SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Revelation

Chapter Twenty, Verses 1–15

The King Reigns from Jerusalem — Satan Bound, the Saints Enthroned, the Dead Judged

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES

One chain, six thousand-years, two resurrections, one last rebellion and one white throne — read through four teachers — **Amir Tsarfati**, **Mark Hitchcock**, **John MacArthur** and **David Jeremiah** — with the Greek behind the abyss, the first resurrection, Gog and Magog, the book of life and the second death.

THE PASSAGE

Revelation 20:1–15

Bound · reigning · loosed · judged

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

Contents

A thousand years, two resurrections, one rebellion, and the last throne

—	**How to Read This Study** · *the four voices & their colors*	3
—	**Before the Passage** · *three readings of a thousand years*	3
I	**Satan Bound** · *Revelation 20:1–3 · the key, the chain, the seal*	4
II	**The First Resurrection** · *Revelation 20:4–6 · thrones and a thousand years*	7
III	**Satan Loosed and the Last Rebellion** · *Revelation 20:7–10 · Gog and Magog*	9
IV	**The Great White Throne** · *Revelation 20:11–15 · the books and the book*	11
V	**The Passage in the Whole Bible** · *cross-references*	14
†	**At a Glance** · *the four voices side by side*	17
†	**Key Insights & Questions for the Table** · *discussion*	17

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"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." — Revelation 20:6

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Revelation 20:1–15

The King Reigns from Jerusalem — A Thousand Years and a Great White Throne

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Revelation 20 in four movements, in the order John saw them: an angel with a key and a chain, thrones and a resurrection, a prison opened and a final war, and a great white throne with the books open. At each movement you will hear four teachers, each marked in his own color, and you will see the Greek John chose and why it matters. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle. Amir Tsarfati listens for Israel, Jerusalem and the times; Mark Hitchcock lays the chapter on the whole prophetic timeline and weighs the views. Where they overlap, the truth is underlined; where they differ in emphasis, the passage opens wider. This four-voice edition adds two more: **John MacArthur** of Grace to You, the expositor who works the text phrase by phrase and holds the line on a literal reading, and **David Jeremiah** of Turning Point, who reads the signs of the times and presses the chapter home as a call to live ready.

AMIR TSARFATI · Revealing Revelation · Behold Israel

MARK HITCHCOCK · Prophecy Perspectives · Israel My Glory

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You sermons, 1994

DAVID JEREMIAH · The Coming Golden Age

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED

God — His character & actions

Command / instruction

Key repeated word

Sin / warning

Promise / blessing

Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · REVELATION 20:6

"Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

† Before the Passage

A word about the title first. Ed's workbook calls this lesson "The King Reigns from Jerusalem," and the title carries the whole argument of the chapter. Revelation 19 ended with the Rider on the white horse returning, the beast and the false prophet thrown alive into the lake of fire, and their armies fallen (19:11–21). Two of the three members of the unholy trinity are gone. Chapter 20 opens with the same words John has been using for a whole vision — "And I saw … Then I saw," *kai eidon* (19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11) — and deals with the third. Then a kingdom: the phrase "a thousand years" six times in seven verses (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), and nowhere else in the Bible is that reign given a length.

No chapter in the Bible has divided careful believers more, and the three main readings deserve to be heard fairly. **Premillennialism** — the oldest, held by Papias, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus in the second century — reads chapters 19 and 20 in sequence: Christ returns, Satan is bound, and Christ reigns on the earth for a thousand years before the last judgment. **Amillennialism**, given its classic shape by Augustine (*City of God*, book 20) and held by much of the Reformed and Lutheran church, reads chapter 20 as a new vision that steps back to the first coming: Satan was bound at the cross (Matthew 12:29; Colossians 2:15) so that the gospel can reach the nations; the "first resurrection" is the new birth or the believer's entrance into heaven at death; the thousand years is the whole church age, a number for completeness. **Postmillennialism**, the hope of many Puritans, Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hodge, expects the gospel to so prevail that a long age of righteousness comes before Christ returns. All three confess the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment; they differ on the order and on what kind of kingdom fills the thousand years.

The prophets had already drawn the map. Isaiah saw the nations streaming up to "the mountain of the house of the Lord," the law going out "from Zion," and swords hammered into plowshares (Isaiah 2:2–4). He saw the host of heaven and the kings of the earth "gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon," punished "after many days," while "the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 24:21–23) — a binding, a long interval, and a release to judgment, centuries before John. Isaiah 65:20 describes an age when a man who dies at a hundred dies young: long life, but still death — which cannot be the eternal state, where death is "no longer" (21:4). Zechariah puts the Lord's feet on the Mount of Olives, makes Him "king over all the earth," and sends the nations up to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of Booths (Zechariah 14:4, 9, 16). Ezekiel 40–48 measures a temple and a city whose name is "The Lord is there" (48:35). Daniel 7 gives the kingdom "to the people of the saints of the Highest One."

Both of our teachers read those prophecies the way they read Revelation 19 — literally — and so both expect a thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth with Jerusalem as its capital. **Tsarfati** comes at it as an Israeli: God made promises to Abraham and David about a land and a throne, and He will keep them in the city where He made them; Jesus will sit on David's throne and reign from Jerusalem, and the nations will come up to Him. **Hitchcock** comes at it as a teacher of the timeline: the order of Revelation 19–20, the six repetitions of a specific number, a Satan who is plainly not bound today, the earliest church's reading, and four unconditional covenants — Abrahamic, land, Davidic and new — that have never yet been literally fulfilled. Read the chapter with both in view: a promise kept to Israel, and a timeline that ends in a throne.

I
MOVEMENT

REVELATION 20:1–3

Satan Bound

The key, the chain and the seal — the deceiver taken off the field

> *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding* △ *the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for* ⟲ *a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that* ⚠ *he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things* ◷ *he must be released for a short time."*
>
> REVELATION 20:1–3

ἄβυσσος

ABYSSOS · "ABYSS, BOTTOMLESS PIT"

From *a-* ("without") and *bythos* ("depth"): the place with no bottom (G12). In the Greek Old Testament it is "the deep" of Genesis 1:2. In the New Testament it is a prison: the demons at Gerasa beg Jesus not to send them "into the abyss" (Luke 8:31). Revelation uses it seven times (9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) — the pit smokes, the locusts' king rules it, the beast rises from it. Here, for the first time, the key is in heaven's hand and the traffic runs the other way: Satan goes *in*.

χίλια ἔτη

CHILIA ETĒ · "A THOUSAND YEARS"

Chilioi (G5507), "thousand," with *etos* (G2094), "year." Six times in seven verses, and three times with the article — "*the* thousand years" (vv. 3, 5, 7) — pointing back to a period already defined. Revelation's other numbers of time are counted plainly: ten days (2:10), forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6). The Latin *mille* ("thousand") gives us "millennium"; the Greek gives us "chiliasm," the early church's name for the belief in a literal earthly reign.

ἔδησεν … ἐσφράγισεν … δεῖ λυθῆναι

EDĒSEN … ESPHRAGISEN … DEI LYTHĒNAI · "BOUND … SEALED … MUST BE RELEASED"

Five verbs of arrest in two verses: *ekratēsen* "laid hold," *edēsen* "bound" (*deō*, G1210), *ebalen* "threw," *ekleisen* "shut," *esphragisen* "sealed" (*sphragizō*, G4972) — the same verb used for the seal on Jesus' tomb (Matthew 27:66). The purpose clause is *hina mē planēsē eti ta ethnē*, "so that he would not deceive the nations any longer": not restrained, removed. Then *dei* (G1163), "it is necessary," the word of divine plan (1:1; 4:1; 22:6) — even the release is on God's schedule, and *lythēnai* (*lyō*, G3089) is a passive: he is let out; he does not break out.

κλεῖν … ἅλυσιν μεγάλην

KLEIN … HALYSIN MEGALĒN · "KEY … GREAT CHAIN"

Kleis (G2807), "key," is the sign of authority to open and shut: Peter's keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19), the key of knowledge the lawyers took away (Luke 11:52), Christ's keys of death and Hades (1:18) and His key of David (3:7; Isaiah 22:22). In 9:1 the key of the abyss was *given* to a fallen star and the pit was opened; here an angel from heaven holds it, and the pit is shut. *Halysis* (G254), "chain," is the iron that could not hold the man of the tombs (Mark 5:3–4) and that fell from Peter's wrists (Acts 12:7); Paul wore one "for the sake of the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20). Now one great chain holds the dragon himself.

Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς

DIABOLOS KAI HO SATANAS · "THE DEVIL AND SATAN"

Four names in one arrest — dragon, serpent of old, devil, Satan — the same four read out at his fall in 12:9. *Diabolos* (G1228) comes from *diaballō*, "to slander, accuse"; Paul uses it of people too, warning against being "malicious gossips" (1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3), and Jesus called Judas "a devil" (John 6:70). *Satanas* (G4567) carries the Hebrew *satan* (H7854), "adversary" — the accuser of Job 1–2 who stood at Joshua's right hand "to accuse him" (Zechariah 3:1). In 12:10 he is "the accuser of our brethren," thrown down from heaven; here the slanderer and adversary is chained, and the nations are free of his deceiving for a thousand years.

AMIR TSARFATI · Behold Israel

Chapter 19 dealt with the beast and the false prophet; chapter 20 deals with the one who empowered them. Every name of his is read out at the arrest — the dragon who hunted the woman and her child in chapter 12, the serpent of Eden, the devil who slanders, Satan who accuses — because the whole history of his war on God's people, and on Israel in particular, ends here. For Tsarfati the sequence is plain and the hope is concrete: the King returns, the deceiver is locked away, and Jesus takes David's throne and reigns from Jerusalem. His pastoral word follows from it: the devil is not bound today — he still prowls (1 Peter 5:8) — so believers stay alert and keep looking up.

MARK HITCHCOCK · Bible prophecy · DTS

Hitchcock lays the chapter on the timeline: the Second Coming, Armageddon, the binding of Satan, the thousand-year reign, the Great White Throne, the new heaven and new earth. He reads 20:1 as the next event after 19:21, not a jump back to the first coming — the repeated "and I saw" moves the story forward, and God judges the beast and the false prophet first and their master second. Satan cannot be bound now: Paul calls him "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), and Peter a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). A symbolic chain, he notes, does not make a symbolic binding — a man can be "chained to his desk" for two hours, and the hours are real.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur puts one question to these verses — where is Satan during the kingdom? — and answers it in a word: bound, out of the picture. That is why, for him, Revelation 20 can never describe the present age. The amillennial appeal to the strong man bound at the cross (Matthew 12:29) fails twice: the cross was far more than a thousand years ago, and Satan is plainly at work now — filling Ananias's heart (Acts 5:3), blinding unbelieving minds (2 Corinthians 4:4), prowling like a lion (1 Peter 5:8), hindering God's servants (1 Thessalonians 2:18). The church is still waiting for Satan to be bound, and he will not be bound until Jesus comes. Nor is the number a code: "a thousand" comes six times, Revelation's numbers are used in their normal sense, and the earliest church — Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian — read a literal kingdom.

DAVID JEREMIAH · Turning Point

Jeremiah reads the binding as the first act of the golden age. Satan is seized after Armageddon, when Christ returns, and thrown into the abyss — "God's supermax prison for evil spirits," he calls it — which is not hell; the lake of fire is the devil's final destiny (Luke 8:31; Jude 6). Every name at the arrest describes his work: the dragon (12:9; Isaiah 27:1), the serpent of Eden (Genesis 3), the *diabolos* who slanders and accuses, the *satanas* who opposes. Then Jeremiah lists what the world loses: his inflaming of temptation (1 Corinthians 7:5), his sifting (Luke 22:31), his hindering of God's work (1 Thessalonians 2:18), his stirring of nations to war (Daniel 10:13). He counts it out — 365,250 days, "a thousand devil-free years" — yet he is careful: the binding does not mean there will be no sin on the earth.

II
MOVEMENT

REVELATION 20:4–6

The First Resurrection

Thrones, martyrs and a thousand-year reign — the blessed who share in it

> *"Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and* △ *judgment was given to them*. *And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and* ☆ *they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is* ⟳ *the first resurrection*. ☆ *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be* △ *priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."*
>
> REVELATION 20:4–6

ἔζησαν

EZĒSAN · "THEY CAME TO LIFE"

Aorist of *zaō* (G2198), "to live" — an ingressive aorist: they *began* to live. The same form is used of Christ, "who was dead, and has come to life" (2:8, *ezēsen*), and of the beast's healed wound (13:14). Verse 5 uses it again for "the rest of the dead," who do not come to life until the thousand years end. The nineteenth-century Greek scholar Henry Alford pressed the point: if the same word in the same paragraph means a spiritual rising in verse 4 and a bodily one in verse 5, language has stopped meaning anything. Two risings, a thousand years apart.

ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη

HĒ ANASTASIS HĒ PRŌTĒ · "THE FIRST RESURRECTION"

Anastasis (G386), "a standing up again" — in the New Testament almost always bodily resurrection (John 11:24–25; 1 Corinthians 15:12–13). *Prōtē* (G4413), "first" in order. Jesus had already spoken of two: "a resurrection of life" and "a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29), and Daniel of some who awake "to everlasting life" and others "to disgrace and everlasting contempt" (12:2). Revelation 20 puts the thousand years between them. "First" is a kind as well as a time: everyone in it is "blessed and holy" (the fifth of Revelation's seven beatitudes).

πεπελεκισμένων

PEPELEKISMENŌN · "HAD BEEN BEHEADED"

Perfect passive participle of *pelekizō* (G3990), from *pelekys*, a double-headed axe — executed with the axe, the old Roman sentence. The word occurs only here in the New Testament. The perfect tense marks a finished fact with lasting effect: they *are* the beheaded. The reason is doubled — *dia tēn martyrian Iēsou kai dia ton logon tou theou*, "because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God" — John's own reason for being on Patmos (1:9). And the ones who refused *to charagma* (G5480), "the mark" (13:16–17), are the ones who now sit on thrones.

καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς

KAI KRIMA EDOTHĒ AUTOIS · "AND JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN TO THEM"

Krima (G2917) is a court word — a verdict, a decision, the authority to render one. Revelation uses it three times: "the judgment of the great harlot" (17:1), God's "judgment for you against her" (18:20), and here. *Edothē*, "was given," is the passive Revelation uses for every grant of authority, good or evil (6:4; 13:5, 7): no one on these thrones took his own seat. Daniel saw the moment: the Ancient of Days came and "judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One" (Daniel 7:22). Jesus promised the Twelve thrones, "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28), and Paul asked, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2).

ἱερεῖς … βασιλεύσουσιν

HIEREIS … BASILEUSOUSIN · "PRIESTS … WILL REIGN"

Hiereus (G2409), "priest," from *hieros*, "sacred." Revelation gives the title to the redeemed three times (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), the calling Israel received at Sinai — "a kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6; compare 1 Peter 2:9). Here they are "priests of God and of Christ," the Son named with the Father in one service. *Basileusousin*, future of *basileuō* (G936), "to reign as king," answers 5:10, "they will reign upon the earth," as verse 4's aorist *ebasileusan*, "they reigned," had begun it. Paul used the same future in Romans 5:17: those who receive the abundance of grace "will reign in life." And the reign has a goal: "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

AMIR TSARFATI · Behold Israel

Tsarfati's picture of the kingdom is physical and Jerusalem-centered. Jesus sits on the throne of David and reigns from Jerusalem; believers, in glorified bodies, reign and judge with Him (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). The nations are required to come up to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of Tabernacles, and the nation that refuses loses the blessing of rain (Zechariah 14:16–17). He describes the world of those years as about as close as it can come to what it was before the curse of sin. The martyrs of verse 4 are the tribulation believers who refused the beast's mark — they lost their heads and gained a throne. For anyone suffering for Jesus now, that is the last word on the subject.

MARK HITCHCOCK · Bible prophecy · DTS

Hitchcock asks why there must be a millennium at all, and gives three answers: to reward the faithful (Daniel 7:18, 22, 27; Luke 19:11–26, where faithfulness is repaid with cities to rule), to redeem creation (Romans 8:19–22 — the curse lifted and the Second Adam ruling the earth the first Adam lost), and to keep God's promises — the Abrahamic (Genesis 15), land (Deuteronomy 30), Davidic (2 Samuel 7) and new (Jeremiah 31) covenants, fulfilled when Jesus reigns on David's throne from Jerusalem. The glorified saints rule with Christ; believers who survive the tribulation enter the kingdom in mortal bodies and repopulate the earth. Revelation 5:10 had already said it: they "will reign upon the earth."

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur sees two kinds of thrones in Scripture, judicial and regal, and these are both — places of rule for the people the Lord puts on them. He fills them from the whole Bible: the saints of Daniel 7:18, 22 and 27, the apostles of Matthew 19:28, the church that will judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2–3; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 5:10), and the tribulation martyrs who refused the mark. "Came to life," he insists, cannot mean anything but resurrection, and the first resurrection gathers all the saints of all the ages; "the rest of the dead" are unbelievers, whose rising waits for the end of the chapter. Believing survivors of the tribulation — the sheep of the Olivet Discourse — enter the kingdom in mortal bodies. The glorified saints serve as a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), His agents carrying out His will in the world.

DAVID JEREMIAH · Turning Point

Jeremiah counts 20:6 as the fifth of Revelation's seven blessings and reads it as the believer's own future. The church, taken up before the tribulation, returns with Christ and does not go back to wait in heaven: "We will stay on earth with Him," he writes, and reign with Him over the whole world. Those who died or were raptured come back in perfected, sinless bodies like the risen Lord's; those saved during the tribulation enter the kingdom in ordinary bodies, still with a sin nature. Jesus sits on the throne of David with Jerusalem as the capital of the world, and Jeremiah pictures David beside Him as His "vice president." Places in that government are rewards, assigned by faithfulness now (Matthew 25:14–30) — and asked exactly what those roles will be, he answers plainly that he does not know.

III
MOVEMENT

REVELATION 20:7–10

Satan Loosed and the Last Rebellion

Gog and Magog, the beloved city, and the devil's final address

"When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

REVELATION 20:7–10

Γὼγ καὶ Μαγώγ

GŌG KAI MAGŌG · "GOG AND MAGOG"

Gōg (G1136) and Magōg (G3098) appear in the New Testament only here. In Ezekiel 38–39, Gog is a ruler "of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal" (38:2), leading a coalition from the north against a restored Israel; Magog first appears as a son of Japheth (Genesis 10:2). John changes the grammar: in Ezekiel Gog is a man and Magog his land; here both stand in apposition to "the nations which are in the four corners of the earth" — not a northern alliance but the whole world. Jewish writers had already made "Gog and Magog" a byword for the last great assault on God's people.

τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἠγαπημένην

TĒN POLIN TĒN ĒGAPĒMENĒN · "THE BELOVED CITY"

Ēgapēmenēn is a perfect passive participle of *agapaō* (G25): the city that has been loved and still is. The Psalms had named it — "The Lord loves the gates of Zion" (87:2); "Mount Zion which He loved" (78:68). Beside it is *hē parembolē tōn hagiōn*, "the camp of the saints" — *parembolē* (G3925) is the word for Israel's camp in the wilderness in the Greek Old Testament, and "outside the camp" in Hebrews 13:13. God's people are still encamped around His city, and no battle is described: fire falls "from heaven." Some manuscripts add "from God" (KJV); SBLGNT and NASB95 do not.

τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου

TĒN LIMNĒN TOU PYROS KAI THEIOU · "THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE"

Limnē (G3041), "lake"; *pyr* (G4442), "fire"; *theion* (G2303), "sulfur," the burning stone that fell on Sodom (Genesis 19:24). In five verses of Revelation (19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8) and nowhere else in Scripture. The devil "who deceived them" — *ho planōn*, the present participle: deceiving is what he is (12:9) — joins the beast and the false prophet, who "are also" there. They were thrown in alive a thousand years before (19:20), and they are still there; the verb that follows, *basanisthēsontai*, "they will be tormented," is plural and future, "day and night forever and ever."

ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς αὐτοῦ

EK TĒS PHYLAKĒS AUTOU · "FROM HIS PRISON"

Phylakē (G5438), from *phylassō*, "to guard," means a guarding, a watch of the night ("the fourth watch," Matthew 14:25), and a prison. John now names the abyss for what it has been: a guarded cell. The word turns back through the book. To Smyrna Jesus warned, "the devil is about to cast some of you into prison" (2:10); fallen Babylon is "a prison of every unclean spirit" (18:2); Peter writes of "the spirits now in prison" (1 Peter 3:19); and Isaiah saw the rebel powers "confined in prison" and punished "after many days" (Isaiah 24:22). The one who threw the saints into prison has spent a thousand years in one.

κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς

KATEBĒ PYR EK TOU OURANOU KAI KATEPHAGEN AUTOUS · "FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DEVOURED THEM"

Katesthiō (G2719), "to eat down, devour" — *kata* sharpening *esthiō*, "eat." It is a hungry word: the birds that "ate up" the seed (Mark 4:4), the dragon waiting to "devour" the child (12:4), the fire from the two witnesses' mouths that "devours their enemies" (11:5). The clause is Elijah's: when the king's captains came to seize the prophet, "fire came down from heaven and consumed" them (2 Kings 1:10, 12), a scene the Greek Old Testament tells with the same verb. Ezekiel's Gog also ended in fire — "I will send fire upon Magog" (Ezekiel 39:6). The armies cover the broad plain and surround the beloved city, and the whole war is over in a single verb.

AMIR TSARFATI · Behold Israel

After a thousand years of the perfect King, the perfect government and a world nearly free of the curse, Satan is let out — and the nations follow him. Tsarfati reads it with Psalm 2: "Why are the nations in an uproar?" The rebellion is not a failure of environment but a revelation of the human heart; people who lived under Christ's righteous rule still turn on it. The "beloved city" is Jerusalem, the capital where Jesus reigns, with God's people camped around it. And this is not Ezekiel 38–39: there Satan is never mentioned, the attackers come from the north, the dead are buried for seven months (39:12), and the purpose is to bring Israel back to God; here the whole world comes, Satan leads it, fire ends it, and the next scene is the last judgment.

MARK HITCHCOCK · Bible prophecy · DTS

Hitchcock calls them Gog and Magog I and Gog and Magog II — separate events more than a thousand years apart. Ezekiel's invasion, he holds, comes after the Lord removes His church at the rapture; Revelation 20:8 comes after the millennium. Ezekiel names specific nations; John describes the whole world. The only thing the two battles share is the name, which John uses the way we use "Waterloo" for a final, decisive defeat. He also notes the contrast built into the text: a precise "thousand years" against a vague "short time" — the reign is long and measured, the rebellion brief. Then the timeline moves on: the devil's doom, the Great White Throne, the new heaven and the new earth.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur reads the last rebellion as the kingdom's verdict on the human heart. The nations Satan gathers do not invade from outside the millennium; they are born inside it. Believing survivors of the tribulation enter the kingdom, their children multiply, and many of those children, loving iniquity, reject the very King they live under. When Satan is let out of his prison, he finds them ready, and the Lord destroys the rebellion. The order stays literal: a thousand years of righteous rule on the earth, a brief revolt, fire from heaven, and the devil thrown into the lake where the beast and the false prophet — its first occupants — already are. That lake, MacArthur teaches, is as lasting as the God who judges: the same terms that describe eternal punishment describe the eternal God.

DAVID JEREMIAH · Turning Point

Jeremiah gives the final rebellion a purpose: it shows how deep human sin goes. Everyone who enters the millennium is saved, but children are born in those years, and each must choose for or against Christ just as people do now. Sin is present but kept in check, and judged so swiftly that rebellion never lasts long. Then, at the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and stirs up one final rebellion against God, as he did in Eden — and after a world of peace, health and plenty, some will still be deceived. For Jeremiah that is the lesson of 20:7–9: a perfect environment does not make a righteous heart, and man can never achieve righteousness apart from God. The devil's end follows — the lake of fire, tormented "day and night forever and ever."

IV
MOVEMENT

REVELATION 20:11–15

The Great White Throne

The books, the book, and the death after death

> *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."*
>
> REVELATION 20:11–15

θρόνον μέγαν λευκὸν

THRONON MEGAN LEUKON · "A GREAT WHITE THRONE"

Thronos (G2362) — a word Revelation uses more than forty times, more than the rest of the New Testament together; *megas* (G3173), "great"; *leukos* (G3022), "white," brilliant, the color of the Ancient of Days' garment (Daniel 7:9) and of the Lord's transfigured clothes (Matthew 17:2). Great in authority, white in purity. Before it *ephygen hē gē kai ho ouranos* — "earth and heaven fled" (*pheugō*, G5343) — the old creation has nowhere left to stand, which is why the next chapter opens on "a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1). The Judge is the Son: the Father "has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

βιβλία … τῇ βίβλῳ τῆς ζωῆς

BIBLIA … TĒ BIBLŌ TĒS ZŌĒS · "BOOKS … THE BOOK OF LIFE"

Two kinds of record. *Biblia* (plural of *biblion*, G975), the books of deeds — "judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (*kata ta erga autōn*, G2041), said twice. Then one book: in v. 12 "another book … which is of life," in v. 15 *en tē biblō tēs zōēs* (*biblos*, G976; *zōē*, G2222). Moses knew it — "blot me out from Your book" (Exodus 32:32) — and Daniel (12:1), Paul (Philippians 4:3) and Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 21:27). The books show what each person did; the book shows who belongs to the Lamb. Deeds measure the sentence; only the book decides the destiny.

ᾅδης

HADĒS · "HADES"

Hadēs (G86), "the unseen place," the Greek Old Testament's usual word for Hebrew *Sheol*, the realm of the dead. The rich man lifts up his eyes "in Hades" (Luke 16:23); the risen Christ holds "the keys of death and of Hades" (1:18); the pale rider of the fourth seal is Death, with Hades following (6:8). Here the sea, death and Hades give up their dead — no grave, no ocean, no holding place keeps anyone back from this throne — and then death and Hades themselves are thrown into the lake: the waiting room is closed. "The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26).

ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος

HO THANATOS HO DEUTEROS · "THE SECOND DEATH"

Thanatos (G2288) with *deuteros* (G1208), "second" — four times, all in Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). SBLGNT verse 14 reads *houtos ho thanatos ho deuteros estin, hē limnē tou pyros* — "this is the second death, the lake of fire": the definition is given in the text. The phrase was already used in the Aramaic Targums (as on Deuteronomy 33:6) for final judgment after the resurrection. The first death separates soul from body; the second separates the person from God for ever. Over those in the first resurrection it "has no power" (v. 6) — and to the church in Smyrna, facing the first death, Jesus promised that the second would not hurt them (2:11).

τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικρούς

TOUS MEGALOUS KAI TOUS MIKROUS · "THE GREAT AND THE SMALL"

Megas (G3173) and *mikros* (G3398) paired are a way of saying "everyone, whatever their rank." Revelation uses the pair for those rewarded (11:18), those forced to take the mark (13:16), those called to praise (19:5, echoing Psalm 115:13, "the small together with the great"), and the fallen at Christ's coming (19:18). Paul testified "both to small and great" (Acts 26:22). Here they stand, the dead of every station, before one throne. And there is an echo inside the chapter: *mikros* is also the "short" of "a short time" (20:3). The devil's season is small; the Judge's court receives the small and the great alike.

εὑρέθη … γεγραμμένος

HEURETHĒ … GEGRAMMENOS · "FOUND … WRITTEN"

Gegrammenos is the perfect passive participle of *graphō* (G1125), "to write": written once and standing written — the tense of Jesus' "It is written" (*gegraptai*, Matthew 4:4). Revelation uses the perfect for the book of life: those whose name "has not been written … from the foundation of the world" (13:8; 17:8), and "only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:27). *Heurethē*, aorist passive of *heuriskō* (G2147), "was found," makes the search part of the sentence. Daniel had used the same picture: "everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued" (Daniel 12:1). The last question of the chapter is not what a person did, but whether his name was found where God wrote it.

AMIR TSARFATI · Behold Israel

The prophetic program ends where every soul ends: before a throne. Tsarfati's urgency is the urgency of a man who believes this is coming and that the clock is running. The earth and the sky that fled make way for what he loves to preach next — a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem coming down (21:1–2). But there is one question no one at this throne can answer for himself: is my name written? Great and small stand there, the powerful beside the forgotten. The books cannot save anyone; only the Lamb's book can, and the time to have your name in it is now, while the door is open.

MARK HITCHCOCK · Bible prophecy · DTS

Hitchcock walks the scene as a courtroom in six parts — the court, the Judge, the defendants, the evidence, the verdict and the sentence. The Judge is Jesus Himself. The defendants are the lost of every age; believers were raised in the first resurrection and are not on trial here. There is no jury, no defense attorney and no appeal — only the righteous Judge on His throne. The evidence is the books; the verdict turns on the Book of Life; the sentence is the lake of fire. On his timeline this is the last event before the eternal state, and it closes the account the Bible opened in Eden.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur preaches the scene as "Man's Last Day in God's Court," and insists first that it is a just judgment. The Judge is God in the person of Jesus Christ (John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31). Earth and heaven flee because the sin-polluted universe is not repaired but uncreated (2 Peter 3:10–12), making way for 21:1. Only the unredeemed dead of all history stand there — "the somebodies and the nobodies" — since believers have already been raised and are judged for reward, not condemnation (John 5:24; Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The books are the full record, measured against perfect holiness (Matthew 5:48), and because the judgment fits the record there are degrees: "Hell will have few lashes for some and many for others" (Luke 12:47; Hebrews 10:29). The book of life is the register of the redeemed; none of them will ever taste the second death.

DAVID JEREMIAH · Turning Point

Jeremiah reads the throne by its name: "great" for the infinite Judge, "white" for His holiness and justice, "throne" for His right to decide destiny. The Judge is Jesus — "Jesus Christ will conduct the trial, and no one is better qualified" (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42). With earth and sky fled, the court sits neither on earth nor in heaven, where no sinner may enter; Scripture does not say where. Before it stand all who died without Christ, of every religion and rank (Matthew 7:21–23). Christians are not there; they meet Christ at His Judgment Seat. So this throne does not decide who is saved — anyone summoned to it is not; it sentences evil works, and the Lamb's book of life (21:27) is the final evidence. The first death parts soul from body; at the second, both go together into the lake of fire.

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The kingdom the prophets saw, the two resurrections, and Gog before Gog

> *"Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war."*
>
> ISAIAH 2:2–4

> *"So it will happen in that day, That the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. They will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, And His glory will be before His elders."*
>
> ISAIAH 24:21–23

> *"No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed."*
>
> ISAIAH 65:20

> *"And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one. ... Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths."*
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> ZECHARIAH 14:9, 16

> *"Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him."*
>
> DANIEL 7:27

> *"Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him … and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog."*
>
> EZEKIEL 38:2, 16

> *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."*
>
> DANIEL 12:2

> *"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment."*
>
> JOHN 5:28–29

> *"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death."*
>
> 1 CORINTHIANS 15:22–26

> *"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; …"*
>
> MATTHEW 25:41

AMIR TSARFATI · Behold Israel

Isaiah 2 and Zechariah 14 are the reason Tsarfati can say without hedging that the King will reign from Jerusalem. The law goes out from Zion, the nations go up to the mountain of the Lord, and every year they come to keep the Feast of Booths in the city — promises made to Israel, about Israel's land and Israel's capital, that have never yet been kept and will be. Ezekiel 38 is a different war: a northern coalition against a restored Israel, ended by God so that the nations, and Israel, will know Him. Revelation 20 borrows the name for the last rebellion of a whole world.

MARK HITCHCOCK · Bible prophecy · DTS

For Hitchcock the cross-references set the order. Paul's "each in his own order" (1 Corinthians 15:23–24) lays out stages — Christ, then those who are His at His coming, then the end, after He has reigned until every enemy is under His feet. John 5:28–29 and Daniel 12:2 name two resurrections, and Revelation 20 shows the thousand years between them. Isaiah 65:20 cannot describe heaven, because people still die; it describes the millennium. And Ezekiel 38 is Gog and Magog I; Revelation 20:8 is Gog and Magog II.

JOHN MACARTHUR · Grace to You

MacArthur's cross-references rest on a way of reading. In his 2007 Shepherds' Conference message, "Why Every Self-Respecting Calvinist Is a Premillennialist," he argued that the God who sovereignly elects His church also sovereignly chose Israel, and that His promises to her are not forfeited; read plainly, the Old Testament covenants end in a literal kingdom. So the thrones of Revelation 20 are the thrones of Daniel 7 and Matthew 19:28; the saints who judge the world are Paul's (1 Corinthians 6:2–3); the King is the Son promised "the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). At the end, Daniel 7:10's opened books and Daniel 12:2's "everlasting contempt" meet at the white throne, and Matthew 25:46 uses one word for eternal punishment and eternal life: if one lasts forever, so does the other.

DAVID JEREMIAH · Turning Point

Jeremiah reads the prophets as the description of the kingdom chapter 20 measures. Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3–4: swords into plowshares, no nation learning war. Isaiah 11:6–9: the wolf with the lamb and the earth full of the knowledge of the Lord. Isaiah 65:20: a hundred-year-old like a child, with death left for the rebel. Isaiah 19:23–25: Egypt, Assyria and Israel blessed together. Psalm 72:11 and Isaiah 9:7 supply his reason the reign must come — without it the prophecies of the King go unfulfilled — and Matthew 6:10 the prayer it finally answers: "Your kingdom come … on earth as it is in heaven." Over all of it stands his rule of reading: "If a passage can reasonably be interpreted literally, do so."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

The same chapter, read four ways. Tsarfati listens for Israel, Jerusalem and the heart of man; Hitchcock lays every verse on the prophetic timeline and weighs the views. Together they keep Revelation 20 from becoming either a symbol with no address or a date with no Savior. MacArthur adds the expositor's precision and Jeremiah the pastor's call to readiness — four men who share one framework (a future, literal fulfillment, the church caught up before the wrath) and still hear different notes.

THE MOMENT	TSARFATI · the times	HITCHCOCK · the timeline	MACARTHUR · the text	JEREMIAH · the signs
Satan bound (20:1–3)	The deceiver of the nations and hunter of Israel finally locked away; not bound today — stay alert.	Sequence of 19 → 20; Satan active now (2 Cor 4:4); a symbolic chain does not make a symbolic binding.	Where is Satan in the kingdom? Bound — so not now (Acts 5:3; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Pet 5:8). Numbers mean numbers.	After Armageddon, into God's "supermax prison," not hell; temptation, sifting and war-stirring gone — a thousand devil-free years.
The first resurrection (20:4–6)	Jesus on David's throne in Jerusalem; nations up for Tabernacles; glorified saints reign.	Three purposes: reward the faithful, redeem creation, keep four unconditional covenants.	Judicial and regal thrones; "came to life" means resurrection; all saints of all ages; mortal survivors enter the kingdom.	The fifth beatitude; raptured saints return to reign in sinless bodies; David beside Christ; roles reward present faithfulness.
The last rebellion (20:7–10)	Psalm 2 — the heart, not the environment; the beloved city is Jerusalem; not Ezekiel 38.	Gog and Magog I and II; "Waterloo" as shorthand; a measured reign and a short revolt.	Rebels born in the kingdom who love iniquity; Satan finds them ready; the lake is as lasting as God.	Children born with a sin nature; one last revolt, as in Eden, proves man cannot be righteous apart from God.
The white throne (20:11–15)	One question for every soul: is my name written? The new Jerusalem comes next.	A courtroom with no jury, no defense, no appeal; the lost of all ages; the last event before eternity.	A just court: the unredeemed only, a universe uncreated, a complete record, degrees of punishment, the book decides.	Jesus conducts the trial; it sentences works, not decides salvation; Christians absent; today is the day of salvation.
The whole Bible	Isaiah 2 and Zechariah 14: promises to Israel's capital not yet kept.	1 Cor 15's order; two resurrections (John 5; Dan 12); Isaiah 65:20 cannot be heaven.	God's election of Israel makes Calvinists premillennial; Daniel 7, Matthew 19:28, Luke 1:32; Matthew 25:46's one word for forever.	Isaiah 2, 11, 19, 65; Micah 4; Psalm 72; Matthew 6:10 — read literally when reasonable; the King's prophecies demand a kingdom.

REVELATION 20:1–15 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Six times, one number.** "A thousand years" appears in vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 — the only place Scripture gives the kingdom a length — set against the vague "short time" of v. 3. HITCHCOCK
- **Five verbs of arrest.** Laid hold, bound, threw, shut, sealed (vv. 2–3). The purpose is not that Satan deceive less, but that he "would not deceive the nations any longer." TEXT
- **Even the release is on God's schedule.** *Dei lythēnai* — "he **must** be released." The passive voice: he is let out; he never breaks out. TEXT
- **One verb, two risings.** *Ezēsan*, "came to life," is used of the martyrs (v. 4) and of "the rest of the dead" (v. 5). If one is bodily, so is the other — two resurrections a thousand years apart. TEXT

- **The beheaded sit on thrones.** *Pepelekismenōn*, "executed with the axe," occurs only here in the New Testament. Those who refused the mark lost their heads and gained a crown. TSARFATI
- **The nations come up to Jerusalem.** Zechariah 14:16–17 — every year, for the Feast of Booths; no rain for the nation that stays home. TSARFATI
- **Gog and Magog I and II.** Ezekiel 38 after the rapture; Revelation 20:8 after the millennium. The name is the only thing they share — John's "Waterloo." HITCHCOCK
- **A thousand years later, they are still there.** The beast and the false prophet were thrown in alive (19:20) and "are also" there when the devil arrives (20:10). TEXT
- **The books and the book.** *Biblia*, the records of deeds, measure the sentence; *hē biblos tēs zōēs*, the book of life, decides the destiny. TEXT
- **No jury, no defense, no appeal.** The lost of every age before Jesus as Judge; believers, raised in the first resurrection, are not on trial here. HITCHCOCK
- **"Came to life" can only mean resurrection.** MacArthur will not let *ezēsan* be spiritualized. The first resurrection gathers all the saints of all the ages — Old Testament believers, the church, the tribulation martyrs — while "the rest of the dead," the unbelieving, wait a thousand years for theirs. MACARTHUR
- **The judgment fits the record.** MacArthur: the books are the complete record, measured against perfect holiness, and the sentence is exact — "Hell will have few lashes for some and many for others" (Luke 12:47). Believers are not there; their record was answered at the cross. MACARTHUR
- **A perfect world cannot make a righteous heart.** Jeremiah: everyone who enters the millennium is saved, yet their children must still choose. After a thousand years without the devil, some follow him the moment he is loosed — proof that man can never achieve righteousness apart from God. JEREMIAH
- **This throne does not decide who is saved.** Jeremiah: anyone summoned to the great white throne is already lost; believers have met Christ at His Judgment Seat. Here the works of the unsaved are sentenced, and the Lamb's book of life is the final evidence. JEREMIAH

† Questions for the Table

1 **Satan is called the one who "deceives the nations." Where does his deception reach you most easily — in what you fear, what you want, or what you believe about God?**

He is not bound yet; the believer's defense is alertness and the truth (1 Peter 5:8–9).

REVELATION 20:3, 8; 1 PETER 5:8

2 **Premillennial, amillennial and postmillennial believers all confess Christ's return. How can you hold your own view firmly and still treat a brother who differs as a brother?**

The chapter's center is not a chart but a throne — and every view bows before it.

REVELATION 20:4–6

3 **The martyrs of verse 4 lost their heads and gained thrones. What would you need to lose to stay faithful to Jesus this year — and what does this passage promise you in return?**

The first resurrection is "blessed and holy," and the second death has no power over it.

REVELATION 20:4, 6; 2:10–11

4 **After a thousand years of a perfect King, the nations still rebel. What does that tell you about the human heart — and about your own need for a new one?**

Environment cannot change a heart; only regeneration can (Jeremiah 17:9; Ezekiel 36:26).

REVELATION 20:7–9; PSALM 2:1–3

5 **Jerusalem is called “the beloved city.” How should God’s continuing love for Israel shape the way you pray and speak about the Jewish people?**

The promises to Abraham and David are kept in the city where they were made.

REVELATION 20:9; PSALM 87:2; ZECHARIAH 14:9

6 **At the white throne, “great and small” stand alike. Who do you know whose name may not be written in the book of life — and what is one step you can take toward them this week?**

The books record deeds; only the Lamb’s book saves — and its door is open now.

REVELATION 20:12, 15; 21:27

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A chain, a throne, a short rebellion and a white throne — and between them a thousand years in which the King reigns from Jerusalem. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · The teacher sections are the study author's faithful summaries — not verbatim quotations — of Amir Tsarfati (Revealing Revelation, with Rick Yohn, Harvest House, 2022; Behold Israel teaching on Revelation 20 and on Gog and Magog) and Mark Hitchcock (Prophecy Perspectives lessons on the millennium and the Great White Throne, Tipping Point Prophecy Update, 2025–2026; “Understanding Gog and Magog,” Israel My Glory, 2024; The End, Tyndale, 2012) as they bear on Revelation 20. Consult each author's own work for his exact words. · Greek text: SBL Greek New Testament. · Smith For Christ deep dive series. · John MacArthur’s sections summarize his Grace to You sermons on Revelation 20 — “The Coming Earthly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ” and “Man’s Last Day in God’s Court” (1994) — and his 2007 Shepherds’ Conference message “Why Every Self-Respecting Calvinist Is a Premillennialist,” as reported; David Jeremiah’s summarize The Coming Golden Age and Escape the Coming Night as excerpted by Turning Point, with his DavidJeremiah.org articles on the millennium and the Great White Throne.