ νεκροὶ, *the dead*, are judged against the listing of all their deeds: καὶ

³¹“This is an allusion to a particular aspect of the judgment scene in Dan 7:10, καὶ βίβλοι ἠνεώχθησαν, ‘and books were opened.’ The plural in both Dan 7:10 and here probably reflects the early Jewish tradition of two heavenly books, one for recording the deeds of the righteous and the other for recording the deeds of the wicked (Ps 56:8; Isa 65:6; Jer 22:30; Mal 3:16; Dan 7:10; Jub. 30:22; 36:10; Asc. Isa. 9:22; Lev. Rab. 26 [on 21:1]; Gen. Rab. 81 [on 35:31]; b. Ta’an. 11a; see Comment on 3:5). Dan 7:10 may be alluded to in 4 Ezra 6:20, ‘the books shall be opened before the face of the firmament, and all shall see my judgment together.’ Reference to the books of judgment in the plural occurs frequently (1 Enoch 47:3; 90:20; 4 Ezra 6:20; 2 Apoc. Bar. 24:1). Books recording evil deeds are mentioned in Isa 65:6; 1 Enoch 81:4; 89:61–77; 90:17, 20; 98:7, 8; 104:7; 2 Apoc. Bar. 24:1. 1 Enoch 47:3 relates a very similar scenario where God is seated upon his throne and “the books of the living” are opened before him. The use of the passive voice in the verb ἠνοίχθησαν, ‘were opened’ (cf. v 12c), implies that the books are opened by angels or by God himself.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1102.]

ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. Regarding divine judgment, this phrase κατὰ τὰ ἔργα, *according to deeds*, occurs four times in Revelation: 2:23; 18:6; 20:12, 13. In 2:23, believers are included in the reference, while unbelievers are those referenced in 18:6; 20:12, 13.

Although not spelled out by John, this divine evaluation of each wicked person seems to imply differing levels of condemnation based upon the level of evil of the individual. Jesus clearly asserts this especially in regard to the Jewish cities of His day in comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment: Mt. 10:15; 11:23–23; Lk. 10:12; cf. also Mt. 12:41–42; 25:19, 31. This is picked up elsewhere in the NT as well: Rom. 9:29; 2 Pet. 2:6–13; Jude 7; cf. also 2 Thess. 1:7–10. Although much speculation about levels of both punishment of the wicked and rewards for the righteous surface in the Jewish scribal writings, the NT never moves beyond affirming the core ideas of different levels of punishment and rewards.

Fourth, καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. *And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done* (v. 13). Here a repetition of v. 12 surfaces and one might wonder why? A variety of speculations can be found in the commentaries, but what does seem to stand in the background of John’s world is a clear distinction between dying at sea and dying while on land.³² Many in John’s world believed that if one died at sea, he went to a different ‘abode of the dead’ than if one died on land. Hades was commonly thought to contain those who died on land but not those who died at sea.

At minimum, what John does with this statement is to cover all bases by indicating that no matter where one died he would not escape facing God in final judgment. The sea will give up its dead (ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ). Those having died on land

³²“Ancient coastal societies (Greeks, Romans, Palestinians) were conscious of two abodes of the dead, the sea, invariably thought inappropriate and unnatural (Propertius 3.7.29; Seneca Nat. quaest. 5.18.8; Ovid Amor. 2.11.16; 3.8.45; Vergil Eclogae 4.38; Pliny Hist. nat. 19.5; see Propertius 3.7.43, ‘Therefore remain on land, learn to be content, and die a natural death’), and the land, widely regarded as appropriate and as the region below which the realm of Hades was thought located. The popular belief that the souls of those who died at sea did not enter Hades but remained where they died in the water is expressed in Achilles Tatius 5.16.2 (Neuer Wettstein, ad Rev 20:13). Though one occasionally finds the sea compared to Hades (Antiphilus 4; Philip 48; both in Gow-Page, Greek Anthology 1:92–93, 328–29), Hades is primarily associated with those buried on the land.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1102–1103.]

will be surrendered to judgment by Death and Hades (καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἔδωκαν τοὺς νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς). Death and Hades were typically equated in the ancient world and as we find in Revelation (1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14) are often personified.³³

The final declaration in v. 13, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, and each one of them was judged according to their deeds, individualizes the parallel declaration in v. 12c, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their deeds. Final judgment is no 'guilt by association'! Each person will face divine scrutiny of their own actions as the basis of condemnation.

Fifth, καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire (v. 14). Here is perhaps the most significant declaration of all of those in vv. 7-15. Death is eliminated totally. No longer will people suffer death and enter the underworld called Hades. Note the declaration in 21:1c, καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι, and the sea will never exist any more. The new heaven and the new earth do not include a sea!

Here at the end of v. 14 John defines the lake of fire as the second death: οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός ἐστιν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός. Interestingly the destruction of θάνατος, death, in v. 14a then clearly alludes to physical death. But οὗτος ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός, this second death, continues on since it is ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός, the lake of fire. John mentions this second death two other times.

2:11. Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἕκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου. The one conquering will never ever be harmed by the second death.

21:8. τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλοάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστιν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be

in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

This lake of fire is pictured in v. 10 as producing torments endlessly upon its occupants: καὶ βασανισθήσονται ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

Sixth, (v. 15). καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

And just who will occupy this place of eternal damnation? John has already indicated that Satan and the two beasts are among its tenants (v. 10). Now in v. 15, he makes it clear that all humanity who are not God's people (=name in the book of life) will also occupy the lake of fire forever as well. Here the declaration is individualized (εἴ τις, if anyone; cf. ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος, each one of them was judged, v. 13c) in order to be very clear that no one will escape this fate who does not belong to the people of God.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

In the midst of perhaps the darkest moment in all of human experience since the Garden of Eden, there comes the bright light that all evil has met its match and stands utterly, totally defeated and doomed to eternal torments in Hell. God's people have been preserved and protected in the watch care of Almighty God. Now they stand at the beginning of an eternal life in heaven where no evil can ever harm them again.

Satan and his cohorts have wreaked havoc upon God's people since Adam and Eve. At times he seemed unstoppable. But even in the worst of times God's control was always in place putting limits on what he could do. And those limits especially centered on divine protection of the people of God from spiritual harm and damage. Now in this final desperate attempt to attack and defeat God at the end, the devil and all those following after him stand destroyed and doomed to pay forever for their wicked deeds.

This dark moment then turns into a shout of victory for those whose lives are committed to God and His Lamb. Rev. 21:1-8 in the next study will turn this dramatic corner into the brightness of a glorious eternity awaiting God's people.

The enduring message of 20:7-15 is a clarion call to the people around us: **Whose side are you on?** If you don't belong to God lock, stock, and barrel, then repent and turn to God through Christ before it's too late. Right now, whether you realize it or not, you are on the Devil's side and are headed to the same disastrous fate as he is. Wake up from your deception! Night is coming soon when the chance for decision is long gone.

³³Death and Hades are often equated (Heinemann, Thanatos, 29–32), and the pair are personified four times in Revelation (1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14; see Comment on 6:8). They are always in this order, suggesting that 'Death' is considered the ruler over the realm of 'Hades.' The final elimination of Death is mentioned in Rev 21:4 and 1 Cor 15:26. The phrase 'Death and Hades gave up the dead in them' is problematic, for it is unlikely that the author conceives of Death and Hades as two separate entities. Charles has argued that the phrase τὰ ταμεῖα, 'the treasuries' (i.e., the place where only the souls of the righteous were admitted), was deliberately changed to ἡ θάλασσα, 'the sea,' to emphasize the physical resurrection of the dead (2:195–96). [David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, vol. 52C, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 1103.]

