

March 5, 2017

Revelation 20:4-6 The Millennium in Heaven

Well let's turn in our Bibles please to the book of Revelation chapter 20. We're going to read together verses 1 through 10, though the focus of our study today will be on verses 4 to 6. Revelation 20, beginning at verse 1:

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

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

“⁷ And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

Now last week, we began to study together Revelation chapter 20, and we saw that Revelation chapter 20 began the seventh and final parallel section of the book of Revelation. Each of the previous parallel sections of the book have traversed the time period between the first and second coming of Christ, and this last parallel section is no different.

Revelation chapter 20, verses 1 to 3, tells us about the events that took place at the first coming of Christ, when Satan was bound by Christ at the cross and rendered powerless to deceive the nations. We then looked at what it meant for Satan to be bound. We saw that Satan being bound by Christ at the cross means two things. First of all, it means that Satan is unable to get all the nations of the earth to work together to persecute the church. The church enjoys a large degree of safety and protection from the persecution of civil governments in this age. Satan is unable to deceive the nations into making a concerted, unified, intense, and prolonged effort to destroy

Christianity in the world. And while it is true that for the last 2,000 years, individual nations have tried to wipe out Christianity within their own borders from time to time, there has never been any kind of a transnational, worldwide effort to do so, nor will there be one, as long as Satan is bound so he cannot deceive the nations into doing so.

So because Satan is bound, the church enjoys a large degree of safety and protection from the kind of persecution that would overwhelm it and eradicate it from the face of the earth. Satan has been stripped of his power to persecute the church at that level by Jesus Christ.

The second thing we saw that Satan being bound means is that the church cannot be stopped from spreading the gospel throughout the whole world. The church is able to enter Satan's kingdom across the globe and penetrate into every nation and bring hundreds of millions of his people out of bondage to him, and bring them into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, so that they are now servants of Jesus.

In a word, Satan is so bound that the church can enter into his kingdom and plunder it at will, and Satan can do nothing to stop it. We can go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person, and Satan's hands are tied so that he is powerless to prevent that from occurring. This binding of Satan will go on as long as needed for all of God's elect to be saved.

Symbolically, this time period in which Satan is bound is called the Millennium, a symbolic thousand-year period in which the church is both divinely protected from persecution, and is zealously preaching the gospel message to all nations. This symbolic thousand-year period is an age-long, and yet definitely limited period of time, during which we enjoy protection, and during which we engage in preaching the gospel to the whole world, until our testimony is finished. When the last elect person has been saved, then our testimony will be finished. We do not know when the last elect person will be saved. It could occur today; it could occur many centuries into the future. But when the last elect person has been saved, then our testimony will be finished, and this millennial period of God's protection will be over.

Now then, as we live in this millennium of relative protection, due to the restraint of Satan, we made it clear in our last message that this does not mean that Satan is bound from engaging in any evil activity at all. Satan's restraint is partial, not complete, and Satan is still able to do a great deal of evil in this earth through his agents—the beast, the false prophet, Babylon, and those who have the mark of the beast. The church is still severely persecuted, and it endures great suffering as believers bear witness for Jesus Christ.

It is Satan's goal to kill as many believers as possible, and all through the last 2,000 years, he has viciously slaughtered Christians without number. The slaughter of Christians is Satan's greatest victory in this age, but our passage today makes it clear that even Satan's greatest victory is a complete defeat, because all those he kills immediately go to heaven to be with Jesus Christ.

Now last time, we talked about the structure of chapter 20, and we said that verses 1 to 3 was a description of the Millennium on earth, in which the topic was Satan's relationship to the nations of the earth during the Millennium, and that relationship is one of his being bound. We then said that verses 4 to 6 was a description of the Millennium in heaven, in which the topic was the rule and reign of the saints in heaven who had been martyred by Satan and his agents in this age. We said that the events of verses 1 to 3 and the events of verses 4 to 6 run parallel with each other, and occur during the same time period. The one set of events describes what is happening on earth, and the other set of events describes what is happening in heaven, at the same time.

The point of allowing us to see what is happening in heaven, while we are living through this millennial period here on the earth, is to assure us that the persecution we endure now in serving Christ, and any death that Satan and his people inflict on us now, results in victory and eternal life for us. So the primary point of verses 4 to 6 is to demonstrate the victory of God's people, who throughout the church age will suffer Satan's attacks and will endure martyrdom, but who will also receive a crown of glory for their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 2, verse 12 tells us that if we endure suffering for Christ, we will also reign together with Christ. And this passage in Revelation 20, verses 4 to 6, that we're going to be studying today, is a picture of that reigning with Christ for those suffering saints. It is a picture of that reign in action.

So verses 4 to 6 is meant to be an encouragement to suffering saints throughout the millennial period, who always triumph through Christ, even though during that period they are martyred for Christ here on earth. Satan's efforts to kill the believers never succeeds, because no sooner does he kill them than they immediately live again in heaven. So therefore, during this millennial period, there can be no defeat for believers, however, there is nothing *but* defeat for Satan. That's the message of verses 4 to 6.

Well then, let's explore our passage together today, as we look at Revelation chapter 20, verses 4 to 6. Now I want to re-read this fourth verse. Notice it says, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

In the first place then this morning, let us consider together the dwelling place of the martyrs. Now notice the first phrase in verse 4 says, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Now the question arises, Where are these thrones located? Are they located in heaven, or are they located on earth? The answer to that question is important, because the location of the thrones will tell us the locations of these souls that are sitting upon them. It's important for us to take note that every time we see believers represented by the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones, those thrones are always and without exception in heaven. Let's just take a quick little survey through the book of Revelation.

Turn back to chapter 3 and verse 21, where Jesus is making promises to the believers. He says in Revelation 3:21, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” And so, where is the throne of Jesus? Clearly, it’s in heaven. And so if we’re sitting with Him in His throne, on thrones, then those thrones are going to be in heaven.

Now notice if you will Revelation chapter 4, verses 1 to 4: “¹ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” So clearly, he’s being taken up to heaven. “² And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. ³ And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” So this is God the Father, sitting on His throne in heaven.

Now notice verse 4: “And round about the throne were four and twenty seats.” Now what’s interesting is that word “seat” is the exact same word that is translated “throne” in the first part of the verse. It’s the word *thronos*, and it should read, “And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the *thrones* I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” Now I don’t know why the King James translated that as “seats,” when it’s the exact same word for throne, as the throne God is sitting on. So these twenty-four elders aren’t just sitting on lawn chairs, or some wooden bench. They are enthroned. Twice in verse 4 it says that they were sitting upon thrones.

Now turn to Revelation 11, verses 15 and 16. It says in Revelation 11:15, “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their”—and there it is again, the Greek word is *thronos*, the word “throne”—were sitting on their thrones, and “fell upon their faces, and worshipped God.”

And now turn to Revelation 20 and verse 4. Revelation 20 and verse 4 says, “And I saw thrones,”—the exact same Greek word that was translated “seats” earlier—“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.” So here, the same Greek word *thronos* is translated “thrones,” where it was previously translated “seats.”

So the point is, these thrones upon which believers sit are located in heaven, and therefore these believers spoken of in Revelation 20, verses 4 to 6, are also in heaven. Now we would expect that to be the case, since in a moment in verse 4, John is going to tell us that those who sit on these thrones are the disembodied souls of men. And the disembodied souls of men never remain upon the earth. They always go either immediately to hell or immediately to heaven. He says, “I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.” So their bodies have been beheaded, and their souls were in heaven.

Of the 47 uses of the word *thronos* in the book of Revelation, it is used once of Satan's throne, in chapter 2 and verse 13, and it is used twice of the throne of the beast, in chapter 13 and verse 2, and chapter 16 and verse 10. The remaining 44 usages of the word *thronos* are all of thrones in heaven, either the throne of God or the throne of believers. The point is, any good throne is a throne in heaven, or else a throne in the new earth and the new heavens.

If these people are living and reigning with Christ for the thousand-year millennial age, we must ask, Where is Christ located during this thousand-year millennial church age? From what place is Christ reigning? Well, He is reigning from heaven, and therefore, those who are reigning with Him are also reigning from heaven, beside Him.

So the dispensational idea that somehow these saints are reigning from thrones on earth during some future millennial period is both unfounded and unscriptural. Instead, these saints are enjoying the purity and the blessedness of heaven in the immediate presence of Christ, as they behold His glory and as they participate in His rule.

So here, then, is Satan's defeat. By killing the saints on earth, he did not harm them. Instead, he promoted them to the glory of heaven, a place far better than anything they ever experienced on earth. In trying to harm the saints, Satan only brought about their increased blessing. He achieved the exact opposite of his goal. You know, only a fool fights Christ and His people and hopes to win, and Satan is the biggest fool of all.

Well that brings us then to our second major point this morning. Having seen the dwelling place of the martyrs—that it's in heaven, notice secondly, the justification of the martyrs. It says here in verse 4, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." Now while believers are here on earth, the world passes judgment on them. They are scorned, they are mocked, they are condemned, and they are rejected by the world. They are viewed as wicked bigots and self-righteous hypocrites, and as the scum of the earth, and held in utter contempt by all. Society looks down on Christians and treats them with injustice and with oppression and with scorn. But the sentence society and the world passes on Christians is going to be overturned by God.

Notice what it says in verse 4: "And judgment was given unto them." That is, a favorable judgment was given to them. The idea contained in that phrase is that judgment was passed *for* them, rather than judgment being passed *against* them. In other words, judgment was passed in favor of the saints by God. They were given a favorable verdict by God. That this is the proper interpretation of that phrase is confirmed by Daniel 7:22, which describes the same event. It says, "...the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High."

You see, the world passes its judgment on us now, and its sentence is, "Condemned!" God will pass His judgment on His saints when they appear before Him at their death, and His sentence is, "Righteous!" What the saints in heaven experience here is God vindicating them from the slanders and false judgments of the world, and the unjust sentence that the world has passes upon

them. God vindicates His saints, God justifies His saints, and God exonerates His saints. God condemns and overturns the judgment of the world against them, and God acquits them and clears them of the accusations of evil men.

As it says in Romans 8:31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” It goes on to say in Romans 8:33, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” And if God is for us, and if God justifies us, then we are eternally vindicated and liberated from all of the shame and contempt and the slanderous judgment that the world has passed upon us and placed upon us. The judgments of the world as to who we are and what we are, will cling to us no more—they are gone forever. The accusations of the Evil One and his helpers are rendered meaningless and dismissed as being without any merit of any kind at all.

What did the world think of believers? What judgment did the world pass on the believers? Their judgment was, “Behead them!” And what did God think of the believers? What judgment did He pass upon them? His judgement was, “Enthroned them!” God has a passionate concern for justice, and He will give justice to His people. Judgment will be given to them.

And that brings us then to our third major point this morning. Having seen the dwelling place of the martyrs—it’s in heaven; having seen the justification of the martyrs—they are not condemned, they are enthroned; now notice thirdly, the faithfulness of the martyrs.

Now who exactly are those who are sitting on these thrones in heaven, and who are they who are justified by God? Well, verse 4 says, “and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded.” Here are the saints of God who have proven the strength and the genuineness of their faith by laying down their lives for Jesus Christ. I do not think that this class of people mentioned here only consists of those who suffered a literal beheading while they were here on earth. After all, what about those who were burned at the stake? Are they excluded from this class of people because they died with their heads still attached to their bodies? And what about those who were shot for their faith, or hung by the neck, or torn apart by lions? What of those who were starved to death in prison or beaten to death? Are they excluded because they died with their heads still attached to their bodies?

And what of those who suffered the slow death of many decades of pouring out their life and their health as a living sacrifice to Christ and in faithful service to Christ, and who wore out their lives in serving Him, and then died? Are they excluded because they died with their heads intact? Are not all of these that I just described to you martyrs for Christ?

I think that every Christian without exception is represented by those who are said to be beheaded for the witness of Jesus. Every Christian without exception is a martyr, because every Christian lays down his life, in one way or another, for Jesus Christ, either in the quick death of beheading, or in the long slow death of dying to self, and laying down one’s life for Christ for a lifetime. Indeed, the word “martyr” is a translation of the Greek word *martus*, which means to be a witness, and is translated with the word “witness” 29 times in the KJV New Testament.

For example, Acts 1:8 says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be [martyrs] witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Every Christian is a witness for Jesus Christ, and every Christian pours out and lays down his life for Christ, and every Christian presents his body as a living sacrifice to Christ. And therefore, every Christian is a martyr for Christ. So this symbolic category of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus represents all Christians and every Christian, because all Christians are martyrs, or witnesses, for Christ.

Now in setting forth the faithfulness of these martyrs, John tells us that they were all marked by both positive and negative characteristics. Notice our text in verse 4. It says, “and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded”—now notice positively—“for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and”—negatively—“which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.” So positively, these martyrs maintained their witness for Jesus. Even when threatened with beheading, they continued to confess Christ before men. They would not deny Christ, no matter the cost, and they openly confessed Christ, no matter the price. Whatever price they had to pay to openly confess Christ, even if it meant the loss of their head, they were willing to do that.

Furthermore, they defended and taught and lived according to the Word of God. The Scriptures were their ultimate authority, and the Scriptures were their final authority, and they would rather die than betray its teachings, deny its doctrines, or compromise its principles. They were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and they were beheaded for the Word of God. So these are the two positive virtues that mark all believers in Jesus Christ—they maintain the witness of Jesus, and they live by and proclaim the Word of God.

Now negatively, it says that the faithfulness of these martyrs was demonstrated by the fact that they refused to worship the god of this world, represented by the beast. They would not worship the civil government as God, or see the civil government as the ultimate source of authority, or see it as the final determiner of right and wrong. They would not think like anti-Christian government wanted them to think, or act like anti-Christian government demanded that they act. Instead, they remained faithful to Jesus Christ. And so it was these faithful martyrs, and it was these faithful witnesses who were justified by God and who were enthroned in heaven.

That brings us to our fourth major point this morning. We’ve seen the dwelling place of the martyrs— they’re in heaven; the justification of the martyrs—God said that they were worthy to be enthroned in heaven; and the faithfulness of the martyrs—they were willing to lay down their life for Jesus Christ, they maintained the testimony of Christ and their commitment to the Scriptures no matter what it cost them, and they utterly refused to recognize the gods of this world as having any authority over them, or of ever bowing to them, no matter what cost they incurred because of that.

Having then seen the dwelling place, the justification, and the faithfulness of the martyrs, notice fourthly, the resurrection of the martyrs. Now it says at the end of verse 4, “and they”—that is,

these martyrs—“lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Though they were killed for their faithfulness to Christ and His word, and though they were killed for their refusal to worship the God of this world, they did not remain dead. Their bodies remained dead, on the earth, but their souls were now more alive in heaven than they had ever been on the earth. Their souls were made perfect, and their souls were brought into perfect union with God, and as a result it is said of them that they *lived*. They were alive like they had never been alive before. They were filled with the perfect life that Adam had before the Fall, but elevated to a level of permanent and perfect and eternal righteousness. This perfect new life that their souls obtained at their death is declared to be “the first resurrection,” in verse 5.

Now I want you to look at verse 5. It says, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” Verse 6: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Now we must understand that the first sentence in verse 5 is a parenthetical statement. When it says, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished,” you could put parentheses around that sentence. It is an aside. It is an interruption to the flow of thought that must be set aside for the moment and dealt with later, and we will deal with it in a few moments.

And so setting aside the first sentence in verse 5 as a parenthetical statement, the flow of thought from verse 4 continues in the middle of verse 5, and then all the way through to end of verse 6. And so all that is said of the believers in verse 4, and all that verse 4 says these believers experience, is called in verse 5 “the first resurrection.”

Now I want you to notice the second half of verse 5. It says, “This is the first resurrection.” And the word “This” refers back up to all that was said in verse 4. So this perfect new life that the martyrs received and is described in verse 4, is said in verse 5 to be the first resurrection. That is, everything that is said in verse 4 is the first *phase* of their resurrection. The second resurrection, or the second *phase* of their resurrection, will take place at the second coming, when their dead bodies are raised and perfected and reunited with their already perfect souls that are in heaven, as described in verse 4.

The blessedness of participating in the first resurrection of the soul being perfected and brought into perfect union with God in heaven upon one’s death, cannot be overstated. That blessedness is declared in verse 6. Notice it says, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

It says in verse 6, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” Who has part in the first resurrection? Those described in verse 4—the disembodied souls in heaven who are sitting on thrones, justified by God for their faithfulness to God while they were alive on earth.

It says of them that they *live*, and this life they have in heaven as disembodied perfect souls in perfect union with God, is said to be the first resurrection, and it is a blessed resurrection.

It says, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection,” verse 6. And why are those who participate in the first resurrection, which is described in verse 4, so blessed? Well, for two reasons. Negatively, it says in verse 6, that they will never experience the second death. Notice verse 6: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.” Here is the first aspect of their blessing, negatively, “on such the second death hath no power.”

Now it’s a wonderful thing to be delivered from the second death. You ask, Well, what is the second death? The answer is contained right here in chapter 20, in verses 13 and 14. Notice verse 13. It says, “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” Now here it is, verse 14: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Being cast into the lake of fire *is* the second death. And those who take part in the first resurrection, these souls that are described in verse 4, will never wind up in the lake of fire. In a word, the souls of believers in heaven can never run the risk of winding up in the lake of fire. They are forever delivered from that possibility. Once you get to heaven, you can never wind up in hell.

Positively, this blessedness of those who are in verse 4, who were said to have experienced the first resurrection—positively, it says in verse 6, “but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” And so believers in heaven minister as priests before the throne of God, giving Him worship. And believers in heaven reign with Christ in the kingdom of God, giving Him service. No more blessed position could even be occupied than the position of being kings and priests before God, serving in the kingdom of God, all to the glory of God. Twice we are told in verse 4 and in verse 6 that this ministry of being kings and priests will go on in heaven, all throughout the millennial age, for the entire thousand-year church age.

But this millennial privilege of reigning with Christ will not end at the end of the Millennium, because Revelation 22 and verse 5 tells us that this millennial reign that we are engaged in now will be transformed into an eternal reign with Christ when the new heavens and the new earth are established, and we will have that status of priests and kings with Christ forever. But He’s making sure that we know that this status and this privilege is going to go on, and that blessedness is going to be experienced, for the entire church age. As long as they’re in heaven, they are kings and they are priests.

So we know the blessedness of the believers when they die. They cannot ever run the risk of experiencing the second death, and they have this glorious privilege of being priests and kings with Christ and before the throne of God. That’s their blessedness.

But what happens to the wicked dead during this thousand-year millennial period of the church age? This brings us back to the first sentence in verse 5 that I promised you we would return to. Notice verse 5: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” We said that this sentence was parenthetical; that is, it interrupted the flow of thought. And you have seen, if you just took it and set it aside, the flow of thought is very continuous, from verse 4 to verse 5b and verse 6. It just all flows as one topic. But then we have this insertion of this first sentence in verse 5.

This parenthetical sentence tells us that the rest of the dead—that is, those whose souls do not go to heaven when they die—it says of them that they do not live again until the thousand years are finished. This death they experienced when they died during the church age is their first death. That is, when the wicked die in this age, their souls are not only separated from their bodies, but their souls are also finally and permanently and irrevocably separated from God. They are both physically dead and spiritually dead. They are cast into hell. Their souls are cast into hell, and they remain there in conscious torment for the entire millennial period. This is their first death.

It is only at the end of the millennial period, when Christ returns, that they are brought out of hell, reunited with their resurrected bodies, and therefore, since they are reunited with their resurrected bodies, they can be said to live again. Verse 5: “But the rest of the dead *lived not again* until the thousand years were finished.” And the clear implication is that when the thousand years were finished, they *did* live again.

And so this “living again” at the end of the thousand-year period is described in Revelation 20, verses 12 and 13. Notice it says, verse 12: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹⁴ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” So now they’re resurrected out of hell, they’re reunited with their bodies, and now they’re standing before God on the day of judgment, and so they can be said to be “alive again.” But this life is very short. They are judged by Christ and they are cast into the lake of fire, and experience their second death, which is eternal separation from God and eternal pain and torment of soul and body forever, in the lake of fire.

So the righteous have a two-stage resurrection. First, their souls are raised to heaven and made perfect. That’s the first resurrection. Then, at the second coming of Christ, their bodies are raised and made perfect and reunited with their perfected souls, and that’s the second resurrection. They then dwell forever in the new earth. Thus, the righteous have a first and a second resurrection.

But in contrast to the two-stage resurrection of the righteous, the wicked have a two-stage death. First, their souls are condemned to hell and experience torment there. That is their first death. Then, at the second coming of Christ, their bodies are raised and made suitable for eternal

suffering, and their corrupt souls are reunited with these bodies made suitable for eternal torment, and they are then cast into the lake of fire, and that is the second death of the wicked.

So then, we see what occurs in heaven during the church age. And when we see what occurs in heaven during the church age, it is a great encouragement to believers who suffer and who lay down their lives for Christ, however they may lay them down. They who suffer at the hands of the wicked and are finally killed by them, go to heaven. And the wicked, who killed them, when they die, they go to hell. The wicked are condemned, though the world justified them; and the saints are vindicated, though the world condemned them.

And so what is being said in verses 4 to 6 is that Satan is always defeated, and Satan's people are always defeated. And the saints always triumph, no matter the situation or the circumstance that they find themselves in. Even when Satan does his worst in this age, this millennial age we're living in, it always works out for our best and for his failure. For if we live, we get to live unto Christ. And if we die, we get to go to be with Christ. So we're in a no-lose situation. For them, they are in a no-win situation. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, and then they are cast into hell, along with the beast and the false prophet, and Satan himself, as we shall see next week. And they go into an eternity of suffering, while we go into an eternity of joy.

And I just want to say to every person that's listening to my voice that you need to think long and hard about whether you're going to experience the first and second resurrection, or the first and second death. And the difference between those two outcomes is this: Did you repent of your sins to Jesus Christ, and receive Him as your Lord and Savior, and remain faithful to Him in your walk and your life?

Or did you love the praise of men and the approval of the world so much that you didn't want to be identified with those "hypocritical religious folk," and so you went the way of the world and you worshiped the gods of the world and you sought the pleasures of the world and of Babylon? And in that great day, you will be called before the throne of God, and you will be judged according to your works, and your works will say that you lived a life of defiance and rebellion against the Lord Jesus Christ. And when that record is established, you will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

But, O, if you maintained, as it says in verse 4, the witness of Jesus and you followed the Word of God, and you refused to worship the gods of this world because you were worshiping the God Jesus Christ, then on that great day, judgment will be given in favor of you, you will be enthroned, and you will never run the risk of being in the lake of fire. You will forever be a priest and a king in the kingdom of God, to live in eternal happiness and bliss with the God who made you, and made you for Himself.

And if you do not have a relationship with this God, you can never be happy, in time or in eternity. And if you would have a relationship with Him, then repent of your sins and believe in

Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your Savior, and follow Him as His disciple. And those who are faithful to that commitment and to that life will be received into the everlasting habitations of the glory of heaven. May I meet you there in that great day, because you turned away from the gods of the world and you followed the God Jesus Christ. Shall we pray together.

Our Father, we thank you so much for our wonderful Savior, and that no one has ever been the loser by following Him, for He provides the most blessed life possible on this earth, and then the most blessed life conceivable in all of eternity. And while we may suffer for Him, that suffering will be well rewarded and completely compensated, and this light affliction which is but for a moment will work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen, but on the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

And so Father, help us to live for Jesus Christ, and though we see Him not now, one day we will look upon His face. And so, Father, cause us then to keep this vision bright before our eyes so that when the pressure is put on us to go the way of the world, we stand firm, even to the point of losing our lives, before we would betray and deny Christ to have the favor of men.

Father, thank you for this wonderful privilege of suffering for you here now, under the assaults and the insults of the world, and of then being received by you into glory, to eternal reward and blessedness. Father, we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.