

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 393

Revelation 20

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### Episode Summary

In the previous episode (Rev 19, Part 2) we looked at how John's use of the Old Testament, especially Ezekiel 38-39, more or less proves that Revelation 16-20 cannot be read as a linear sequence of events, but as a series of cycles that describe the same series of events leading to the return of Jesus and the destruction of the Beast. In this episode we explore one major difficulty for this approach: If, as this approach validates, the "kingdom" and "thousand year" language used in the book actually refer to the present Church Age, how is it that Satan can be said to be "bound" and imprisoned during the present Church Age. This seems absurd and some answers to the question are weak. Listen as we propose a different explanation, one that dovetails beautifully with the Deuteronomy 32 worldview articulated in Dr. Heiser's *The Unseen Realm* and *Demons* books.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 393: Revelation 20. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

**MH:** Well, I've had a chemo cycle [laughs] in between this episode and the last. So people can listen to our little chitchat at the last episode, and it gives you an idea of what it's like. So some really rough days, but you know, you climb out of it, and you move on, and you do what you can. So it's been rough, but anyone who's done it, they already know that. So we just have to get through it. Fortunately, I have people here (especially my wife) who just keeps me at it, to keep going, pushes me when I need to and when it need it. I have a good support system.

**TS:** Are you able to work or listen to any audiobooks or anything?

**MH:** During the chemo days, not much. Really not much of anything. I'm probably awake and lucid for a few hours at a time. But to be honest with you, it's probably the most faithful I am in taking the medications that will put me to sleep. [laughs] Just so I can pass most of it asleep. [laughs] You know, I'm not doing anything

crazy, but it's like, the days you feel good it's like, "Eh, I guess I don't need to take that." You know? Which is dumb.

**TS:** Yeah.

**MH:** Drenna jumps all over me for that, like, "You've got to follow directions!" You know. So she's after me for that, but on the rough days it's like, I don't need to be told. [laughter] I'm looking on the label, "May cause drowsiness." "Good. Give it to me." [laughs]

**TS:** Yeah. "I'll take two." Yeah.

**MH:** Yep, that's what we want. The drowsier the better.

**TS:** I hear you. Well, then, we need to get you back in bed. So we might as well go ahead and start this here, Mike. [MH laughs] I'm ready if you are.

**MH:** Yep. So last time we went through at length the Armageddon element of Revelation 19. And we looked at how John's use of the Old Testament more or less proves that Revelation 16-20 (that section) should be regarded as recapitulation cycles about the judgment of the beast at Armageddon and the return of Jesus and the end of the present age. So if you have not listened to Revelation 19, Part 2, you're going to need to, or certain things in this episode will make no sense at all because I'm not going to repeat it here. But I will offer a bit of a summary. So as far as what we did in that last episode, I'll say it this way:

1) The Old Testament use by John, specifically of Ezekiel 38-39, in chapters that precede the second coming (that is Revelation 16-19) and also in chapters that follow the "thousand year" language of Revelation 20 forces the conclusion that the kingdom language up through Revelation 20 is basically the present Church age. You know, you really can't wiggle out of it if you see that John, in his description of Armageddon, is taking a pretty clear deep dive into Ezekiel 38-39 (the Gog and Magog battle). Then we've got him aligning Revelation 16 to Ezekiel 38-39. He does the same thing in Revelation 19. And then when we get Revelation 20, after the Lord has returned, we get Gog and Magog specifically mentioned in that climactic battle. So you can't read these things as three separate events in a linear chronology, or else you have three Gog and Magog events. Or... It's just ridiculous. So what we have instead is a recycling of the same series of events three times in these chapters. It's actually more if you loop in the bowl and the trumpet judgments and all that. So that was the first thing we talked about and summarized.

2) Now that, in turn, produces an eschatology that has the present age (the Church Age) headed toward Armageddon. No problem there.

5:00

3) We interacted with an article with Meredith Kline, where he basically uses this material to destroy the premillennialist eschatological system. And I said, “Yeah, he does destroy the *system*, for the most part.” But all he really destroys is the traditional definition of premillennialism or how people who believe in a literal reign of Christ on earth are accustomed to articulating that idea. They’ll use the references to 1,000 years in Revelation 20 as sort of the foundation for that view. And what I suggested was that we abandon that. What if we ditch the “premillennial” or the “millennial” language? What if the idea of a literal messianic reign on earth doesn’t depend on the word “thousand” in Revelation 20? If you do that (again, you have to listen to the episode) then the literal kingdom idea is alive and well. It’s just not 1,000 years. It’s forever. And it follows Armageddon. So we talked about that.

4) You know, and basically, I had some personal notes in that last episode. My position, just generally, is that when all of this stuff in the book of Revelation plays out on earth, Christ will literally return, he will literally defeat the beast (which is both a chaos system and an antichrist), and he will literally reign forever on earth in a new global Eden. I believe in a literal messianic reign on earth that never ends. Now that isn’t the standard way that you will hear of the literal kingdom articulated. Because we have somehow married that biblical theological thought to specific terminology, and even more than that, specifically terminology given to us through a system—a sandbox in which we must play to talk about the reign of Christ. Well, I don’t play in the sandbox. And I don’t care about the vocabulary. I care more about the ideas.

So that is what we covered in Revelation 19, just this whole notion that we can’t read this as a linear chronology of separate events. It’s a rehearsal—a recapitulation—of the same series of events several times.

Now what that brought us to, at the end of the last episode, was a question. Actually, more than one question, but sort of a fundamental question about Revelation 20. And this is what I want to lead into here. So I’m going to read, as I did at the end of the last episode, the first seven verses of Revelation 20 and then introduce the question that I want to start with. So John writes:

**Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,**

Now remember, the “thousand years” here is the Church Age. So he binds Satan for the Church Age, which is the present age. Right away you should be thinking, “It sure doesn’t look like Satan’s been bound. How do we interpret that?” Okay, hold that thought. So he seizes the dragon, binds him for a thousand years (the length of the Church Age)...

**<sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer [MH: Hmm, it sure looks like the nations are getting deceived plenty today, but again, hold that thought], until the thousand years were ended [MH: until the end of the present Church Age]. After that he must be released for a little while.**

**<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.**

So most amillennialists would say that this refers to dead martyrs (who are depicted a lot in the book of Revelation), that when they die, they're still alive in heaven and they are reigning with Christ in heaven, because that's where Christ is reigning from until he returns. So they're reigning during the length of the Church Age.

**<sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended [MH: the Church Age was brought to a conclusion]. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they [MH: i.e., the ones raised after the Church Age ends] will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.**

And I made the comment that this thousand years can't refer to the Church Age because that just ended. So Kline's approach that we talked about in the last episode doesn't really account for this instance—doesn't really work here. But what we're more concerned about is the "Satan" talk. In verse 7 it says:

10:00

**<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison...**

Then we get the whole Armageddon scene rehearsed again. So we have Satan being bound so that he "can't deceive the nations" until he's released, right before Armageddon, and then everything's destroyed (the beast and Satan and the false prophet—all this). They're destroyed. There's a general resurrection. Then we have the eternal state. So on and so forth.

So the first item of today, like I promised at the end of the last episode, is we've got to deal with this "Satan" talk, and how do traditional amillennialists (because that's what Kline was) deal with this. Because a majority of the Church (believe it or not—this might come as a shock to a lot of our listeners) is not premillennial, pretribulational rapture people. Okay? Your Reformed traditions are not. All your Presbyterians, your Lutherans, all this kind of stuff, the major denominations, the people who are... I'm not talking denomination in name only. The people who are really believers that are in these denominations that take Scripture seriously, they're not thinking like Tim LaHaye. They're not thinking *Left Behind* and a rapture and all this stuff. That's actually a minority view, even though it's probably the view that, if it comes to books about prophecy, that's the view that is most dominant in terms of what is sold and what is read and consumed. But that's actually not the majority view historically in the Church.

So for those who look at the kingdom as only the present age, and then after the Lord returns we have some sort of... We go to heaven or some sort of eternal heavenly existence, which more often than not gets abstracted (as I commented in the last episode) that, "We can't have the kingdom here on earth because then we'd look like premillennialists or something." It's kind of odd. This is why amillennialists will say, "The kingdom is now, and that's the kingdom, period. When the Lord returns then we get the eternal state, which is somewhere. And the language in the New Testament used to describe it is idyllic or allegorical or purely metaphorical, or something." Again, this is how they do it. They don't expect the literal release of the Watchers in Revelation 9. And they don't expect, in many cases, a literal antichrist. They don't literalize any of this. Because the "thousand years" talk, they can make a very good case (and Kline does, and we shared that last episode) that the "thousand years" talk should not be understood literally but as the present Church Age, which is a lot longer than a thousand years anyway. And we're basing that on Kline's very deft handling of how John uses Ezekiel 38-39, and Psalm 48, Isaiah 14, and a little bit of Zechariah 14, in Revelation 16 and Revelation 19 and Revelation 20. He uses the same material in three different places, showing that John is recycling the same set of events three times. He is not doing a linear chronology. And if you follow that, you see it for what it is, then you can't have an intervening literal 1,000-year reign in Revelation 20:1-6. It doesn't work.

So if you're going to take this view, you still have to answer the Satan problem. What in the world? What could it possibly mean, that Satan is bound, like in the present age, so that he might not deceive the nations? That just seems ridiculous. Because the rest of the New Testament has a number of passages that presumes that Satan is quite active in tempting, persecuting believers, and blinding the eyes of unbelievers. I'm going to read you just some passages about Satan in the rest of the New Testament here, just to make the point. And recall when I read these that normative, traditional amillennialism... or them, the kingdom was inaugurated during Christ's first coming. And we believe that too. I

do, but I'm not an amillennialist. But they're dyed-in-the-wool there. "This is when the kingdom begins. The kingdom begins when Christ shows up the first time and it continues on into the present age. And that is *the* kingdom. There is no other kingdom to look forward to." So with that in mind, just listen to some of these things that the New Testament authors have Satan doing during the present age, which includes the age of the apostles when Jesus was on earth, leading up to the cross. Now just listen to some of these. Matthew 12:26:

**<sup>26</sup> And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?**

15:00

Well, Satan has a kingdom too. How does he manage that if he's in jail? What's going on there? Matthew 13:39. This is the seeds and the sowing.

**<sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sowed [the bad seeds] is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.**

So the devil is sowing bad or false seed. How does that work in light of this understanding in Revelation 20? Luke 22:3

**<sup>3</sup> Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot...**

Looks like he's active there. I think Judas was deceived, don't you? Acts 5:3, Ananias and Sapphira.

**<sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... ?**

Plenty active there.

Acts 10:38, when the apostles are talking about how Jesus went about doing good and healing "all who were oppressed by the devil." Looks like he's active there.

Acts 26, the gospel is designed to "open the eyes of the unbelievers, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." Well, that suggests that the power of Satan is to keep people from turning to the light. Might that involve deception? I would think so. Makes good sense.

1 Corinthians 5:5, where Paul (dealing with the unrepentant guy in Corinth) says,

**You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh...**

Now we know, and you know if you've read *Unseen Realm*, that this is a reference to being expelled from the congregation. It's cosmic geography because the Church is now sacred space, and you remove sin from sacred space and all that. But apparently, Satan has a realm, according to Paul.

1 Corinthians 7:5, Paul again doesn't want the Corinthians to (in this context) withhold sexual activity from each other,

**...so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

Satan can tempt, according to Paul. 2 Corinthians 2:11:

**<sup>11</sup>so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.**

So Paul viewed Satan as a threat, that he could be outmaneuvered by Satan. Hmm. Again, how does this work? 2 Corinthians 11:14:

**<sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.**

Look, that's deception, folks. So how does this work with Revelation 20? I mean, there are just a lot of these.

Ephesians 6, Paul wants believers to be able to "stand against the schemes of the devil." How would that exclude deception?

1 Thessalonians 2:18, Paul says that Satan hindered them in their ministry.

2 Thessalonians 2:9:

**<sup>9</sup>The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan...**

Well, the antichrist is empowered by Satan. How does he do that if he's in jail? I mean, how does this work? Honestly, how does it work?

2 Timothy 2:26, he wants Timothy (and other believers) to escape from the snare of the devil and to not be captured by him to do his will.

James 4:7, James says,

**Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

1 Peter 5:8:

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**Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**

I want to know how in the world Satan can be so active [laughs] in the rest of the New Testament in light of this idea that the “kingdom” language in Revelation 20:1-6 is the present age, and Satan is bound, “so that he might not deceive the nations.” How in the world does this work?

Now I think the answer to this is not going to be found in your typical amillennialist defense of this. I think their defense is weak. And I’m going to offer a different view that... Because I have told you I agree with Kline. I agree with the recapitulation here, even though I believe in a literal coming forever kingdom, literally on earth, ruled by a literal messiah. But I’m not an amillennialist and I’m not your standard premillennialist, either, because I don’t base my theology on the term, which is what I recommended that we don’t do in the last episode. And whether people can wrap their minds around Mike’s unwillingness to play in the sandbox... Whatever. I can’t... It just is what it is. I don’t. Those of you who have been long-term in this audience, you know the drill by now. It’s no surprise.

So I accept Kline’s work here, admitting that he’s missed some things. But when it comes to the “Satan” problem, I think I have a better answer than what you’re going to get in standard responses to this question. So let me just illustrate this. He’s how Beale and Campbell (this is the shorter version of Beale’s Revelation commentary) describe Revelation 20:1-7. They say:

20:00

The millennium is inaugurated during the church age as God limits Satan’s deceptive powers...

And again, I ask, “How would we know?” Looks to me like Christianity is the minority religion in the world, at least *real* Christians, not those in name only, but gosh. I don’t see the limitations working very well. But anyway...

The millennium is inaugurated during the church age as God limits Satan’s deceptive powers and as deceased Christians are vindicated by reigning in heaven. The millennium is concluded by a resurgence of Satan’s deceptive assault against the church and the final judgment (20:1–15)

So again, I listen to them... I read what they’ve written here and it’s like, “So in other words, Satan *doesn’t* have a deceptive assault against the Church now?” That just seems to make no sense. Now Beale and Campbell would further say:

In light of the close verbal connections, it is more natural to suppose that the curtailing of Satan’s deception through his being thrown into the abyss in



[Revelation] 20:3 refers to the same events as his being thrown out of heaven and down to earth in 12:8–9.

Again, this audience is very familiar with Revelation 12. But I'm going to read this passage anyway, just these couple of verses. This is, of course, the heavenly vision of the woman with the twelve stars and the birth of the messiah child. So in response to the birth of the messiah:

**<sup>7</sup> Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

So Beale says, “You know, there’s a lot of similarity between that and this notion of Satan being bound in Revelation 20.” Well, I’d agree that there’s a connection there, but I would specifically say it’s Luke 10, which Beale and Campbell don’t bring into the discussion. Satan’s casting out of heaven happens when the kingdom is inaugurated—the Christ child is born. That refers to the absence of legal authority to claim members of the kingdom of God as his own. In other words, if you go back to Luke 10 when Jesus sends out the 70 (or the 72), and he gives them power over demons and so on and so forth, and they come back and they’re thrilled. And one of Jesus’ responses is, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Okay, the whole point there is (and you can go back and look at it in *Unseen Realm*) that Jesus is saying, “Look, fellows. The kingdom of God has been launched. And by virtue of me sending out 70 (or 72, depending on whether you’re using the Septuagint or the traditional Hebrew text to refer to the nations in Genesis 10—that’s what the referent point is), the kingdom includes Gentiles. It includes the nations.

So the theological messaging is this, “If you are a member of this kingdom (my kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus), Satan has no claim against you. He cannot bring any claim against you to the throne of God. He cannot accuse you. He cannot claim your soul. He is a prosecutor without a case. He is kicked out. God doesn’t want to hear it anymore. Satan’s done. His authority is nil. Because Jesus knows he’s going to die and rise from the dead. And so you’re not going to end up in Satan’s domain in the underworld. He’s lord of the dead. Guess what? He ain’t getting you. Because the kingdom now has been launched, and it’s going to be irreversible. He’s not going to be able to stop it.”

So yeah, there’s a connection between that and what happens in Revelation 12 and Satan’s limitation in that respect. So I’ll agree that there’s some connection there. But I think we need to loop Luke 10 in here to understand it better as the

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absence of legal authority to claim members of the kingdom of God. It makes little sense to see this casting down as a prohibition of Satan's deception (whatever that means) when we haven't even answered the question yet, because the text of Revelation 12:9 (connected to the messiah's birth) actually tells us. When we read Revelation 12:9 closely it actually describes Satan as the deceiver of the nations. It doesn't tell us his deception is limited. That's not what the text says. It gives him that credit, as opposed to removing it. Okay? So I don't think this is as tight as they think it is.

25:00 Now that's the standard amillennial view, though. I mean, Beale is going to be well representative of it. So somehow or another he has Satan not being able to mount a deceptive assault against the Church during the present age, and I just don't buy it. It doesn't make any sense. It defies what else is in the New Testament. So it must mean something else. And that... Again, I think I'm going to propose a better view here.

So I think, again, the standard amillennial view just doesn't work. It makes zero sense. I would suggest this. We are better off defining the deception spoken of in Revelation 20 in light of what Satan does when allowed later. See, we're going to let the text interpret the text. So here is my proposal. The Greek lemma here in question about deceiving here in Revelation 20... Let me go back specifically to Revelation 20 here in my Bible. Verse 3, he's put into the pit so that he might not *deceive* the nations. The Greek lemma translated "deceive" here is *planaō*. Okay? BDAG, which is the standard Greek lexicon for New Testament literature, has the lemma's primary meaning as "leading astray in a specific way."

The specifics, in my judgment, are best defined in terms of what Satan does when permitted to do what he does. And the text is clear on this point. Do you know what he does? He leads the nations against Zion. So if that's what he does when he's permitted, then that is what he was prevented from doing. Get it? We let one passage interpret the other. It's not that Satan can't mount any effective assault against the Church. He does that every blasted day. What he doesn't do is lead the nations against Zion. Now what does that mean? It means Satan, when he is permitted by God to do so, he moves the status quo spiritual conflict to a new level. He initiates—he launches—a direct assault on God's throne, God's plan, God's city, and God's people. Specifically it's related to Armageddon. Specifically it's related to marshaling all the forces of human and cosmic evil against Mount Zion.

That's what he does. He marshals the nations. He leads the nations (all the people under the fallen sons of God and those gods) in a final rebellion in an attempt to overthrow the eschatological plan of God and the judgment of the gods of the nations (and his own final destruction). That's what he's not allowed to do. This is what he is not permitted to do until the time of the end. The nations (their gods and those loyal to them—the whole supernatural chaos system) are

thereby deceived by Satan at the end into trying to do the impossible: trying to stop or overturn the judgment of Psalm 82. It's a repetition of Isaiah 14. Satan gets all of the forces marshaled against Zion because he still thinks and wants desperately to be the Most High. He thinks he can get there.

Now here's a logical question. Why would God choose to prevent Satan from doing this in the first place? Why restrict him during the present age from doing this? If you've read my material, if you've heard me in interviews, you know the answer to this already. Here's the logical answer to that logical question: God does it because he wants to forestall the judgment of the nations in favor of redeeming people *from* all those nations. God forestalls Armageddon through this decision to give the Great Commission time. He prevents Satan from this desperate act because the desperate act has to have a response, and the response, of course, is going to be the return of the Lord and the destruction of all these idiots, okay? But God doesn't want that to happen. Yet. Why? Because he wants to give the Great Commission time. After all (here we are again with the Deuteronomy 32 worldview again), the return of Christ and judgment of the nations and the gods are linked to the fullness of the Gentiles.

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Now I would suggest that this approach is far more coherent than standard amillennialism. And if we recall that the thousand-year language is mentioned *after* Armageddon once, at least one time, where it can't refer to the Church (that's Revelation 20:6), and if we take the perspective that what follows Armageddon is a literal messianic rule under Jesus that's forever, we can agree that Revelation 16... yep there's recapitulation there. Sixteen through 20, we got it, Professor Kline. Got it. But we still have Christ ruling on earth forever, not just 1,000 years. And we are ruling with him forever, not just 1,000 years. In real time. The nations will be reclaimed in real time. Christ will return in real time. There will be a consummated kingdom—a new, global Eden, in real time. And God is limiting Satan in a very specific way. He will not permit him to instigate Armageddon until God is ready. And what is God waiting for? He's waiting for the Great Commission.

You know, I hate to keep saying stuff like this, because I don't want to make biblical theology sound simplistic. Because it isn't. But this just makes sense. [laughs] You know? I don't know how else to say it. You know? The Deuteronomy 32 worldview again just helps us reframe the discussion. The Divine Council worldview helps us reframe the discussion. It makes sense, and honestly because it's supposed to make sense. But if you lack these elements in your theological framework to help orient you with respect to the data points, you're going to get hits, you're going to be right a lot, but you're going to get some real misses that just mess it up, make it confusing, don't make sense. It is what it is.

So I don't know that there's a label or a name for the eschatology that I've described here just now and in Revelation 19 that I hold to. I don't know that there's a name for it or a label for it. And I frankly don't care. I'm not going to bother inventing one either. It's the one that can make sense of the data. That's all I care about. So, "No," (if I were to address the late professor Kline), "as much as I love your Armageddon work (you're basically the only evangelical who sees the mount of assembly connection for what it is), but I'm sorry, you haven't overturned the literal rule and reign of Christ. You've just torn down a system, and systems are not synonymous with biblical theology."

So let's move on to some specific Old Testament observations in regard to the rest of Revelation 20 for the rest of this episode. There are a few of them that I wanted to mention. If we go back to the beginning in Revelation 20 on the "angel" talk" in verses 1-3 (the angel in the pit)... You need to go listen to the episode on Revelation 9. We spent a lot of time talking about the identity of that angel, so I'm not going to rehearse it here. If you go to verse 4, we have a reference to "thrones." Let me read Revelation 20:4. John says:

**<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.**

Okay, thrones. Did you see that? It's plural. Again, recall the context. Since chapters 4-5 of Revelation, the context is the divine throne room—the Divine Council. But there's a question here. Are these enthroned judges part of the heavenly council as presented in chapters 4-5, or is the council a little wider? In other words, does the language include believers with whom the throne of Jesus is shared (coming from Daniel 7, Revelation 3:21, where Jesus says, "To him that overcomes, I will grant him to sit on my throne with me and rule")? Now Beale (in his longer Revelation commentary) writes this of this particular issue about the thrones (plural):

They have been identified in at least five different ways. (1) They are martyrs who will assist God in the final judgment [MH: that's one possibility] or (2) all God's people assisting him in the judgment (cf. Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26–27; 19:14). (3) They are the angelic court of Daniel 7 who declare the final judgment against the Satanic fiend in vindication of the saints whom he oppressed; this would correspond to Dan. 7:9–11: "thrones were set up ... the court sat ... the beast was slain" (cf. Dan. 7:26; *Midr.* Ps. 4.4 identifies the court as angelic). (4) The court is composed of angels, but the angels represent saints [MH: believers]. (5) The court includes exalted believers along with angels, since the same scene of figures ("elders") sitting on heavenly thrones in Rev. 4:4 included angels who corporately represent exalted saints (see on 4:4 and 11:16). This last identification receives support from the fact that the only occurrences of plural "thrones" in the Apocalypse [MH: in the book of Revelation] outside 20:4 are in 4:4 and 11:16,

where it is elders who sit on the thrones [MH: and then he quotes a rabbinic text] (*b. Sanhedrin* 38b views the court in Dan. 7:9–10 as consisting of God, angels, and the Davidic messiah, while *b. Hagigah* 14a sees only God and the Messiah sitting on the plural thrones).

But again, Beale and myself (and others obviously) are going to say the thrones here are the Divine Council that includes believers. I agree. It makes the most sense. And we assist in announcing (actually carrying out) the judgment launched there in Daniel 7. Now if that's the case... Think about it. If the thrones here are occupied by members of the Divine Council supernaturally ("angels") and us... If that's the case, and if the reigning being described is up until Revelation 20:6 (the present Church Age), then this is your destiny if you die today, before the Lord's return. You will be part of the Divine Council and its rule, awaiting your/their return with Christ (Zechariah 14:5, which John quoted earlier in Revelation). You're the reconstituted Divine Council. You're part of it. You don't have to wait for it if you die. What you're waiting for is shared partner rulership on earth in a new global Eden. *That's* the part you're waiting for. But you join the council right away. And of course, this informs other passages, like Hebrews 12. You can go back and listen to the episode on Hebrews 12 and the cloud of witnesses and all that. Again, this is another reason why I say that believers are the reconstituted Divine Council. Here you go. Now David Aune, in his commentary, adds a grammatical point to this that I thought I'd throw in for the geeks here. He says:

The third-person plural aorist verb ἐκάθισαν, "they sat," is used here without a [MH: stated] subject, so exactly *who* sat upon the thrones remains unspecified [MH: grammatically]. This is an example of the impersonal use of the third-person plural (see M[atthew] Black, *Aramaic*, 126–28, with lists of occurrences in the Gospels; Mussies, *Morphology*, 231), which can be used in place of the passive voice and which occurs in Hebrew with some frequency [MH: and he cites Genesis] (*GKC* § 144f). The impersonal third-person plural can also be used with third-person masculine plural verbs and masculine plural participles in Aramaic...

**Now what does all that mean? Here's why I threw it in.**

The enigmatic reference to thrones is probably an allusion to Dan 7:9–10, "As I looked, thrones were placed [MH: that whole scene right there] [or 'a huge throne was placed'] and one that was ancient of days took his seat ... the court sat in judgment and the books were opened." The plural term כִּסְאוֹת *korsāwān*, "thrones," may simply be for the purpose of emphasis, i.e., "a huge throne," since the multitude of heavenly beings *stands* in God's presence (7:10; see Goldingay, *Daniel*, 165). However, Dan 7:9 was probably construed as a reference to those associated with God in judgment [MH: in other words, the plural is there because it's the group], and it is this conception that is presupposed in Rev 20:4.

So grammatically, Aune adds a point that, by virtue of the fact that there's no supplied subject to the verb... This still tells us something. If we take it back to Daniel 7, who inherits the kingdom? Well, it's the Son of man, the holy ones, and the people of the holy ones. There's three. There's three sets there. They're all combined. And the verb in Aramaic, back in Daniel 7, doesn't specify any of them. Because there's no need for specification. They all sit and rule. They all inherit the rule. It's the Divine Council, made up of supernatural heavenly hosts and the people of the holy ones with Jesus (with the messiah, with the Son of man).

So I just throw that in because I wanted you to see that some of this gets pretty granular when you really get into the details. And it's a view produced by exegesis. It's not, "Mike wants it to be this." No, there's an exegetical point here.

40:00

Now on the word "thousand," just to make one comment here, I thought I'd throw in Aune's observation that:

The period of a thousand years is used in Ps 90:4 (quoted in 2 Pet 3:8, "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"), encouraging the figurative interpretation of a thousand years.

Again, I would agree. Because the Church as the present age is longer than 1,000 years *and* the literal kingdom to come is going to be longer than a thousand literal years too. They're both extending beyond the literal meaning. In both cases. So why would we restrict it? Again, because that's what we're taught to do.

Now if we go to verses 5-6 and verses 11-12 we get references to the "first resurrection" and the "second death." Now I'm just going to throw my two cents' in here, and then I'll take you to some commentaries. Because scholars... I think this is fairly straightforward, but scholars still tend to quibble about things, and I'll try to explain why I'm putting it that way. When it comes to the "first resurrection," this is the anticipated general resurrection of the Old Testament (like Daniel 12). Those raised to life rule and reign on earth with messiah after his return—after Armageddon. There is a "second death" mentioned, which refers to the final judgment—the final dying or annihilation (which we see in verse 15). Revelation 20:15 actually defines what the second death is. It's this judgment. After that event, we have the righteous ruling and reigning with Christ and everyone else is either dying (like the eternal torment idea) or they've been annihilated. This is why there is no "second resurrection" mentioned. This is the point I'm angling for. Because we get "first resurrection," "second death," and you'd think, "Well, what about the second resurrection after the second death?" There's no second resurrection actually mentioned. Now there's an apparent (maybe) allusion to this sort of thing in Revelation 20:11-15. But I would argue that this is actually part of the general resurrection of the dead (the "first resurrection"). It's not a second



resurrection. Because the phrase “second resurrection” never occurs. So I don't think we should make it a second one. It's appositional. The description in Revelation 20:11-15 sort of redescribes the earlier note about the first resurrection. I would put it this way. If you look at Revelation 20:10-15, Revelation 20:10 is like a first scene in a play that involves the final judgment. It picks up after Armageddon.

So if I'm looking at Revelation 20... Let me just read this to you. And we have here verse 11. So this is right after Armageddon. We've got... Let's start with verse 10. So in verse 9, fire comes down from heaven and consumes the beast and all the bad guys. So that's the culmination of Armageddon. The very next thing is:

**<sup>10</sup> 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.**

**<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. [MH: so we have the great white throne judgment] From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.**

And of course, the living are judged by the book of life so we get this description here. So I would look at it this way. Right after Armageddon ends, it's like a play. The curtain goes up. The first scene is verse 10, where we get this judgment. And then we get another scene with the general resurrection, where the righteous are raised to life, and this is the “first resurrection”—not a new second resurrection, but it's still the first one, mentioned before. And the unrighteous, of course, are judged and experience the second death, which is the final dying or the final annihilation.

Now I would say (even though that seems pretty simple, and again I think it is), if you look at it as a play with a couple of scenes in it, Aune's comments reflect scholarly consternation over the subject, and really why scholars kind of bicker about this is because there's no... This series of events is absent from rabbinic discussion about the Old Testament (rabbinic discussion, not Second Temple). Second Temple period is much earlier than the rabbis' writings. But New Testament scholars tend to be stuck on rabbinic stuff that postdates the New Testament, rather than the older stuff. But anyway, I think this is why we get some scholarly tit-for-tat over this, or debate. So Aune writes this:

45:00



There is no trace of the conception of a first and a second resurrection in rabbinic texts (Str-B, 3:828). Among early Christian authors, Irenaeus [MH: he cites his *Against the Heresies*] (Adv. haer. 5.35.2–36), certainly aware of and dependent upon the resurrection schema in Revelation, mentions a resurrection of the just followed by a general resurrection. There is, however, a reference in John 5:28–29 that could be construed as referring to two resurrections [MH: So Aune’s saying, “Here’s a possibility”]: “All who in their graves will hear his voice and those who have done good will come out to the resurrection of life [εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς], and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment [εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως].” of course, this refers to a single general resurrection that has [MH: two sides] two aspects, the fate of the righteous and the fate of the wicked... other texts refer to the resurrection of all the dead, both the righteous and the wicked [MH: just like Revelation does] (Dan 12:2; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; 2 Cor 5:10; [MH: and a few Second Temple Jewish texts] 2 Apoc. Bar. 50:2–4; 4 Ezra 7:32; 1 Enoch 51:1–2; m. ’Abot 4.22); see Str-B, 4:1166–98; Schürer, *History* 2:539–44.

So the idea *is* in Second Temple literature, but it’s not in the rabbis. And again I would say, “Well, with all due respect, who cares about later rabbinic thinking here?” What we’re interested in is the material that New Testament writers would have had access to and read or their community. At least their audience that they’re writing to would have known some of these things and these ideas. And they’re not making stuff up. John is well within the stream of Jewish tradition that has preceded him when he comes up with “first resurrection,” “second death.” You know, all it is... It’s one event. You get Armageddon. You get the beast punished, Satan punished, the lake of fire thing. You get the general resurrection, those to life, the book of life, and then those to the eternal dying or annihilation and that is the second death, and that’s it.

So I don’t think it’s that difficult, but I wanted to just read that little bit to you. Because you know, there are New Testament scholars that want to see the rabbis talk about it before they’ll accept it and so on and so forth. And it’s just not needed.

Now if we keep going to Revelation 20:7-11, we’ve already covered this. This is the Gog and Magog content that we talked about last episode (Revelation 19, Part 2), so you could listen to that. In verses, 13-15 we have references to Death and Hades being destroyed. Now we’ve actually had an earlier episode dealing with this (or at least a lot of it), and that is Episode 363—the one on Revelation 3, Part 2, where we talked a lot about Death and Hades as supernatural figures that are personified. They’re like entities. And we used the work here of Justin Bass a lot in that episode. And I’m going to bring Bass back here and offer his summary (just two quick summary points) on this passage in Revelation 20. He writes:

Death and Hades' reign of terror...

Again, he views them as entities because they're personified beings. And Jesus, of course, has taken the keys from them. He owns [laughs]... I love the image. Jesus has stolen their lunch money. [laughs] Okay? He's taken the keys of Death and Hades from Death and Hades. Why? Because he rose from the dead. Jesus now dictates who remains in the underworld and who does not. They don't. Okay? If you're united to Christ, you escape the realm of the dead. You're going to live forever. Again, I just love the imagery. So back to Bass.

Death and Hades' reign of terror meet their end in the book of Revelation (20:13-14). Not only are they forced to give back the souls of the dead by the glorified Christ and the holder of the keys (1:18; 20:13), but they themselves will be thrown into the lake of fire. John says there will be no more "death" (Rev 21:4)...

This is important. Revelation 21:4, John actually says, "There is no more death."

...and if there is no more death, there is no more need for a realm of the dead (Hades)... Christ hurls Death and Hades into the lake of fire (20:14), symbolizing the end of Death and the realm of the dead because the saints will live forever in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22).

50:00

Now if you just stop there (and I will, because that's the section from Bass I wanted to quote)... This question's come up a lot in Q&A about Mike's view of hell, and I've said before that I think both views (the traditional view that you have eternal punishment and the view of annihilation) are both valid and they're both on the table. The key is (if I can use this phrase) the literalness of the language we have here. Does the death of death mean anything? If death is really done away with (like there is no more death)... And let me just read Revelation 21:4, where John... [laughs] Here we go.

**<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more...**

Now is that reference in reference in Revelation 21 only with respect to the glorified believers in a new global Eden? Or does it mean broadly, comprehensively, that death no longer exists anywhere? Because if it means that, then annihilation is the view that makes the most sense. You can't have people still dying forever somewhere in an underworld that doesn't exist because it isn't needed, and experiencing death when death is no more. So if we are supposed to read that broadly, then we have annihilation. If we're only supposed to read it of people who end up in the glorified Eden, well then you could have death existing on the outside... or can you? In other words, how do we take John's words in Revelation 21:4? How do we take the idea that Paul writes about, where death is done away with? You know? It's difficult to know the

intended reach of these verses. But again, there's fodder here for thought on both sides of this.

Now Bass (I'll bring him back here), if you got his book... And his book is *The Battle for the Keys: Revelation 1:18 and Christ's Descent into the Underworld*. (It's a paperback. It's actually reasonably priced, and you can get it on Kindle too.) If you get that book, chapter 4 goes through the Second Temple period data for Gehenna and other underworld labels—underworld terminology. Here in Revelation 20:13-15 we get the phrase “lake of fire.” And Bass says, for good reason, that imagery is harder to nail down than other terms, like Gehenna or the pit or the abyss or something like that. So Bass writes this:

[W]e are not dealing with a compartment of the underworld, but instead the future, eternal destiny of the wicked (men and angels) according to Jesus, Revelation and the rest of the NT. These are not compartments in the underworld nor did Christ visit them. However, in order to have a complete theology of the afterlife in the NT we must briefly explore them.

This is what he does in chapter 4 with all these different terms.

It is the consistent testimony of the ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman world that the wicked will suffer eternally in the afterlife, usually by fire. This imagery of the wicked suffering by fire in the afterlife may find its origin in Deuteronomy (32:22) and is demonstrated most clearly in Isaiah (1:31; 33:14; 66:24).

Now I'm going to go to two of those passages. Isaiah 33:14 first says this:

**<sup>14</sup>The sinners in Zion are afraid;  
trembling has seized the godless:  
“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire?  
Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”**

So what Bass is saying... He's not saying, “Well, here's a verse in the Old Testament that teaches us about an eternal hell.” He's saying, “Here's a verse in the Old Testament that was probably a data point for the idea.” Because we have “everlasting burnings,” at least for a long time. You can get into what “everlasting” means and so on and so forth. That's part of the debate. But there's an Old Testament passage. And then let's go to Isaiah 66:24. And I'm bringing these up for a reason. This is in Isaiah 66, which is really an important chapter about the new heavens and new earth (in verse 22):

**<sup>22</sup>“For as the new heavens and the new earth  
that I make  
shall remain before me, says the LORD,**

**so shall your offspring and your name remain.**

**<sup>23</sup> From new moon to new moon,  
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
all flesh [MH: all the nations] shall come to worship before me,  
declares the LORD.**

**<sup>24</sup> “And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”**

55:00

Now that “worm dieth not” terminology... We know as readers of the New Testament that it is used in describing Gehenna. So why do I bring this up? Well, I bring it up because the next time you hear someone say or claim (maybe a Jewish friend) that the idea of hell (whether it means everlasting or even annihilation) is not in the Hebrew Bible... Wrong! [laughs] Okay? There is an everlasting judgment of some sort in the Hebrew Bible that involves fire, let's just put it that way. And this becomes fodder (these are data points) for an idea that gets developed in the Second Temple period on into the New Testament. But its roots are in the Old Testament. Now back to Bass, he says:

This future place of everlasting torment for the wicked later became known as Gehenna. The word Gehenna comes from the Valley of Hinnom [MH: *gehinom* in Hebrew] which was the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Josh 15:8; 18:16; Isa 31:9; 66:24; Jer 32:35; 2 Chron 33:6) and the northern border of Judah after the captivity (Neh 11:30). The Valley of Hinnom was the location where the Canaanites would sacrifice their children by fire to the pagan gods, Molech and Baal (2 Kgs 16:3; 21:6; Jer 7:31; 19:4-5; 32:35). Josiah had it desecrated (2 Kgs 23:10).

Interestingly, outside of NT and OT Apocrypha (4 Ezra 2:29) [MH: the term] Gehenna is not found in any sources including LXX, Philo, Josephus, or Greek literature [MH: more broadly]. The Rabbis departed from the NT and the rest of the ancient literature because they started seeing Gehenna as a temporary place of punishment rather than eternal...

It is more difficult to track down the origin of the imagery behind the Lake of Fire in Revelation. A burning lake where the wicked will remain for eternity is sometimes found in the intertestamental literature [MH: Second Temple period stuff]. This Lake of Fire that God has prepared for the wicked may be the same “river of fire” found in Daniel 7:9-10...

I'll just interrupt here. Remember, Daniel 7:9-10 is the judgment of the beast. And in Revelation, the beast is thrown into the lake of fire. Well, is it an incidental detail in Daniel 7:9-10 that we have a river of fire there? Is this where the beast is cast? We aren't specifically told in the book of Daniel, but maybe we *are* being specifically told in the book of Revelation, and due to its ties with Daniel 7:9-10 this is the point of origin for the idea. So Bass continues:

Regardless of its origin, scholars are virtually unanimous that [Gehenna] and [the Lake of Fire] are synonymous titles in the NT referring to the same reality. To illustrate, Jesus consistently uses Gehenna to describe the final destiny of the wicked, and in Revelation their final destiny is the Lake of Fire. Moreover, Jesus says that the Devil and his angels will be cast into the "eternal fire" prepared for them (Matt 25:41), and the Devil and his angels actually get cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:10) [MH: so it shows the synonymous relationship there].

So again, I just wanted to share a little bit with what Bass had done because he's done a lot of work in this area, as we wrap up this episode.

So when it comes to Revelation 20, a lot of this content has been covered in other episodes, but some of these things I just wanted to take an episode at least to answer the "Satan talk" question, because I think that really needs to be addressed. And the coherence of the idea is ultimately going to be seen in the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. And then some of these other references to "thrones" and "Death and Hades" and whatnot, we've had a lot of this content before. But I just wanted to have a little bit of space to add a few details from the Old Testament to round this out.

So that's what I have for Revelation 20. And next time we will jump into Revelation 21. Maybe we'll take 21 and 22 together. I don't know until I'm into it. But again, I'm hoping that these two episodes not only contribute to our understanding of John's use of the Old Testament... Because it's really important when it comes to the recapitulation idea. And again, I think what Kline has done is pretty compelling. But that does not rule out a belief in or an expectation of a literal reign of Christ on earth. Again, dispense with the labels. Don't build your theology on single terms. This is my advice. You're going to hear Mike referred to as an amillennialist. Again, I'm about as close to an amillennialist as an atheist is. I do not take the amillennial route. I just don't play in the sandbox. And I hope that this episode explains a little bit as to why I get asked these eschatological questions. And I've actually given you the short form answers. A thousand years is too short. Okay? Well, now you know why I say that, after these two episodes. So next time we will jump into at least Revelation 21, but maybe the last two chapters of the book.

1:00:00

**TS:** Alright, Mike, sounds good. We're actually going to take a break from Revelation and we're going to have a couple of interviews with Dr. Kent Yinger. Do you want to tell us about what that subject might be about?

**MH:** Oh yeah. Yeah, I finally got around to contacting Kent. I knew him from my days at Logos. I don't know if he still teaches at George Fox in Oregon. He may still be there; he might be retired. But if you've ever wondered about the concept of salvation by grace through faith (we don't do anything to merit salvation and yet we have these passages in the New Testament about being judged according to works), Kent is the guy. This is actually his dissertation, which got published in (I think) the Cambridge University New Testament Monograph series. So I'm reading through his dissertation. We're going to talk about that. How do we understand not just Paul, but the New Testament thinking on unmerited salvation and judgment according to works? How do we marry these two things? How do we relate these two things to each other? So we're going to sit down and have a chat with Kent about his work and go through that issue, and I think you'll find it very interesting.

**TS:** Alright, Mike. Sounds good. Looking forward to it. With that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.