

Future Millennial History

Introduction

Though Revelation is filled with informative *interludes* and *commentary inserts* that seem to fragment the flow of the prophetic narrative, an inspired sequence of final events can be clearly observed. Those “storylines” include:

- Revelation 16, revealing God’s unleashed wrath against evil through the seven vial plagues.
- Revelation 17 and 18, portraying details of the New World Order, with the antichrist becoming its head.
- Revelation 19, announcing the “marriage” of Christ with His church (19:6-10), then symbolically depicting His Second Coming (19:11-16).
- The destruction of the antichrist and his allies (19:17-21).¹
- Then the one-thousand-year saga in Revelation 20, filled with amazing terminal events that culminate in the destruction of the wicked and Satan.
- Finally, the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21).

After Christ’s Second Coming, when the wicked are vanquished (cf. 19:17-21 – graphic and symbolic language of the times written), Satan is “arrested” and bound. That inaugurates a milestone in apocalyptic prophecy – ***evil and rebellion are totally suppressed during this one-thousand-year period.***

- Redemptive history then experiences a *terminus ad quem*.
- Shortly thereafter Jesus Christ and the victorious saints are dwelling together!

Looking deeper into this millennial period:

Imprisonment of Satan

“Then I saw an angel descending from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the abyss and a huge chain” (Revelation 20:1 – NET).

This is so interesting! It is another epic within Revelation that vouches God has ultimate control of that demonic being. In 12:7-9 Michael (Christ) evicted Satan and his angels from the precincts of heaven. In 9:1 this being and his minions were given temporary freedom when he received the key to the place of demonic horrors – the abyss.

¹ Mounce, Robert H.; *The Book of Revelation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1977), pp. 289-360.

- The legion of demons possessing the man (men) of Gadara begged Jesus not to be cast into the “deep” or this abyss. It was a place of confinement for the evil angels (Revelation 9:1-3, II Peter 2:4), which they hated.
- The key was obviously “returned,” because it is now symbolically used to confine Satan and presumably his evil angels.²

This verse is another first-person description by John. An angel “*coming down*” is also noted in Revelation 10:1 and 18:1. Each portrays an important **celestial intervention** on earth at the **end of time**. This angel is Christ, who has the “*key to Hades*” or that “*abyss*” (1:18). The chain was an ancient way to restrict a prisoner. The above demonic man was strong enough to break his chain (Mark 5:4). Here, the angel has a “*huge*” or “*great*” chain, strong enough to symbolically bind Satan.³

- This means a **complete termination** of his activities.
- In the Biblical record, this has never happened before.
- This marks the **end** of the “*short time*” he recognized before this confinement (12:12).⁴

“And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:2).

Satan was morally and “legally” defeated at Christ’s death and resurrection (Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14, II Peter 2:4, Jude 6, Luke 10:17-19), but he continues to harass earth’s inhabitants until Christ’s Second Coming (a crucial purpose in God’s redemptive plan). The ultimate objective of heaven is the destruction of Satan (Hebrews 2:14). Here in 20:2, the wicked have already died (chapter 19 and II Thessalonians 1:6-10) and Christ has taken the saints to heaven (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). It is during this period that Satan is bound.

The earth is without anyone to tempt, harass or destroy. This is the literal meaning of his being bound.

- Because of the earthquakes (sixth seal – Revelation 6:12-14) and the seven vial plagues (Revelation 16) just before His coming, the earth is now desolate.
- *“I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger” (Jeremiah 4:23-26; cf. Isaiah 24:21-22).*⁵

A millennial reign of Christ on earth is not in the context of the prophetic narrative and its associated texts.

² Kistemaker, Simon J.; *Revelation* (Baker Academic; Grand Rapids, MI), pp. 533-534.

³ Osborne, Grant R.; *Revelation* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, MI), p. 700.

⁴ Thomas, Robert L.; *Revelation 8–22 – An Exegetical Commentary* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1995), pp. 406-407.

⁵ Stefanovic, Ranko; *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI; 2002), p. 564.

“The angel then threw him into the abyss and locked and sealed it so that he could not deceive the nations until the one thousand years were finished. (After these things he must be released for a brief period of time.)” (Revelation 20:3 – NET).

This restriction of Satan heralds the onset of the millennium. “Abyss” or “hell” are the terms used in several translations to reveal that Satan is confined – locked or sealed from activity. These words have raised an interesting question: “During this time, is it possible that the devil has no contact with even the evil angels?” That is possible – but it is not clear from this text. The imagination deepens:

“Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a 1000 years. Limited to the earth, he will not have access to other worlds to tempt and annoy those who have never fallen. In this sense he is ‘bound.’ None remain on whom he can exercise his power. He is cut off from the work of deception and ruin which has been his sole delight.’ ‘Here is Satan’s home, with his evil angels, through the 1000 years. Here they will be confined, and wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth, and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law. The effects of the curse which he has caused,’ ... Satan will behold the results of his rebellion against the law of God. His sufferings are intense. He is now left to contemplate the part he has acted since he rebelled and to look forward with terror to the dreadful future when he must be punished.”⁶

Beale gives an amazing parallel between chapters 12 and 20:

“After Christ’s Resurrection

After the Saints’ Resurrection

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) Heavenly scene (v 7) | (1) heavenly scene (v 1) |
| (2) Angelic battle against Satan and his host (vv 7-8) | (2) presupposed angelic battle with Satan (v 2) |
| (3) Satan cast to earth (v 9) | (3) Satan cast into the abyss (v 3) |
| (4) the angel’s evil opponent called ‘the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, the one deceiving the whole inhabited earth’ (v 9) | (4) the angel’s evil opponent called ‘the great dragon, the ancient serpent, the who is the devil and Satan,’ restrained from ‘deceiving the nations any longer’ (vv 2-3), to be loosed later to deceive the nations throughout the earth (vv 3, 7-8) |
| (5) Satan’s expression of ‘great wrath because he knows he has little time’ (v 12b) | (5) Satan to be ‘released for a short time’ after his imprisonment (v 3) |
| (6) Satan’s fall, resulting in the kingdom of Christ (v 10) and his saints (v 1; note the ‘conquering’ theme) | (6) Satan’s fall, resulting in the kingdom of Christ and his saints (v 4) |
| (7) The saints’ kingship, based not only on the fall of Satan and Christ’s victory but also on the saints’ faithfulness | (7) The saints’ kingship, based not only on the fall of Satan but also on their faithfulness even to death in holding to |

⁶ White, Ellen G.; *The Health Food Ministry*, pp. 398-399; ISG211.

even to death in holding to 'the word
of their testimony' (v 11)

'the testimony of Jesus and the word of
God' (v 4)

Chapter 20, verse 3 is the **inaugurated** executive judgment of Satan. It will be **consummated** at the millennial end.⁷ This is the first phase of Satan's punishment. The last will be his annihilation by fire.

"The earth has returned to its original state of nothingness and void. God is absent, as is life. Heaven has condemned the devil to the desert and to the void, just as the serpent had been reduced to the dust (Gen. 3:14). He has no one left to seduce. Unlike the situation in Genesis, there is no one left to tempt. Evil is thus neutralized."⁸

At the end of the millennium **the wicked will be raised**, and Satan will have once again access to his subjects (Revelation 20:7-9). How do we know that these individuals were raised to life? In verse 14 they are then eternally destroyed, and the record says that this is the **second death**. They are alive, however, long enough that those vast throngs can attack the New Jerusalem, which had come down out of heaven to the earth (21:1-2).

Millennial Reign of the Saints

There are many courtroom scenes in Scripture. Especially prominent are those in Daniel 7:9-10 and Revelation 4:2-5 with 5:1. Following Christ's Second Advent and the "imprisonment" of Satan, another heavenly judicial episode convenes.

"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" (Revelation 20:4).

The collective expression here of "*thrones*," sitting and judging, means that there are elements of heaven's redemptive work still unfinished after the Second Coming of Jesus! The text does not say who are on those thrones. This imagery is similar, however, to Revelation 4, with the twenty-four elders sitting on thrones around the Father's throne. Might they still be functioning as special representatives of the redeemed? (4:4, 11:16).

- Building upon Luke 22:30 and I Corinthians 6:2, they also must include all of the saints along with the raised martyrs.
- This is in keeping with Revelation 3:21, where the "overcomers are promised that Christ would give them the right to "*sit with me on the throne*"⁹ (cf. 5:10; 20:4, 6; 22:5; II Timothy 2:12).

⁷ Beale, Gregory K.; *The New International Greek Testament Commentary; The Book of Revelation* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan – 1999), p. 996.

⁸ Doukhan, Jacques B.; *Secrets of Revelation (The Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD 21740)*, p. 178.

⁹ Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 704-705; Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

Some suggest that those on the thrones are just the raised martyrs. Since 20:9 talks of the “*camp of the saints*” who are present throughout the millennium, it must include every saved individual – the whole church.¹⁰

“(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5 – NIV).

These verses reveal that only some of the dead came to life at the onset of the millennium (I Thessalonians 4:16). Contextually, they represented the redeemed of all ages. John notes that that was the “*first resurrection*”! The “*second resurrection*” will be discussed later. John’s parenthetical comment clarifies the condition of the lost. The celestial picture:

- The resurrected saints were taken to heaven (I Thessalonians 4:13-16, Revelation 20:1-5). “*It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us*” (II Timothy 2:11-12; cf. Ephesians 2:11-7 – this is called the resurrection of the just).¹¹
- They are reigning with Christ during this thousand-year period.
- A few of the wicked were raised at Christ’s Second Coming! This is revealed in Daniel 12:2. Also, Revelation 1:7 states that those who participated in His crucifixion will be alive to witness Christ’s Second Coming!

“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” (Revelation 20:6).

This text does not say where the saints reign with God and Christ but, based on I Thessalonians, Revelation 7:9-17 and 19:1-10, we conclude that it is in heaven.¹² What are they doing in this amazing role?

- In 20:4 the saints were given “authority to judge.”
- In I Corinthians 6:2, Paul says, “*the saints will judge the world.*”
- Intriguingly, this is the time when the last seal of the seven-sealed scroll has already been broken (8:1). It now can be read. Its contents explain why the wicked were not saved.¹³

Might this be that era in redemptive history when those who are saved, along with that worthy Lamb, review God’s judicial work against the wicked? When this is completed, God’s government and character will stand vindicated. Any and all charges that Satan has ever made against Him will disintegrate!

¹⁰ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 705.

¹¹ Johnson, Alan F.; *Revelation*, p. 514, from Gaebelin, Frank E. (gen. ed.); *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. II (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 49530; 1981), p. 583.

¹² Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

¹³ Fowler Jr., Franklin S.; *The Seven Seals of Revelation*, pp. 25-30.

That seven-sealed scroll can be opened after Jesus returns the second time (noted in the sixth Seal, Revelation chs 5, 6 and 8:1). The sentence that each receives must be commensurate to **why** they were lost.

“During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the second advent. ‘Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5.... At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God. John in the Revelation says: ‘I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.’ ‘They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’ Revelation 20:4, 6. In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book.”¹⁴

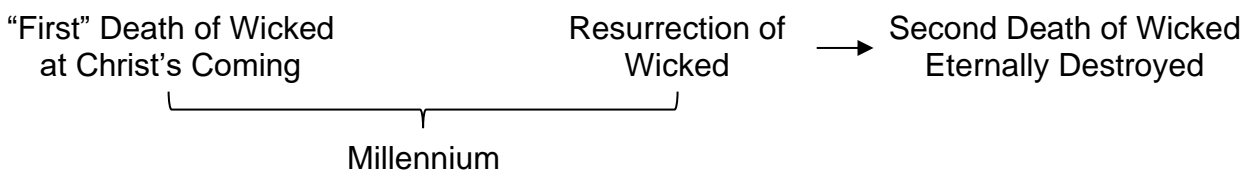
By now it has become fully clear that Christ’s millennial reign is in heaven and not on the earth.

Satan Destroyed

“Now when the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to bring them together for the battle. They are as numerous as the grains of sand in the sea” (Revelation 20:7-8).

Satan’s release was anticipated in verses 3 and 4. He would be released for a brief period at the end of this millennium. There is a final purpose for Satan to be released. Will he admit his evil course? Will he have learned anything from his confinement? The answer: No!

- He goes out to deceive the nations from the four corners of the world.
- If they are all dead, where did they come from? They were resurrected! Again, they all will face their eternal fate, which is called the second death (20:14).



“The ‘second death’ is quite clear in the book. The first death would be physical death in this life, while the second is eternal death in the lake of fire (see 20:14; 21:8).” Believers will experience the first but never the second (also 2:10-11, reveal that believers will receive the crown of life and will never be hurt by the second death). “In Matt. 10:28 Jesus said, ‘Do not be afraid of those who kill the body [the first death] ... [but] of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell [the second death].”¹⁵

¹⁴ White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 660.

¹⁵ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 709

Why would God permit the wicked to die at His coming and then raise them to be under Satan's control, only to die again? The answer will come shortly! The hate-filled spirit is revived in the demonic-driven hearts of the wicked. Those raised are a vast throng like the "*sands of the sea.*" It is a lesson book to the universe of how ingrained evil has become in these individuals.

- Satan does not overpower the people but ***deceives them*** in order to gather them to battle.
- Gog and Magog are used as symbols for all the rebellious nations that are gathered together to oppose Christ and His followers (symbolic words originating from Ezekiel 38–39).¹⁶

That great heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, had descended to planet earth (Revelation 21:2). Now, the devil, with the billions of the wicked, surround that glorious city (described in detail in 21:9–22:5) in preparation for an attack.

"They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them."
(Revelation 20:9 – NIV).

This is Satan's last attempt to dethrone God and take dominion of the world! Hatred against Him, deep-rooted in every being, drives this army forward.¹⁷

Imagining this time: "Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan's captives.... He proposes to lead them against the camp of the saints and to take possession of the City of God. With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city and regain his throne and his kingdom."¹⁸

A Judgment Scene

All the post-millennial events have been divinely structured to convene a final "courtroom" scene when sentencing occurs! The sequence is "rough" in these verses, but contextually, can be deciphered with some recapitulation of events.

"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."
(Revelation 20:13).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 712.

¹⁷ Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, pp. 567-568.

¹⁸ White, *op. cit.*, p. 663.

This is that final resurrection, associated with much symbolism, that will soon lead to the second death. The “*sea*,” “*death and hades*” are words also describing the “region” of death (cf. 1:18, 8:9, 16:3).¹⁹ This is the second resurrection, again implied in 20:5.²⁰ What happens now is stunning and sad. This is when the wicked will literally face heaven’s tribunal, symbolized as the ***great white throne***.

“Then I saw a great white throne” (Revelation 20:11a).

- “*great*” (*megas* – G) suggests that it is something larger than life or anything man can imagine.
- “*white*” depicts purity and holiness.²¹

Most scholars conclude that this is Christ seated on the throne (Matthew 16:27; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Romans 2:16, 14:90; II Corinthians 5:10). “*Sitting*” on a throne represents judgment in prophecy. Since there has already been a review of records during the millennium, what could this mean?

This can only mean that the wicked will hear the final “courtroom” decisions and their sentences before their destruction. Stunning and amazing is heaven’s redemptive plan. Nothing is done without a purpose and with full, complete transparency!

The intense courtroom drama is portrayed: “The whole wicked world stand arraigned at the bar of God on the charge of high treason against the government of heaven. They have none to plead their cause; they are without excuse; and the sentence of eternal death is pronounced against them. It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life; but slavery; ruin; and death. The wicked see what they have forfeited by their life of rebellion. The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory was despised when offered them; but how desirable it now appears. ‘All this;’ cries the lost soul; ‘I might have had; but I chose to put these things far from me. Oh; strange infatuation! I have exchanged peace; happiness; and honor for wretchedness; infamy; and despair.’ All see that their exclusion from heaven is just. By their lives they have declared: ‘We will not have this Man [Jesus] to reign over us.’”²²

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. Then books were opened, and another book was opened – the book of life.... [all] were judged by what was written in the books, according to their deeds” (Revelation 20:12 – NET).

All the wicked are raised from the dead to receive their sentence (cf. vs 5). Since the plan of redemption is based on pristine jurisprudence, this final event must be designed so the wicked understand why they will not have eternal life. Many call this the “great white throne judgment.”

¹⁹ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 1033.

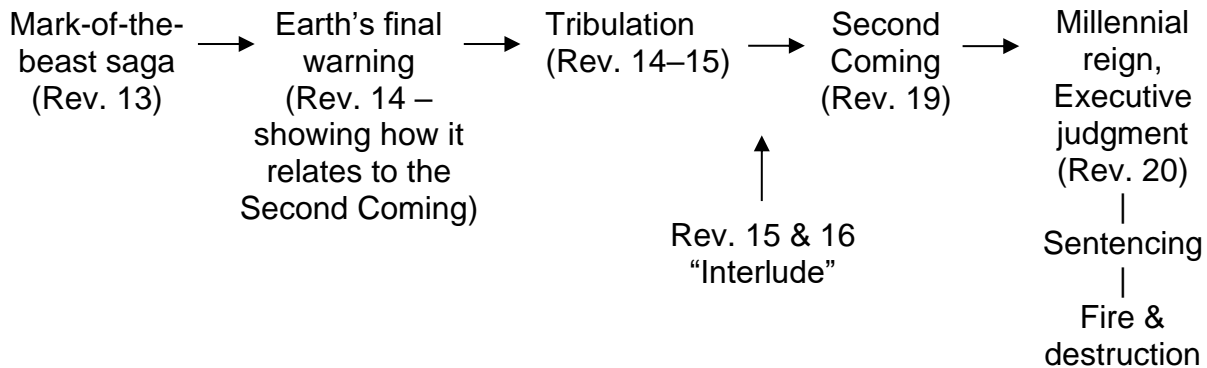
²⁰ Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 723.

²¹ Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, p. 545.

²² White, *op. cit.*, p. 668.

- God bases His decisions on a complete knowledge of the individuals' lives. The Biblical information tells us that this information is "housed" in special records in heaven ("books").
- The conclusion of all matters is based upon each person's willful choices (Revelation 2:23, 18:6, 22:12; Psalm 28:4, 62:12; Romans 2:6).²³

This represents the end of the millennium. Many confuse this time with the Second Coming of Jesus. That occurred in chapter 19. There is a sequence of earth's final events within Revelation that is important and helpful:



"No sentence executed on 'any wicked will be arbitrary, biased, or unfair.' While salvation is on the basis of grace, the judgment is according to the works as recorded in the books. Paul states that God would 'render to every man according to his deeds' (Rom. 2:6; cf. 1 Pet. 1:17).... [It has been noted], 'works are unmistakable evidence of the loyalty of the heart; they express either belief or unbelief, faithfulness or unfaithfulness.'"²⁴

- Christ came in Revelation 19 and the saints were taken to His Father's house (John 14:1-3). The millennial period reveals why the wicked died at His coming. That, in turn, leaves Satan to think, contemplate and review his evil history.
- Now they are raised, and each person is brought to understand why they could not be saved. God is never seen as arbitrary or capricious. His honor and fairness are supreme. The picture here reveals that all through life we are writing our own destiny. In essence, man writes his own judgment.²⁵

There are many scholars who assume that this second resurrection includes many righteous. The late professor Alan R. Johnson of Wheaton College addressed this issue. In discussing verse 6 he noted that "John clearly seems to tie exclusion from the second death with those who are part of the first resurrection, thus strongly implying that those who participate in the second resurrection are destined for the second death.... We may understand the first resurrection as being the raising to physical life of all the dead in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:12ff; 1 Thess 4:13ff.); this is the resurrection to life of John 5:29 (NIV, 'rise to live'). For those who participate in this resurrection, 'the second death [the lake of fire (20:14)] has no power over

²³ Kistemaker, *op. cit.*, p. 546.

²⁴ Stefanovic, *op. cit.*, p. 570.

²⁵ Naden, Roy C.; *The Lamb Among the Beasts* (Review and Herald Publishing Association; Hagerstown, MD; 1996), p. 282.

them' (v.6). Therefore, they are 'blessed and holy' (the fifth beatitude in Rev; ...) and shall be priests of God and Christ for the thousand years."²⁶

God's summary judgment:

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

This depicts the end of redemptive history, the consummation of a seven-thousand-year period, beginning with the fall of Adam and Eve. Sin and sinners have met their fate. Death has been eradicated from the universe (I Corinthians 15:54-55, Isaiah 25:8).²⁷

- The concept that the wicked will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10, 14:10-11) is a metaphor indicating the results will be eternal or everlasting. To have them burn and suffer forever would be to change the very character of the God revealed in the Scriptures. The death of the wicked and Satan and his angels will put a "period" at the end of sin.
- That history makes it possible for a new heaven and a new earth in the next chapter (21) to emerge in a universe where there are now no traces of sin! Even hell, that abyss, is consumed!

The history of sin and rebellion will stand throughout all eternity, showing that the existence of God's law is bound up in the happiness and security of all created beings.²⁸

Franklin S. Fowler; Jr.; M.D.
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²⁶ Johnson, Alan R.; *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, "Revelation," pp. 584-585.

²⁷ Beale, *op. cit.*, p. 1034.

²⁸ Adapted: White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 671.