

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

In the world today we see and hear of much unrest and even in our own lives before we surrendered to the Lord Jesus would acknowledge that it was the same for us.

What was it that brought rest? Much property, wealth, social status, power over others, and no doubt you could cite other reasons from your own experience but what was it?

Those who have chosen to submit and follow Christ surely have taken the words of our Saviour to heart and accepted the rest that followed as stated in Matthew 11:28, Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Please notice that the promise is for rest not the fulfillment of any of those worldly things that we sought after before surrendering ourselves to Jesus.

Perhaps you sense that your rest is not complete, perhaps you still have some areas of unrest in your life and perhaps caused by still desiring or lusting after worldly things? John is very clear that the things of the world are not of the Father and conversely will not give us rest (1 John 2:16)

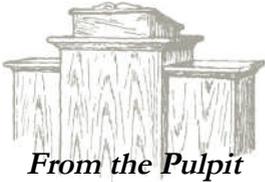
The article “My Soul is Satisfied” explores some of those areas but another area in my view that does not bring rest or is unlikely to do so is when we doubt God’s word or try to find loopholes so we can in our own opinion continue to pursue some of those worldly things and pleasures.

Another area that may contribute or lead to not having rest as Jesus would desire for us and offers us is when we expose ourselves to vain babblings that Apostle Paul warns Timothy and us against, 1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16.

Furthermore Paul also has some excellent directions in 1 Timothy 1:4 and 1 Timothy 6:4 and following them will also ensure our rest.

There is no doubt that if we were to disregard the warnings in the above verses that there would be little if any rest nor would our soul be satisfied.

If we desire the rest that Jesus promised to those that come to Him then let the words of Romans 14:17:19 be a guide for our life and then we can be confident that rest will follow. “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.¹⁸ For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men.¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” *J.v.L*



My Soul Is Satisfied

*From a message by Wendell Eberly
Given at Ashland Mennonite Bible School*

From the Pulpit

Bring greetings to you again, we welcome you to another week of Bible study trusting that it is with you like Jesus said: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.”

For a message I would like to consider a saying or a statement that is on a gospel sign, perhaps you have seen it, maybe it has been in your own yards there is a gospel sign that is circulating that says “My Soul Is Satisfied” This is not an exact scriptural quote but it does have a scriptural basis.

Turn to Psalm 103, thinking of my soul is satisfied and while you are turning there in [Psalm 23:1](#) we have this verse: “The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.” It is a picture of someone satisfied when God is their Shepherd.

[Psalm 103:1-2](#) Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *ble*ss his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: [Psalm 103:5](#) Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; *so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

[Psalm 107:9](#) For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

That is a picture of someone that is satisfied.

There are other verses in Scripture that would continue to build the thought of my soul is satisfied but I think we will move on and consider the title.

What is our soul? When we say my soul is satisfied what is satisfied?

[1 Thessalonians 5:23](#) tells us or it is one of the places that tells us that our body is a threefold being there it says: And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.....

Our bodies are a threefold being.

Let's first of all consider our body.

Our body is a temple, an abode, the house or we might say the dwelling place for the soul and the spirit, the body waxes old and feeble and eventually dies and that is in contrast to the soul and spirit that are eternal.

Our body has appetites that cannot be satisfied but must be crucified. In [Proverbs 27:20](#) it says the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Turn to [Ecclesiastes 1:8](#) and the latter part it says the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Appetites that cannot be satisfied.

[Isaiah 5:8](#) talks of men that join house to house, that lay field to field till there be no place. Again we see an appetite of man that is not satisfied.

Man fails when he attempts to satisfy the soul by feeding the appetites of the body, many men do that they attempt to satisfy the soul by feeding the appetites of the body but it leaves and emptiness avoid, the soul can never be satisfied by feeding bodily appetites.

In [Matthew 19:16-22](#) we have the young man that came to Jesus wondering what he must do to inherit eternal life. When Jesus said that he should sell what he has and give to the poor it says he went away sorrowful. He was attempting to find meaning in life by holding on to the appetites of the body these earthly things; they were standing between the satisfaction that he longed for and himself.

Let's turn to Luke 12 we have another example here in verse 13.

An individual from the crowd comes up to Jesus and says:

“Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. ¹⁴And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰ But God said unto him, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall*

be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹ So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” [Luke 12:13-21](#)

The rich fool was a man who attempted to find soul satisfaction by feeding his bodily appetites.

We notice in this account that when one level of achievement is attained man reaches for the next because the emptiness remains. This fool thought when he had much that he would build himself barns and bestow all his fruits and his goods thinking that the next level would offer what he was looking for.

A more current example is Alexander the Great the first one that conquered the known world at the time, he travelled rapidly conquering every important throne and he covered a vast territory but after he had conquered every throne history says that he wept. Why? Because he had reached the highest rung on his ladder, he was world Emperor the highest rung on his ladder only to discover it offered nothing more than the ground on which the ladder rested.

He had an appetite that could not be satisfied. A bodily appetite will not satisfy the soul it leaves a man empty regardless of the degree that he fills it to.

In [Job 20:22](#) it says in the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits. The picture of men like Alexander and like Solomon who did all that they could possibly do to find meaning in life by feeding the appetites of the body and they were still in straits they were in distress.

Man has not yet learnt how to find true soul satisfaction or we should say the masses have not.

For example it used to be the record player, when I was a youth the eight tracks were common the cassette tapes, today we have the CD's and the MP3s the advancement that man continues to make, improvement yes but it does not satisfy the soul.

When man was first able to communicate via the telegraph they thought they had mastered much, then it was the telephone, then it was a cellphone

and now it is the smart phone, man continues to reach for a higher level thinking that satisfaction and meaning will come with one rung higher but it leaves him at the same place.

Look again at the words of Jesus in verse 15 of Luke 12, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Leaving the body we want to think now of the soul and spirit.

The soul and spirit are closely entwined yet they are separate, [Hebrews 4:12](#) tells us that God alone can divide between the soul and the spirit. The soul and the spirit are of the innermost parts of man and because they are not tangible they are more difficult to grasp and to comprehend.

Unger's Bible dictionary explains the difference between the soul and spirit in this way; "The soul is that part of man that concerns life, action and emotion, the spirit of man is the inner part of man that relates to worship and divine communion."

Or you might say that the soul is man's spirit and what we know as the Spirit or God's Spirit and they are able to communicate together it is the connection between the body, man, and God, the soul and the Spirit, man's side and God's side being able to relate together and communicate with God.

Now we know that the soul has an appetite we have mentioned that but to feed the appetite of the soul means or requires that we have communion and fellowship with God.

We are doing that these three weeks, reading the word, in prayer, those are ways that the soul is fed that is what brings satisfaction to man, full obedience, surrender, and pure heartedness. When the soul's appetite is fed then the whole of man, the body, the soul and with the spirit is satisfied.

Satisfied means to fill up a desire for a want, it means to saturate, it means to be filled to overflowing, fall and running over or you might say more than can be contained, that is what God is able to do for us when we feed the appetites of the soul, He is able to fill us full and overflowing.

[Psalm 63:5](#) says: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

That is a picture of having the best that life can offer and the psalm writer is saying that his soul can be satisfied in that way when we feed the appetite of the soul.

We would like to consider just several things that hinder or destroy finding soul satisfaction and building on the one thought that we have been using and that is to feed the wrong man.

If you feed the appetites of the body it will never satisfy the appetite of the soul, Solomon tried it, in Ecclesiastes it says that he gave his heart to know wisdom or education, it proved to be empty so he pursued pleasure and mirth, life is still empty so he tried silver in abundance and he still concluded that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

When we feed the appetites of the body it is going to hinder finding soul satisfaction rather we must crucify them.

Another thing that will destroy or hinder finding true satisfaction is to tantalise our minds with things that God has withheld from us and simply to continually long for something that we do not have.

We know that God does not call everyone to marriage; can you find contentment in being single if God called you to that?

Some people do not enjoy physical health like others but to accept what God brings into our experience but if we tantalise our minds with things that God has withheld it will hinder finding true satisfaction.

Another thing that will hinder us is if we have too much of this world's goods.

We could think of the young man that came to Jesus or the rich fool both of them had much of this world's goods and it was a hindrance to them in finding what they truly longed for.

[Ecclesiastes 5:11](#) tells us when goods increase they are increased that eat them and what good is there to the owners thereof saving the beholding of them with their eyes.

To have more does not bring and does not give man what he truly longs for.

In the affluent society in which we live we have much perhaps too much and it can hinder us from finding true soul satisfaction.

We would like to conclude with things that bring true satisfaction.

What is it that we can do, how do we find soul satisfaction?

The first one I would like to list is surrender, the giving up of ourselves. Remember the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12 had a thorn in the flesh and he prayed three times that God would remove that but it was when Paul surrendered to what God brought into his life that he finally found satisfaction.

Verse nine of that chapter, [2 Corinthians 12:9](#) Paul says: And He said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

His testimony was when he gave up when he surrendered himself then he found soul satisfaction.

[Psalm 63:3](#) says that God's loving kindness is better than life.

What God has to give me is far better than what I would choose myself. So surrendering ourselves to God brings true satisfaction.

Number two: Filling our minds with thoughts of God will bring satisfaction.

Again in Psalm 63 verse five we have read that before but I would like to read it again, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lives when I remembered the upon my bed and meditate upon thee in the night watches," [Psalm 63:5-6](#)

Filling our minds with thoughts of God, a God consciousness continually will bring soul satisfaction.

Contentment in life, being thankful for what God has given to us.

First Timothy six reading several verses beginning at verse six.

[1 Timothy 6:6-10](#) But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Contentment in life even if it offers little, being content with what God has blessed us with, being thankful for it will help to bring soul satisfaction.

The next point is similar and that is contentment with life instead of contentment in life contentment with life and that is accepting life as God has given to you.

In [1 Corinthians 7:20-27](#) we won't read it all but in verse 21, Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, usage rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's Freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.

Contentment with life, satisfied with where God has placed you in family life, in church life, in your personal life, being content with that which life brings, soul satisfaction.

Waiting on God brings soul satisfaction.

Too often we try to take things into our own hands, too often we find ourselves perhaps ahead of God not waiting on God, letting God work will help to find soul satisfaction.

When the children of Israel were at the Red Sea and the Egyptians were behind them Moses said: Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. [Exodus 14:13](#)

Let God work. And we know that God did work in their behalf.

Perhaps it is easy to look at their experience but we need to be able to come to that place ourselves to wait on God.

The last one that I have is to be involved in things with eternal value.

Again we will contrast the life of King Solomon and the life of the Apostle Paul.

It is easy to get involved with earthly things, earthly duties and responsibilities the pursuit of things of this life like Solomon did but if we are going

to put our emphasis in life on earthly things we will come to the place like Solomon did where all is vanity and vexation of spirit, life is empty and life will be meaningless.

But contrast that with the life of the Apostle Paul who laboured extensively in Kingdom work, financially the Apostle Paul would have been poor, he owned no real estate, he had very little in fact while he laboured others often met his needs, there were women that provided for him, there were churches that lifted offerings for him, we do know that he did labour with his hands as opportunity availed but the Apostle Paul had very little of earthly goods, he was involved in Kingdom work things with eternal value. When he came to the end of life he says: "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I finish my course, I've kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day and not to me only but to all them also that love His appearing." [2 Timothy 4:6-8](#)

What a contrast between Solomon and the Apostle Paul.

The difference was where their focus in life was, Solomon fed the appetites of the body, the Apostle Paul fed the appetites of the soul and he found meaning and value in life. May we do the same.



Believe.

From a devotional by Tom Bender

There is an inspirational commitment to make to each other and to our Lord as we are privileged to share together.

You may open your Bibles to the Book of John first of all perhaps to one of the key verses of this book. This morning I would like to think for just a few moments about the word "believe" It is a very primary theme in the Book of John and we are given a perspective to John's writings within his

gospel where the Apostle explains how he decided what to write and what he did not write. “

He says in John 20:31: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Back in John 1:12 we notice this thought of believing is introduced in this verse: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

The words "received" and "believe" are synonymous in that verse.

Now let's go to chapters 3, it is the familiar story of Nicodemus, remember Nicodemus thought he was a spiritual man, one that was much more ready to exercise his belief or his knowledge than many of the Pharisees were. Jesus had explained some things to Nicodemus that Nicodemus was puzzled by. In verse 9 Nicodemus exclaimed: How can these things be? (John 3:9)

There are some things about "believe" that are hard to explain, there are some things that are beliefs that don't necessarily fit into simple logic. There are some things that are hardly even contained in the thought of knowledge, there are things that we believe that we recite but we can hardly claim that even as knowledge. Let's begin reading at verse 11 and notice the emphasis to believe:

John 3:11-18:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. ¹²If I have told you earthly things, and ye **believe** not, how shall ye **believe**, if I tell you of heavenly things? ¹³And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵That whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever **believeth** in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

¹⁸He that **believeth** on him is not condemned: but he that **believeth** not is condemned already, because he hath not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And verse 36: “He that **believeth** on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that **believeth** not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The story is told of a missionary in one of the regions of Africa as he was endeavoring to translate the gospel of John into the native language, he had not discovered a word within the native vocabulary that contained the thought of the word "believe" and he had struggled to find one and not finding any he went on leaving that spot blank in the verses as he was translating, but you can imagine that was a wee bit of a unsatisfactory approach when the Book of John so focuses on believing and belief.

Then one day there was a messenger who had come running into the village from a neighboring village through the jungle, it was a very difficult and strenuous task, when the runner reached the centre of the village because he was so exhausted flung himself into a hammock that was strung there between two trees and then he said a word that the missionary did not understand, did not know what it meant so he asked one of the bystanders: "What did he say, what did he mean?"

And the person explained that the runner was saying that all he can do right now is rest all his weight on this hammock. He was resting all his weight on it was the English translation that he was given and that appealed to the missionary that that is one of the meanings of the words "believe" Resting our weight on God's Word.

I think there is truth in that as we think about our lesson, as we think about what Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus, as we think about living a Christian life today. Knowledge and believe are not true synonyms because people can know and not rest their weight on what they know, but as we "believe" as Jesus said here, as we believe in Him, as we entrust our entire present, past and future then we are saved, we shall not perish, He that believeth on Him is not condemned.

It is not enough to have knowledge, it is not enough to give a mental assent but there must be a proactive response otherwise we will have a dead faith, James says faith without works is dead. (James 2:20, 26)

This morning do we count it a privilege to have that opportunity that helps us believe, that helps us to respond with more than just words. Can we sense the importance of endeavoring to rest all our weight, so that our entire scope of life leans on this one fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He loved the world so much that He came to give His life for our salvation.

May the Lord bless our knowledge and further our belief in His revealed Word.

May the Lord help us to believe with all of our weight on His promises and order our lives according to His direction.



A LOOK AT REVELATION TWENTY by Merle Ruth

The following paragraphs are an attempt to introduce the view of Revelation 20 that, in the opinion of the writer, can be best substantiated. Related themes are also touched upon

First, a few general remarks concerning the structure of the book of Revelation. The visions related in this book frequently seem to lead right up to the second coming, only to retrace themselves a number of times. Stated otherwise, the book, as I understand it, does not follow a continuous chronological sequence; there is progressive parallelism, there is repeated coverage of the same time span from different perspectives. For example, in chapter 10 and 11 it seems clear that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet the whole purpose of God in human history is complete and the time is come for the dead to be judged (Revelation 11:18). Yet after this announcing of the end, chapter 12 brings us back to the beginning of the Christian era, for there we have pictured the dragon waiting to devour the man-child (the new-born Christ). I believe that another of these “breaks” in continuity occurs between chapter 19 and 20. Revelation 20 marks a return to the beginning of the New Testament era and constitutes, within itself, a comprehensive unit. It is, according to my understandings a panoramic view of the entire New Testament era including the final consumma-

tion. I further believe that its successive paragraphs represent a shifting of scenes with the context indicating the location in view.

In support of this view is the following observation: Chapter 19 depicts surely the return of Christ and His crushing of all opposition. It is the climax in a series of visions, each of which lead up to the end of time. At the conclusion of chapter 19, Satan's victims and agents have been finally and decisively dealt with. The fowls have devoured "the flesh of all men" (verse 18). If there is unbroken historical continuity, if chapter 20 is the natural sequence of chapter 19, as premillenarians claim, how then is one to account for the sudden presence of "nations" (verse 3) and wicked people as numerous "as the sand of the sea" (verse 8)? Where did they all come from? And so quickly? Were the exterminated ones quickly resurrected? If, however, there is a break in continuity and chapter 20 represents a return to former ground that has already been traversed and is a unit within itself — then that obvious problem is eliminated.

Let's move now to Revelation 20. Hopefully you would agree that Revelation 20:1-3 speaks of the restraint put upon Satan as a consequence of the victory of Christ. Since that victory is a past accomplishment, I view this binding as an already accomplished fact. Since we ought to let scripture interpret scripture, I believe this binding of Satan is the same as that referred to by our Lord in Matthew 12:29 where Christ speaks of His binding of "the strong man" (Satan) as a prerequisite for "spoiling his house" (snatching lost ones from his domain). Significantly, the same Greek word is employed in both passages. The use of the key and the chain symbolize restraint, and this terminology finds a remarkable parallel in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, both of which speak of past action imposed on demonic forces. Generally, premillenarians acknowledge that the bruising of Satan's head, foretold in Genesis 3:15, did occur when Christ died on the cross. It is not very likely that the "bruising" and the "binding" were meant to be different terms with a similar of meaning? Persons who find it difficult to accept the fact that Satan is now "bound" need to reckon with the equally strong language used to describe Satan's present condition in the non-apocalyptic books of the New Testament (Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14 and John 12:31, 16:11).

The Greek word translated “bound” in Revelation 20:2 is one that does not represent the person in this state as immobile. Other uses of this word clearly indicate that fact. Note the following: “I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem” (Acts 20:22). “The woman. . . is bound by the law to her husband” (Romans 7:2). Satan is indeed bound, but he has been given, we might say, a long chain. A certain gangster was said to have ruled Chicago from a Chicago jail. Something similar could be said of Satan.

Since the key and the chain obviously symbolize restraint, I find it consistent to view the number 1000 as likewise symbolizing a long period of time rather than precisely that many years. This is in keeping with the fact disclosed in Revelation 1:1, namely, that this revelation would be “signified” to John. That anticipates the employment of symbols, numerology etc. Just as the seven churches are representative of the Church universal, so the 1000 years are, as I see it, representative of the entire “Christian” era, the inter-advent period extending from the first advent of Christ to the “little season” on the eve of the second advent. It would correspond to the present mediatorial reign of Christ. Included in this symbolism may also be the idea of the completeness of Christ’s power over the Devil. For the number 1000 is the sacred number three added to the perfect number seven to form ten, the number of completeness, and then raised to the third power. As such, it speaks of the completeness and perfection of Christ’s victory over Satan.

If, as the premillenarian claims, Satan is not to be bound until after Christians have gone to be with the Lord (“raptured”) and are thus forever beyond Satan’s reach, the fact of his being then finally bound affords little if any comfort for the present. But if that binding occurred at the first advent, it then becomes a tremendous source of inspiration. It supplies the saint with solid ground on which to meet the Enemy.

In spite of the above given evidence that Satan is now “bound,” some point to the fact that Satan appears to be exercising great deceptive powers. For them, this is conclusive evidence that Revelation 20:1-6 must speak of a yet future time. Let it be noted, however, that this passage emphasizes one particular area in which his deceptive powers have been restricted. Verse 3 states that the Devil will deceive the nations no more until the

1000 years are finished. Verse 7 repeats this thought and verse 8 adds that he shall then go forth to deceive the nations, to gather them together to “the war” (ton polemon). In other words, the “deception” from which he is now restrained and which he is at the end permitted to exercise, is distinctly stated. He is restrained from “gathering the nations together to the war.” What “the war” is appears from Revelation 16:14-16 and 19:19, where the same great climactic battle is spoken of. It is the battle or the war of the great day of God Almighty. A time is evidently coming, and perhaps has already arrived, when Satan will be permitted to inspire a mass attack upon the true church. The nations (peoples) whom he will gather are referred to as “Gog and Magog,” taken from Ezekiel’s description of the enemies of God’s ancient people. The three chapters, 16, 19, and 20, all speak of this “gathering together” and of “the war.” John, in verses 8 and 9, is depicting this final, world-wide oppression of the Church of Christ preceding the second advent. The Church is described under the figure of a camp and a city. Again there is depicted a sudden divine intervention and a final decisive victory for God on behalf of His saints.

According to the premillenarian view, verses 4-6 depict a future reign on earth by Christ and His saints centering in Jerusalem along with numerous other details imported from other supposedly related scriptures. Here again I would raise some questions. The souls whom John saw were seated upon “thrones.” Elsewhere in the book of Revelation, such thrones are located in heaven. I’m sure the reader would acknowledge that chapter 4 is a heavenly scene. The “seats” occupied by the twenty-four elders (4:4) are “thrones”—the same Greek word is in one instance translated “seats” and in the other instances “thrones.” If, in chapter 4, these thrones are located in “heaven,” is it not likely that in chapter 20 they are also located in “heaven”?

John saw these thrones (seats) occupied by “souls.” Some find it difficult to view these souls as disembodied saints. I freely admit that there are instances where the term “soul” stands for the whole person. But the reader will acknowledge, I am sure, that the meaning of a word in a given instance is determined to some degree by its context. For that reason, I feel that in this instance John saw departed, disembodied saints as they are “with Christ” awaiting the general resurrection which comes into view at

the end of the chapter. For them, this is that phase of their existence that is commonly called “the intermediate state.” That he is seeing souls rather than bodies seems to be the natural inference for it is “the souls of them that were beheaded.” The same thought concerning the reign of the martyrs in Paradise while the powers of evil seemingly triumphed on earth was brought into view on the opening of the fifth seal (6:9-11). “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God,” etc. The context in this instance makes it apparent that this, too, is a pre-resurrection scene. The similarity in phraseology, “the souls of. . . ,” argues for the same time period. These “dead” saints “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Do we not believe that those who were persecuted unto death during the Roman persecution have been, like the repentant thief, “with Christ in Paradise,” and will continue to be there throughout His mediatorial reign (which corresponds to the period of the intermediate period for the dead)? Did not Jesus make the promise: “Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” (Revelation 3:21) These “souls” are “with Christ” not because He came down to earth for the purpose of setting up a throne in Jerusalem but because they, upon their release from the body, soared up to live and reign with Him.

Sparse comfort would come to those first recipients of this letter through the knowledge that at some point in the way-distant future there would be a golden age, a restoration of the Jewish theocracy, a taming of wild animals, a bloody Armageddon followed finally by victory for God and His people. What those saints needed as they suffered under Satan’s persecuting agent (the Beast — at that time in the form of Imperial Rome) was the knowledge that just on the other side of the door of death was something “far better” (Philippians 1:23), the heaven of the intermediate state, a sharing of the mediatorial throne of Christ! This is precisely the knowledge that numerous passages in “The Revelation,” including chapter 20:4-6, were meant to convey.

Perhaps this would be an appropriate point at which to direct the following question to my premillenarian brethren: With your insistence on taking the scriptures just as they stand, and with your view of a post-rapture appearance of the Beast, how can you contend that this passage

teaches that all Christians will participate in the supposed millennial reign of Christ on earth? Specifically, how can you get all Christians into verse 4? Those whom John saw are supposedly resurrected saints. With that assumption, would not the terminology of verse 4 limit that group to resurrected “tribulation saints?” For many have been the saints whose death was not a martyr’s death, and many are the saints who already have, and yet will depart from this life before the supposed appearance of your exclusively end-time beast. Do not the premillenarian assumptions, if consistently observed, lead to the conclusion that those whom John saw were resurrected “tribulation saints?”

The writer raises these questions simply to bring into focus a problem associated with the standard dispensational interpretation of these verses. I now return to my attempt to give the true meaning of verses 4-6.

This living and reigning with Christ in the spirit realm is identified in verse 5 as “the first resurrection.” Later in this chapter, in verse 6 and 14, mention is made of “the second death.” Accordingly, the antithesis in this passage is between “the first resurrection” and “the second death.” I’m sure the reader would admit that “the second death” is not a bodily death. That fact directs us to the meaning of the antithetical statement, “this is the first resurrection.” For if the second death is not the death of the body, neither is the first resurrection a resurrection of the body.

The first resurrection begins with conversion when one is made “alive unto God through Jesus Christ.” (Romans 6:11) Although once dead in trespasses and sins, the new believer, by virtue of his union with Christ, has been “raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6) While still in the body, he reigns in this life by Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17) Although still in the body, in spirit he is with Christ “in heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3), and is seeking “those things which are above.” (Colossians 3:1) At death, the spirit of this believer who has already been reigning with Christ in life, departs to be with Christ in a new way and continues to live and reign with Him throughout his intermediate state while he awaits the resurrection at which time he will receive his new body.

It is confirmatory of the view I am advocating that the writer of the Apocalypse shows, by what he had written in his gospel account, that he had learned from his Master of a “resurrection” which preceded the resurrection of the body, and which could therefore rightly be viewed as “the first resurrection.” In this connection, two sayings of Jesus are especially pertinent. “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). When one passes from death unto life, he experiences a resurrection even though that particular term may not be employed to describe the experience. The transition here in view is from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life, but that makes it no less a resurrection. A second relevant saying of Jesus is recorded in John 11:25, 26: “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Here is a “resurrection” which is wholly apart from that of the body, and one that comes before that of the body.

The Apostle Paul likewise refers time and again to a resurrection which is the experience of those who have not yet experienced bodily death and resurrection, and which therefore is, on that basis, the first resurrection. We read that God “hath quickened [made alive] us together with Christ. . . and hath raised us up together” (Ephesians 2:5-6); and again, “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith” (Colossians 2:12); and again, “If ye then be risen with Christ. . .” (Colossians 3:1) and again, “that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4); and again, “Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead” (Ephesians 5:14); and finally Paul speaks, in Romans 6:13, of believers as those who are “alive from the dead.”

I have been perplexed and in fact astounded at the refusal of some brethren to admit this well substantiated fact, namely, that the New Testament likens conversion to a resurrection. In their attempt to make “the first resurrection” of Revelation 20:5 a separate bodily resurrection, the claim has been made that the word “anastasis” (Greek for resurrection) is never used in reference to a spiritual resurrection. But what about Luke 2:34? “This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.” Marvin

Vincent, in his Word Studies, makes this comment regarding the expression, “rising again.” [Christ is set for. . . the rising again of many] “because many will be raised through Him to life and glory” (Romans 6:4-9 and Ephesians 2:6). These cited scriptures definitely have in view the conversion experience (as does also Luke 2:34) so that here is an instance where “anastasis” is associated with conversion. (Incidentally, Menno Simons wrote a tract on the Spiritual Resurrection. And the well-known Anabaptist, Peter J. Twisk, wrote an exposition of Revelation 20 entitled, The Peaceful Kingdom of Christ. The latter was translated by John F. Funk in 1913, but for some strange reason is almost unknown in our circles. All of this proves nothing, but it says a great deal about the eschatology of the Anabaptists). Even if no exception in the use of the word “anastasis” could be cited, the comparison of conversion to a resurrection is so obvious on the pages of the New Testament that the supposed restriction in the use of the word “anastasis” loses the supposedly great significance that has been attached to it.

Now you may feel that this excursion and this emphasis on conversion and the subsequent life of the believer is a departure from my contention that Revelation 20:4-6 depicts the experience of the faithful during the interim between their physical death and their bodily resurrection. Instead of being a departure, it is the necessary groundwork for what follows. Physical death does not greatly alter the believer’s status; it involves no separation from Christ. “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). “The first resurrection” begins with conversion and culminates in the still — better life of the intermediate state. “The first resurrection” is the resurrection of the soul from death, to a life of grace on earth, and of bliss in glory. The reign of the saints begins with their new birth on earth (Romans 5:17, 20, 21), and continues with Christ in His present glory (Revelation 20:4-6). The Revelation 20 passage has primary reference to the second of these two stages. In this narrow sense, “the first resurrection” could therefore be defined as the rising of the saint at death to a higher life in Christ, which will be consummated at the “general” resurrection when “the thousand years” have expired.

The saints of “the first resurrection” are set in contrast with “the rest of the dead” who live not till the thousand years are finished. The saints who

have gone to heaven are dead as far as the body is concerned, but they live and reign with Christ in the heaven of the intermediate state. “The rest of the dead” are dead in every sense, bodily and spiritually, but they will come to life again (in the body) only to die the dreadful second death. This resurrection to damnation is the only resurrection they will ever experience.

It may be objected, that this involves taking the word “lived” in these verses in two different senses — relating it in verse 4 to a spiritual resurrection and in verse 5 to a bodily resurrection. But John elsewhere refers to the same two different kinds of “life” within a few verses (John 5:25, 28, 29). And in this very passage in verses 5 and 6, he uses the word “death” in two different senses; for he employs it to speak of bodily death (rest of the dead) and spiritual death (the second death). So it is not only permissible to take “life” here in two different senses, it is almost demanded of us that we so take it.

Please note, too, that this allusion to “the rest of the dead” implies that the Christians, whose souls reigned with Christ, had lived and died and had left this old earth behind. These Christians were regarded as some of the dead and existed in a state different from “the rest of the dead” who, while having a conscious existence, did not live in the same way, but will continue in misery and torment until the end of the cycle of time, represented by the one thousand years, when they will be raised to shame and everlasting contempt. They were neither blessed, nor holy, for they had no part in the first resurrection; not having known its beginning in the experience of regeneration, they could not know its end in reigning with Christ.

Now let’s attend to some loose ends. Assuming momentarily that the pre-millenarian interpretation is correct, the company depicted in Revelation 20:4-6 would of necessity need to consist largely, if not wholly, of those who refused to submit to the Beast during the supposed tribulation period, that is, after the rapture of the saints, for that is when the Beast supposedly makes his appearance. These martyred tribulation saints would have needed to experience a resurrection on the eve of Christ’s millennial reign on earth, that is, at the close of the tribulation period — being seven years after the resurrection of the other saints. How then could this be

termed “the first resurrection,” for the first would have taken place seven years before at the time of the rapture?

Actually the pre-millenarian system demands not just two resurrections but a series of at least four resurrections as any thoughtful person will soon perceive. And that becomes extremely difficult to reconcile with the plain declarations of Jesus that “the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29). In my opinion, any unprejudiced person reading that declaration will naturally infer that it depicts one general resurrection. To me it is so strange that people who pose as literalists arrive at another conclusion!

The idea of a bodily resurrection of the righteous dead preceding a thousand year earthly reign is also at variance with the words of Jesus in John 6:40: “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (not a thousand years before).

Another passage bearing on this point is Matthew 13:30: “Let both grow together until the harvest [end of the world] and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles and burn them. . .” Does not this depict both classes living on earth to the very end [the harvest]? And will not the harvest involve both those who are alive and those who have died — necessitating a general resurrection at that point? And how, in the light of this passage can one maintain that the righteous will be raised and rewarded with immortality a whole millennium ahead of the wicked when this depicts God dealing “first” with the tares?

Just as the New Testament uniformly speaks of the judgment in the singular, so it does likewise with the resurrection. Notice Acts 24:15: “. . .there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” Not two resurrections of the dead, but “a resurrection” including both classes. An article in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia makes this assertion: Acts 24:15 and Revelation 20:12 “refer to a general resurrection with absolute unambiguity.”

Note also Luke 17:29 and 30. “The same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all (there was no one left to ask, “Where is Lot?”). “Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” The day of salvation for Lot was also the day of judgment for all others in Sodom. Even thus shall it be in the end time consummation. In the light of this revelation, how can one maintain either separate resurrections or separate judgments?

2 Thessalonians 1 likewise depicts the wicked and righteous receiving their just recompense at the same time.

Philippians 3:11 is often cited as evidence that Paul anticipated sharing in a bodily resurrection that would not be a general resurrection, for it would be “out from among the dead” as the word indicates. The context, however, points to the conclusion that when Paul expresses the desire to “attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” he is expressing the modest hope that, as he chooses “the way of the cross” and shares in “the fellowship of His sufferings,” it might lead to his walking in newness of life by the power of the resurrection. Paul was, in my opinion, thinking in terms of a present tense, spiritual attainment. As this is realized in Christian experience, Christians constitute “the living among the dead.”

In similar fashion, the typical pre-millenarian finds multiple judgments. In our own circles, I have personally heard four separate end-time judgments outlined. This necessitates denying that Revelation 20:15 depicts the general judgment or includes any but the wicked. It is claimed that only the ungodly are here in view. But please note the manner in which it is introduced. John sees “the dead, small and great, stand before God.” A sweeping generalization such as that, in itself, argues for the universality of the scene. Furthermore, that these were not the unbelieving dead only is evident from the fact that, conspicuous among the books out of which they were judged was “the book of life,” and from the statement that “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” Now obviously there would be no use for “the book of life” at this judgment if all the believing dead had been raised, clothed with resurrection bodies, and made shares of Christ’s throne and glory a thousand years previously.

I find in the New Testament an emphasis on the singularity of the judgment. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Again, “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” (Romans 2:16). The following words of Jesus are also highly significant: “The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it” (Matthew 12:41). Does not this imply that both those who repented and those who repented not will be present?

These observations have been shared because they support the long-held view that when rightly interpreted the Bible holds out the prospect of a consummation that will include a general resurrection and a universal judgment.



The Same Yesterday and Today

Theology has nothing new in it except that which is false.

The preaching of Paul must be the
preaching of the minister of today.

There is no improvement here.

We may advance in our knowledge of it;
but it stands the same because it is perfect,
and perfection cannot be any better.

From “Grace Gems” by Charles Spurgeon



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