

Revelation

1:3 “he who reads and those who hear” One person would read aloud, and others, who probably could not read, would listen. See note 1 Timothy 4:13.

1:4. “the seven spirits that are before his throne.” The best we know on the seven spirits before God is that they must be seven spiritual beings who are of great rank and authority, and help God administer the spiritual/physical world. Trinitarians have postulated that these seven are actually just one spirit, “The Holy Spirit,” but that is not good exegesis of the text and is only suggested because of their Trinitarian doctrine. E. W. Bullinger, at one time the president of the Trinitarian Bible Society in England, wrote: “This fact that they are ‘before’ or in the presence of, God’s throne, shows that they occupy the position of servants (see 1 Kings 10:8), and of created beings (4:5, 10; 7:9, 15; 8:2; 11:4, 16; 12:10; 14:3, 5, 10; 20:12). This one fact ought to have precluded the idea that these seven could be one, and that one Divine! ...On the other hand, angels are constantly represented as occupying this position. And angels are again referred to in 4:5 under the symbol of seven lamps (to which other spiritual creatures are likened in Ezek. 1:13).”

Revelation 3:1 says that Jesus Christ “has” the seven spirits of God, which makes perfect sense if these seven are angels and he is Lord of all creation. Revelation 4:5 once again mentions that the seven spirits are “before” the throne of God, and 5:6 mentions them in the context of being connected to Jesus Christ. Revelation 8:2 then mentions “the” seven angels who stand before God, but up to that time there were no “seven angels” mentioned, only “seven spirits.” Thus the use of the definite article is a good reason to identify the seven spirits with “the” seven angels. It is possible that these seven are, or are somehow connected to, the “chosen angels” in 1 Timothy 5:21.

God and Jesus work closely with angels, even though they would not have to. Similarly, Jesus told his apostles that when he came into his kingdom, they would sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel (Matt. 19:28). God tells us that there is safety in a multitude of counselors, and apparently He takes His own advice.

1:7. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδοῦ), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

1:11. “and to...and to...and to,” etc. This repetition of “ands” is the figure of speech Polysyndeton (“many ands”), and the purpose is to give emphasis to each member of the list (Cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*).

1:16. “out of his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword.” This sword is the Word of God (cp. Eph. 6:17), in this case prophecies that are spoken by Jesus Christ. (See commentary on Rev. 19:15; 1 Cor. 14:12; 2 Thess. 2:8).

1:18. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἰδοῦ), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

1:19. This verse shows that the book of Revelation is in the future. The verse has often been seen as dividing the book of Revelation into three parts: the things which were seen (past), the things that are (present) and the things that will be (future). However, that is not the case. The early introduction of Revelation, 1:2, notes that the book is about what John “saw.” John got the vision by revelation, and after he had seen it, was told to write it down. In contrast, Paul got some of the vision also, but was forbidden to write it down (2 Cor. 12:3-7). A careful reading and understanding of the verse reveals that it is the

direction from the Lord for John to write what he saw. John was to write the things that he saw, and “what they signify,” or “what they mean.” This is a common meaning of the word “are” in this type of context (cp. Matt. 9:13; 12:7; Luke 15:26; Acts 2:12; 10:17. Cp also Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). The Greek word *kai* can be translated “and” or “even,” and in this case, “even” is the meaning before the last phrase, which emphasizes that fact that these future things are about to come to pass. E. W. Bullinger, in *Commentary on Revelation*, does a very good job explaining this verse.

1:20. “messengers.” The messengers of the synagogues. See note on Revelation 2:1.

2:1. “messenger.” The Greek is *aggelos* (#32 ἄγγελος; pronounced an-ge-los). The word means “messenger,” and can refer to either human messengers (Luke 7:24) or divine messengers, who we know as “angels” (Matt. 1:20). Usually in English Bibles, when *aggelos* refers to divine messengers, the word is not translated, but is transliterated as “angel.” In Revelation 2:1, the “messenger” is human. When Paul wrote the seven Church Epistles, he wrote them directly to the “holy ones,” the Christians. However, when Jesus Christ wants a letter communicated to the Jewish congregations after the Rapture, he writes to the “messenger” of the congregation. Bullinger writes about this “messenger.” After saying that there is no “angel” or “messenger” connected with the Christian Church, he says:

“But we do meet with the word Angel in connection with the *Synagogue* (though not in the Old Testament). There, there was an officer, who was called *Sheliach Tzibbur...Tzibbur* meaning the *Assembly*; and *Sheliach*, the *Angel* or *Legate* of the Assembly, and the Leader of Divine worship, from...*shalach*, to send. The chief officer [of the Synagogue] was the *Archisynagogos*, or “Ruler of the Synagogue”; and after him came the *Sheliach Tzibbur*; or “Angel of the Assembly,” who was the mouthpiece of the congregation. His duty was to offer up public prayer to God for the whole congregation. Hence his title; because, as the messenger of the assembly, he spoke to God for them.” (E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1984), pp. 66, 67).

The reason that Jesus would write his letter to the “messenger” of the Synagogue was that the messenger of the synagogue would then communicate the letter to the people. The use of “messenger of the congregation” is more supporting evidence that the Rapture occurred earlier, and Jesus was writing to Jews who were left on earth after the Rapture.

2:7. “the Spirit.” This is clearly the Lord Jesus Christ. If you take away the chapter divisions, and even the verse divisions, and start reading from Revelation 1:10, it is clear that Jesus Christ commanded John to write a letter to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, and that what we refer to as Revelation 2:1 is simply the continuation of the conversation between Jesus and John that started in Chapter 1. The description of Jesus is unmistakable, especially since he describes himself in 1:18 as “I was dead, and Look!, I am alive for evermore....” In the letter he asks John to write, Jesus refers to himself as “the Spirit.” We can understand this because when Jesus was resurrected, his body was still flesh and bone (Luke 24:39), but it was spiritually empowered. 1 Corinthians 15:44-46 says Jesus was raised “a spiritual body.” When he first appeared to his disciples, they thought he was a spirit, an incorporeal being (a *pneuma*; Luke 24:37), but he denied that, and had them touch his

body to feel its flesh. Nevertheless, because Jesus' new body was spiritually empowered, Jesus is called "the Spirit" in many places in the NT. These include Acts 2:4; 10:19; Romans 8:16, 26, 27; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; and 22:17. (Cp. also note on Acts 2:4 and *The Gift of Holy Spirit* by STF).

2:8. "messenger." See note on Revelation 2:1.

2:9. "defaming speech." The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning of as they were used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmia*, see note on Matt. 9:3).

2:10. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!").

2:12. "messenger." See note on Revelation 2:1.

2:16. "the sword from my mouth." This sword is the prophecies that are spoken by Jesus Christ. (See commentary on Rev. 1:16; 19:15; 1 Cor. 14:12; 2 Thess. 2:8).

2:18. "messenger." See note on Revelation 2:1.

2:19. "and...and...and." This repetition of "ands" is the figure of speech Polysyndeton ("many ands"), and the purpose is to give emphasis to each member of the list (Cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*).

2:22. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!").

"am throwing." The Greek is *ballo* (#906 βάλλω), to cast or to throw, and the verb is in the present tense, active voice, indicating that this punishment is, to some extent, going on at the present. Almost all translations put the verb in the future tense "will cast," and it certainly is true that her punishment will be more acute in the future. However, sexual sin always has harmful effects in the present.

"a bed of suffering." The Greek simply reads, "a bed," and the suffering is implied from the context. This is great irony. Jezebel has ruined the lives of many through sexual sin, so God will cast her onto a bed, where she will suffer.

2:23. "kidneys." The Greek is *nephros* (#3510 νεφρός) and literally means "kidneys." We get our modern word nephrology, the study of the kidneys, from the Greek word. The Word of God points to the fact that our kidneys, bowels, and belly (or womb) are part of our mental/emotional life, not "just physical organs." Our "gut," including our intestines, bowels, kidneys and stomach contain as many nerve cells as our brain, and studies are now showing that our "gut" contributes significantly to our emotional life and health. We have "gut feelings," get upset stomachs upon hearing bad news or have an upset stomach or irregular bowels when facing emotionally difficult times. Bible commentators used to think that "kidneys," "bowels," and "belly," were in the Bible because the ancients did not know what they did and assumed they were the center of human emotion. Now we know that the ancients, and the Word of God, were correct all along, and the arrogance or "modern" medicine, upon discovery of the brain, had just assumed the ancients were ignorant.

Other words to study besides "kidneys" are "bowels" and "belly." Although in our modern world, we use "mind" to place and emphasis on our thoughts and "heart" for our emotions, biblically, the word "heart" was more closely associated with the mental life while "bowels," "kidney," and "belly" (which is the same word as "womb") were

more associated with the emotional life. The Old Testament reveals the same truth that the New Testament does. The Hebrew word for “kidney” is *kilyah* (Strong’s #3629). Below is a list of some pertinent verses showing the relation of the kidney to our emotional life.

- Psalm 7:9 (KJV): ...God trieth the hearts and reins [kidneys].
- Psalm 16:7 (KJV): ...my reins [kidneys] also instruct me in the night seasons.
- Psalm 26:2 (KJV): Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins [kidneys] and my heart.
- Psalm 73:21 (KJV): Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins [kidneys].
- Jeremiah 11:20 (KJV): But, O LORD...that triest the reins [kidneys] and the heart....
- Jeremiah 17:10 (KJV): I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins [kidneys]....
- Jeremiah 20:12 (KJV): But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, *and* seest the reins [kidneys] and the heart....

2:26, 27. Quoted from Ps. 2:8, 9.

3:1. “messenger.” See note on Revelation 2:1.

3:7. Referring to Isaiah 22:22.

“messenger.” See note on Revelation 2:1.

3:8. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 □δο□), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

3:9. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 □δο□), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

“bow down” See note on “pay him homage” Matthew 2:2.

3:14. “ruler” The Greek is *arche* (#746 ἀρχή) can and should be translated “ruler” in this verse, as the NIV does. See *One God & One Lord* Appendix A.

“messenger.” See note on Revelation 2:1.

3:19. “are my friends.” The Greek word we translate as “are...friends,” is *phileo* (#5368 φιλέω). It is hard to translate the Greek verb *phileo* in this context and keep the English as a verb. If we say, “love,” as most versions do, we lose the meaning of *phileo* here, and confuse it with *agape* love. *Phileo* love has a deep attachment, like the attachment of true friends, while *agape* love does not necessary have any feeling of attachment at all, which is why we can “love” (*agape*) our enemies. Jesus takes a special interest in those who have taken a special interest in him (“You are my friends if you do what I command” John 15:14), and he reproveth, disciplines, and prunes those with whom he has a special friendship relationship. In the REV we could have tried to stick with a verb and used “friendly” or “fond,” but these seem to weak. Also, the Greek verb *phileo* is in the present tense. Given that, it seemed that using the phrase, “are...friends” was the best way to bring the meaning of the Greek into the English. For a more complete understanding of *phileo*, see the note on John 21:15.

3:20. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 □δο□), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

4:1. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 □δο□), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

4:2. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

5:1. “written within and on the back” The fact that the document mentioned in this verse is written “within” and “on the back” lets us know that in this case the word *biblion* (#975 βιβλίον) refers to a scroll and not a “book,” although the first books were being published by the time John was writing. A scroll is written “within,” because that is where the writing appeared when the scroll was rolled up, and “on the back” when the back of the scroll was written on also.

5:2. “break” The Greek is *luo* (#3089 λύω). Normally, “loose,” but here it refers to breaking the seals, the only way to open and unroll the scroll. That was, in fact, the purpose of the seal. One could tell the scroll had been opened if the seals were broken.

5:4. “cried and cried.” Cp. NIV, HCSB. The literal is “cried much,” with *polus* (#4183 πολύς) meaning “much,” and the word for cry, *klaio* (#2799 κλαίω), in the imperfect tense. The imperfect tense of the verb shows that John began crying and kept on crying. This taken together with the word for “much” is painting a picture of John continuing to cry and cry, while no one “was able” (also imperfect, v. 3) to open the scroll. For more on the word *klaio*, see entry on Matthew 2:18.

5:5. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

6:2. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

6:5. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

6:8. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

6:12. “sackcloth” The Greek is *sakkos* (#4526 σάκκος). Similar to burlap, sackcloth was rough and made of goat hair, which was black.

6:16. Referring to Hos. 10:8.

7:9. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

9:12. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

11:2. “42 months.” Daniel 9 speaks of 490 years from the command to build Jerusalem until the Messiah (Dan. 9:25-27). This will consist of two periods of sevens, one for 62 and one for 7. The sevens are years. After the 69 sevens (483 years) the Messiah is killed. After 483 years there was to be another 7 year period (verse 27). The “ruler who will come,” the antichrist, will make a 7 year covenant with Israel. However, in the middle of the 7 years, he will break that off. The last 7 would have followed the first 69 sevens immediately except God intervened with the Administration of the Sacred Secret. After 3 ½ years of the seven years of Tribulation, the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and rules the world. During this last 3 ½ years, God protects some of the people of Israel from the antichrist. This 3 ½ year period is referred to in three different ways in Scripture.

1) Time, Times, and Half a time (i.e., a year, 2 years, and half a year): Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 12:14.

2) 42 months: Rev. 11:2; 13:5.

3) 1260 days. Rev. 12:6. (1260 days is 42 months of 30 days each).

Daniel 12:11 and 12 refer to an extension on the 1260 days needed to gather the nations for Judgment (probably 30 days), and then judge them (probably 45 days): (Matt. 25:31ff). Also, the 1260 days that the two witnesses prophesied (Rev. 11:3) started in the first 3 1/2 years and ends in the second, and does not equate to the 1260 days of Rev. 12:6. After the 1260 days, 42 months, or 3:1/2 years of the reign of the Antichrist, comes the battle of Armageddon.

11:14. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

11:15. Quoted from Exod. 15:18 (Ps. 146:10).

12:1. The “woman” in this chapter changes her identity. The woman in verse 1 is the constellation Virgo, which on the night of Christ’s birth was indeed “clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet,” i.e., the sun was in the center of the constellation, with the moon just below her feet (Earnest Martin, *The Star that Astonished the World*). The woman in verse 4 about to give birth is Mary. The woman in verses 6 and 13, from whom the Messiah came, is Israel, whom the Dragon ruthlessly persecutes during the Tribulation.

12:3. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

“diadems.” The Greek is *diadema* (#1238 διάδημα). The diadem is different from a “crown.” Diadem is an English loanword, “properly the sign of royalty among the Persians, a blue band trimmed with white, on the tiara, hence a symbol of royalty generally; *royal headband* (BDAG).

12:5. Quoted from Ps. 2:9.

12:6. “woman.” See note on verse 1.

12:7. This war is separate and distinct from the war that occurred when the Devil originally fought with God and dragged a third of the angels down with him (12:4). This war occurs in the time of the book of Revelation when the Devil is cast out of heaven and no longer is able to come before God (cp. Job 1:6; 2:1; Rev. 12:10).

12:13. “woman.” See note on 12:1.

13:1. “diadem” See note on 12:3.

“defaming.” The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning of as they were used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmia*, see note on Matt. 9:3). The very names of the evil described in this verse defame God.

13:5. “defaming words.” The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία; pronounced blas-fay-me'-ah), and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning of as they were used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmia*, see note on Matt. 9:3).

13:6. “utter defaming words.” The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. This verse contains the verb, while 13:1, 5 have the noun (For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3).

13:8. “slain from the foundation of the world.” The versions of the Bible are divided as to how the Greek text should be translated. The KJV, for example, translates the Greek the same way as the REV, while the NASB, for example, does not connect the word “slain” with the prepositional phrase, “from the foundation of the world,” and has, “*everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”

Both of the above interpretations involve God’s foreknowledge and fore-planning. “Slain from the foundation of the world” is the natural reading of the Greek text, the phrases being in that order in the Greek. There should be no problem understanding this. From the time that God planned to create the human race, He also had a plan for its redemption. Jesus was both known, and we, the Church, were even chosen in him, before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20; Eph. 1:4). The Church, and Jesus did not literally exist before the foundation of the world, but were in the mind of God. God then revealed what He had in his mind via the prophecies He gave in the Old Testament.

The Church could not be said to be chosen in Christ if the plan of salvation was not plotted out beforehand, so Eph. 1:4 makes no sense if the sacrificial death of Christ was not plotted out beforehand. Thus it makes perfect sense for the text to say that Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world—it was part of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind.

That being said, if the natural reading of the Greek text is “slain from the foundation of the world,” what would be a reason for moving the words of the Greek text around to create the reading in the NASB? The major reason is that the concept that the lamb was “slain” from the foundation of the world is “difficult,” and so some think that it is more natural that the Author meant the verse as the NASB has it. However, as we have seen, the death of Christ was part of God’s plan from the foundation of the world. Thus, there is really no problem at all if the verse says he was slain from the foundation of the world.

Another reason some theologians like the translation as the NASB has it is that then it is more clearly espousing the Calvinist doctrine that people’s names are written in the book of life before the foundation of the world, i.e., God predestines them either to salvation or damnation long before they are born. After all, if people’s names are written in the book of life before the foundation of the world, then God knows, and even determines, the fate of every person. This is not what Scripture teaches. God gives each person freewill to make his or her own choices. God wants all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), and we are the ones who decide whether we are saved or not.

14:1. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!).

14:5. “without blemish” See note on Ephesians 1:4.

14:11. “to ages of ages.” The Greek is ἀ□□*ν*ας ἀ□□*ν*ων ἀ□□*ν*; literally, “to ages of ages.” This is a hyperbole, an overstatement. The wording is similar to Revelation 20:10, see the commentary on that verse.

“day and night.” The meaning of this phrase can be seen by noticing how it is used in other verses. Paul preached “night and day” to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:9), and later prayed for them “night and day” (1 Thess. 3:10). First, we see it does not necessarily mean “constantly,” although it could in the context of future torment. Second, it does not mean it goes on forever. Both Paul’s preaching for the Thessalonians, and his

prayers to see them, came to an end at some point. Similarly, the person who sows seed in the ground sleeps and gets up “night and day” while the seed is growing (Mark 4:27). In this example, as with the one involving Paul, the phrase “day and night” does not mean he sleeps and rises all day every day, but rather that there is a general pattern of sleeping and rising. Furthermore, there is an end to his activity. Another example is when Satan is said to be in heaven accusing the brothers “day and night” (Rev. 12:10), but we know that there were times he was on earth, not in heaven, so the phrase does not necessarily mean all day every day, and we know Satan’s accusations will come to an end. The point the verse is making is that those thrown into Gehenna have no guarantee of rest, and likely will have no rest at all, either day or night, until they are consumed and annihilated.

14:13. “let them rest.” (Cp. HCSB, NAB). We believe this should be taken as a command clause. See entry on John 9:3, “let the works of God be revealed in him.”

14:14. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

14:20. A Roman stadia is about 600 feet. The total distance is about 180 miles.

16:9. “defamed.” The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημῶ) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. (For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3).

16:11. “defamed.” See “defamed” in 16:9.

16:14 spirits, namely demons. Genitive of apposition.

16:15. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

16:21 “talent.” The Greek is *talantiaios* (#5006 ταλαντιαῖος) The Roman weight is somewhere in the neighborhood of 90 pounds.

“defamed.” See “defamed” in 16:9.

17:3. “names that are defaming.” See note on Rev. 13:1.

18:2. “haunt” The Greek word *phulake* (#5438 φυλακή) can mean either a prison or the prison guard, or the act of guarding or watching. In this case, the demons (unclean spirits or “birds”) are not in prison in Babylon, but live there and keep watch there. Thus “haunt” is a good translation to communicate that.

18:22. When Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Babylonians, Jeremiah prophesied that the sound of the millstone would not be heard in her (Jer. 25:10). It was a happy sound that was a staple of family life. The women would grind meal together and enjoy each other’s company, and there would be fresh bread to eat. When the sound of the millstone is not heard, family life is pretty much non-existent.

19:10. “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The testimony “of” Jesus (genitive of relation: testimony about Jesus; most likely also includes the sense of the genitive of origin, i.e., the words or testimony that Jesus gives) is the spirit (the general attitude, the essence, “the inner content” (Lenski)). In contrast to false prophecy, true prophecy will elevate Jesus.

19:11. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

19:12. “diadem” See note on 12:3.

19:14. “armies.” Although the reason for the plural “armies” could be a plural of emphasis to show the large size of the army, it is more likely that it is plural because of the compound nature of Christ’s army, which includes spirit beings and Christians, who

were Raptured into heaven and now are returning to earth with Christ. There are verses that indicate that we will participate in the destruction of Satan, such as Rom. 16:20, which speaks of Satan being crushed “under your [the Christian’s] feet.” Also, 1 Corinthians 6:3 speaks of us judging angels, which almost certainly includes participating in the defeat of the fallen angels we know as demons. Also, 1 Thessalonians 4:17 speaks of us always being with the Lord after the Rapture, so it is unlikely that Christ could come to earth and fight without us participating.

19:15. “out of his mouth comes a sharp sword.” That there is a sharp sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus is also stated in Revelation 1:16 and 2:16. What this “sharp sword” is, is made clear in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, which says that the Lord will destroy the lawless one with the “spirit from his mouth,” where “spirit” is used for prophecies spoken by Jesus Christ (see commentary note on that verse and 1 Cor. 14:12). Christians should be used to thinking in terms of the Word of God being a two-edged sword from Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17. Jesus Christ is not depicted destroying people with a physical sword, but rather with the “sword of the Spirit,” which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

19:20. “sulfur” The word “brimstone” is an old word for “sulfur.”

19:21. “sword.” We know from the context that this sword is the prophetic utterances that are spoken by Jesus Christ. (See commentary on Rev. 19:15).

20:2. “dragon,” “serpent.” These are descriptive terms for the Devil, which is made clear in the verse. They are the figure of speech *hypocatastasis* (pronounced: hī-poe-cā-tās'-tā-sis), a “comparison by implication.” In the Bible, there are many uses of the three common figures of speech of comparison, which are simile, metaphor, and hypocatastasis. These are commonly used in English speech as well, but only simile and metaphor are generally known by name. A *simile* is a comparison by resemblance, usually using “like” or “as.” If a person is a sloppy and noisy eater, someone might say, “You eat **like** a pig.” Psalm 1:3 uses a simile when it says a righteous person is **like** a tree planted by the water.

More intense than a *simile* is the figure *metaphor*, a comparison by representation. In a metaphor, one noun represents another. In the pig example above, a metaphor would be, “You **are** a pig.” Jesus used a metaphor when he said to his disciples, “I **am** the vine; you **are** the branches...” (John 15:5 NIV).

Even more intense than metaphor is the figure *hypocatastasis*, which is a comparison by implication. In the pig example, instead of comparing the messy eater with a pig by saying he is “like” a pig, or even that he “is” a pig, in *hypocatastasis* the comparison is just implied. One person says to the other, “Pig!” and the meaning, although just implied, is effectively communicated.

Hypocatastasis is used very effectively in our everyday language. If a person helps us when we need it, we might say, “You angel!” If someone lies to us, we might say, “You snake!” When someone is being overly hesitant, he gets mocked by the hypocatastasis, “Chicken!”

The examples, “Pig,” “You angel,” “You snake,” and “Chicken” show us that in hypocatastasis, the person is being compared to something else, and in that comparison, the qualities of the pig, angel, snake, chicken, or whatever, are being assigned to the person. As long as the comparison is well known in the culture, the implied meaning is not confused.

Figures of comparison are helpful in communication because they quickly bring both meaning and emotional impact to a situation that would otherwise take a lengthy description. Imagine how long it would take to describe the way a person was eating and how it was affecting you emotionally, when all you have to say is, “Pig,” and the meaning is clear.

The figure of speech hypocatastasis can be confusing, however, for three major reasons. The first is that since the comparison is implied, it may not be clear who the subject of the comparison is. For example, in Ezekiel 19:5 a king of Judah is being called a “lion,” but which king is it referring to? The scholars are not sure. Most of them say either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah, but we do not know for certain.

The second reason hypocatastasis can be confusing is that sometimes it is not clear what meaning is being implied. It may be quite easy to figure out why the Devil is called a “serpent” (Rev. 20:2), but we may not understand what Jesus meant when he called Herod a “fox.” A study of the word “fox” in the biblical culture reveals that Jesus was calling Herod a destructive nuisance (cp. commentary on Luke 13:32).

The third reason hypocatastasis can be confusing is that the figure can be missed and people think that the hypocatastasis is literal. When Jesus used the figure hypocatastasis, sometimes even people who knew him well were confused. For example, Jesus told his apostles to beware of the “leaven” of the Pharisees, but they did not recognize the hypocatastasis and thought he was speaking of actual bread. He was using “leaven” to represent “doctrine,” something he made clear to them after he realized they had misunderstood what he said. (Matt. 16:6-12 KJV).

Another good example of people mistaking the hypocatastasis for something literal is the way many Christians think that Genesis 3:1 is speaking of an actual snake when it refers to the Devil as a “serpent” by the figure hypocatastasis. The figure should be clear because literal snakes cannot talk, the Devil is referred to as the serpent in other verses of Scripture (Rev. 20:2), and when 2 Corinthians 11:3 (KJV) says “the serpent” beguiled Eve, the context is Satan and his ministers (v. 14). Nevertheless many people miss the hypocatastasis and think that the “serpent” in Genesis was some kind of actual snake, and artists do not help much when they paint pictures of a snake with Eve in the Garden of Eden. There are people who think that the snake was possessed by the Devil, but why would Eve believe a snake? She would be immediately suspicious of something so out of the ordinary. The Devil would have appeared to Eve in an unthreatening way as a wise and helpful being, but his nature is clearly set forth by the hypocatastasis: “serpent” (E. W. Bullinger has an extensive appendix (#19) on the serpent being the Devil in his *Companion Bible*).

The Bible has many examples of hypocatastasis. In Song of Solomon the Beloved is called a “dove” (Song of Sol. 2:14); destructive people are called “wolves” (Acts 20:29); the strong enemies of God are called “bulls” (Ps. 22:12); vicious and unclean people are called “dogs” (Ps. 22:16; Matt. 7:6) and also “pigs” (Matt. 7:6); the people of God are “sheep,” while unbelievers are called “goats” (Matt. 25:33). People are sometimes called “trees” or “plants” (Jer. 11:19; Matt. 15:13). Each of these terms imports a meaning into the text that is important for us to understand.

Sometimes very different people are compared to the same thing, as long as the comparison is valid. A lion usually typified irresistible power and destructive strength, and so many things were compared to a lion. These include God (Job 10:16; Isa. 38:13;

Jer. 49:19); Jesus (Rev. 5:5); Israel (Num. 23:24; 24:9); the tribe of Gad (Deut. 33:20); wicked people (Ps. 17:12; 22:13); false prophets (Ezek. 22:25); Jehoahaz, king of Judah (Ezek. 19:3); the officials in Jerusalem (Zeph. 3:3); Babylon (Jer. 4:7); Egypt (Ezek. 32:2); the enemies of Israel (Jer. 2:15); and the Devil (1 Pet. 5:8).

Hypocatastasis is a powerful figure in that it can bring a wide range of possible meanings to the text from just one illustration, and thus invites us into prayer, thought, and study. A good example of this occurs in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 34:8

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock,....

In the above verse, God uses hypocatastasis to compare His people to sheep, calling them “My flock.” Then He again uses hypocatastasis to explain what has happened to them: they became food for the “wild animals.” If instead of using the figure hypocatastasis, God had tried to explain in paragraph form exactly who the “wild animals” were who had eaten His people, i.e., taken advantage of, hurt, and killed them, it would likely have taken Him at least a paragraph, and the punchy impact of the figure would have been lost. No doubt the list would include cruel leaders, ungodly priests, ruthless businessmen, foreign enemies, and even demonic forces. God covers all these possibilities, forces us to think broadly about the verse, and brings emotion into the text, simply by using the figurative phrase, “wild animals.”

Here in Revelation 2:2, the Devil is referred to by hypocatastasis as a dragon, comparing the Devil to a dragon and importing to him the characteristics of evil, fierceness, viciousness, etc. He is also compared to a snake, being cunning, tricky, deceitful, poisonous, etc.

20:4. “came to life” The dead are dead, and not alive in any way. This verse does not mean that living souls had been enjoying heaven by joining their dead bodies, or any such thing.

20:10. “They will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.” This is usually translated as, “They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” This verse has been used to teach the eternal torment of the damned, i.e., that people who die “unsaved” burn forever in “Hell.” What the Bible really teaches is that people who die unsaved are not tormented forever, but are eventually annihilated in the flames of Gehenna.

Through the years many people have had difficulty believing that God would torture people eternally, and for a number of important reasons. For one thing, it is not logical that someone could commit sin in one short lifetime that would be justly recompensed by being tormented forever. How can that be just, righteous, or loving? Furthermore, it makes us seem very cold-hearted in heaven. Can it really be that the saved are rejoicing forever while hearing the screams of people being tortured forever? Remember, in Jesus’ teaching in Luke 16:24 the rich man in torment could actually converse with Abraham. And frankly, even if the saved could not hear the cries of the damned, would that make such a big difference? Civilized people will not even torture their worst enemies here on earth, does that change when the saved are perfected? Also, the teaching of everlasting torment contradicts many clear and simple scriptures.

Revelation 20:10 contains a hyperbole (pronounced hī-per'-bō-lē), an exaggeration or overstatement of the truth. The reality is that the Devil, his demons, and some extremely evil people, will burn in the lake of fire for a very, very long time before dying and being consumed and annihilated. However in this verse the length of time that the torment will last is exaggerated by the figure of speech hyperbole to intensify the horror of the punishment.

One of the best known principles of biblical exegesis is that God's Word is internally consistent, i.e., verses cannot contradict each other. If verses appear to contradict, any unclear verse must be interpreted in harmony with the clear verses on the subject. The Bible says in many different ways and in many places that the unsaved will be totally destroyed. In contrast, there are only a few verses that seem to say the unsaved will not be destroyed. Thus we can safely conclude that the unsaved will be destroyed. Furthermore, when we closely examine the few verses that seem to say the unsaved will burn forever, each of them can be explained from grammar or customs in a way that is consistent with the clear verses.

When studying whether the wicked are annihilated or live forever in torment, the most natural place to start is in the Old Testament. When we read it, we see that it says over and over in many different ways that the wicked will be annihilated and be gone forever. They will be "no more" (Ps. 37:10; Prov. 10:25); "be forever destroyed" (Ps. 92:7; cp. Ps. 73:17-19; cp. Ps. 145:20; Prov. 13:13 KJV); "die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20; 33:13-16); "perish" (Ps. 1:6; 37:20; Isa. 41:11); "perish forever" (Job 20:7); "be as nothing" (Isa. 41:12); and have "everlasting ruin" (Ps. 52:5). It says that moths will eat them up like a garment, and worms devour them like they devour wool (Isaiah 51:8), which are both illustrations showing nothing will be left of them. The OT also says that wicked people will fly away like a dream and be found no more (Job 20:8). They will "burn...with no one to quench the fire" (Isa. 1:31); "be consumed like dry stubble" (Nahum 1:10; cp. Isa. 29:20); and will "vanish like smoke" (Ps. 37:20) because "his [God's] fire will consume them" (Ps. 21:9). No one will see them any more (Job 20:9).

These many clear verses do not portray eternal torment, but total destruction. And there is even more support for annihilation of the wicked than what we have just seen. Notice the way Malachi refers to the future of the wicked.

Malachi 4:1

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them."

Like the other Old Testament verses we have seen, Malachi does not give us a picture of eternal torment, but of total destruction. Nothing, not one root or branch, will be left to the wicked. Later on in Malachi, the same picture of total destruction is put a different way: "[the wicked] will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things" (Mal. 4:3). The wicked are not pictured as being tortured forever, but eventually will become "ashes."

Still another way God portrays the destruction of the wicked is by saying they will be "cut off." The phrase "cut off" is used in several different ways in the Old Testament. It is used of physical death (1 Sam. 24:21; 1 Kings 18:4; Isa. 53:8; thus some versions have "killed"), and it is also used of people who will be "cut off" in the next life (Ps. 12:3; 37:9, 22; Nahum 1:15). Just as when a person was cut off in his first life and ceased

to live, so when he is cut off after the Judgment he will cease to live, and then cannot “live” in torment.

In contrast to these clear verses that say the wicked will be destroyed and be no more, there is not one clear Old Testament verse that shows the wicked living forever in torment. Having now seen more than a dozen different ways the Old Testament says that wicked people will eventually be destroyed and cease to exist, we will see that the New Testament continues the same idea, saying that the wicked are totally consumed and become non-existent.

John the Baptist compared the wicked with chaff that is burned (Matt. 3:12). Jesus compared the unsaved to trees that do not produce fruit and so are cut down and burned (Matt. 7:19); to weeds that are gathered and burned (Matt. 13:40); and to vine branches that do not produce fruit and so are cut off and burned (John 15:6). None of these illustrations give the impression that the burning lasts forever. Instead, they all convey the simple truth that was well known in the biblical culture: chaff, weeds, or wood that is thrown into a fire burn for a short time then are completely consumed. If John or Jesus knew that people burned forever in the lake of fire, they should have used illustrations that made that point, or added some comments to make their illustration clear. However, it surely seems that John and Jesus both knew exactly what their illustrations conveyed--the total destruction of the wicked--and chose their illustrations on purpose to make that exact point and fit with the rest of Scripture. Just as the chaff, weeds, or wood, burn for a time in the fire and then are consumed and gone forever, the wicked suffer some retribution in the lake of fire and then die and are burned up completely.

Another New Testament illustration that teaches the ungodly will be destroyed is the comparison of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to the destruction of the wicked. The book of 2 Peter says that God, “by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:6 ESV). Sodom and Gomorrah were not tormented forever, but burned to ashes, and that is exactly what will happen to wicked people.

As well as illustrations and comparisons about the destruction of the unsaved such as those we have seen above with trees, weeds, or Sodom and Gomorrah, the New Testament uses more than half a dozen Greek words to describe what will happen to the unsaved, and they each refer to death and destruction, not continued life in torment. If we are going to arrive at the true meaning of Scripture, we must pay careful attention to the vocabulary it uses because God chooses His vocabulary carefully. When it comes to the total annihilation of the wicked, God uses many different Greek words to make the point again and again that the wicked will be destroyed. Sometimes the same Greek word is translated into English in different ways. For example, *apollumi* is sometimes translated “destroy” and sometimes “perish,” but if we follow the Greeks words and understand their meanings, we can arrive at truth no matter how the translators brought the Greek into English. Below is a list of Greek words God uses to portray the destruction of the wicked.

1. ***Apōleia*** (Strong’s #684 ἀπόλεια). *Apōleia* means “the destruction that one experiences; annihilation” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by Arndt and Gingrich; abbreviated BDAG). Jesus said that the road is narrow

and the gate small that leads to “life,” while the broad road and broad gate leads to “destruction” (*apōleia*). Philippians 3:19 and 2 Peter 3:7 say the end of ungodly men and the enemies of God is “destruction,” and Romans 9:22 speaks of vessels (i.e., people) prepared for “destruction.” Hebrews 10:39 says that believing results in the “saving of the soul (KJV), while unbelief results in destruction, i.e., annihilation. To contrast *apōleia* with other words that mean destruction or total destruction, perhaps “annihilation” would be a clear translation. So *apōleia* is just one word that shows us the end of the unsaved is annihilation, not eternal torment.

2. ***Apollumi*** (Strong’s #622 ἀπόλλυμι). *Apollumi* means “to cause or experience destruction” (BDAG). The Gospel of Matthew says that we are to fear God, who is the one who can “destroy both soul and body” in Gehenna (Matt. 10:28), and John 3:16, using the same Greek word, says that the unsaved will “perish,” but those who believe will have everlasting life. Romans 2:12 also says the unsaved will “perish.” These verses give more evidence that the fate of the wicked is everlasting destruction, not everlasting torment.
3. ***Esthiō*** (Strong’s #2068 ἐσθίω; in some lexicons it is listed as the unused root, *phagō*, Strong’s #5315 φάγω). *Esthiō* means “do away with completely; consume; devour” (BDAG). James 5:3, speaking of wicked people, says their gold and silver will “eat [*esthiō*; consume] your flesh like fire,” meaning that the greed and possessions of the wicked will be the cause of them being consumed after the Judgment. Hebrews 10:27 speaks of a “fire that will consume [*esthiō*] the enemies of God.” Hebrews 12:29 says God is a “consuming fire,” but in this verse the Greek word for “consuming” is *katanaliskō* (Strong’s #2654 καταναλίσκω), which means “consume” (BDAG), to do away with completely. That is exactly what fire does to things, it burns them up until they are totally consumed. The translation of Hebrews 10:27 in many versions, that a fire will “consume” the enemies of God is simple, clear, and accurate. There is no “eternal torment,” but there is everlasting death, the unsaved are consumed in the lake of fire.
4. ***Exoethreuō*** (Strong’s #1842 ἐξολεθρεύω). This is an amplification of *olethros* (2 Thess. 1:9) below, and means to destroy completely. Peter used it in Acts 3:23 (quoting Deut. 18:19) to show that anyone who did not listen to the prophet who was foretold to come (i.e., the Messiah), would be completely destroyed and not be part of the people of God. *Exoethreuō* is used frequently (over 200 times) in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was made around 250 BC, and it sometimes refers to a person’s destruction in this life, and sometimes refers to their complete destruction in the next. That is certainly the way Peter used it in Acts 3:23, and an example of the total and everlasting destruction of the wicked in the Old Testament is Psalm 37:9.
5. ***Katastrophē*** (Strong’s #2692 καταστροφή). 2 Peter 2:6 says that God reduced Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes as an example of what would happen to ungodly people. Some Greek texts include the word *katastrophē*, which means “condition of total destruction” (BDAG), which is why the ESV reads that God “condemned them to extinction. . . .” The ESV has chosen a good English word, “extinction,” to separate *katastrophē* from other Greek words that mean destruction. “Extinction” exactly describes the fate of the unsaved, they are not tormented forever.
6. ***Olethros*** (Strong’s #3639 ὄλεθρος). *Olethros* means “a state of destruction, destruction, ruin, death” (BDAG). 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says that people who do not obey God will be punished with everlasting “destruction” [*olethros*]. Perhaps simply to distinguish *olethros*

from other Greek words that mean destroy, it might be helpful to use “destroy completely” a definition in Friberg’s Greek Lexicon.

7. ***Phthora*** (Strong’s #5356, φθορά). *Phthora* means the “total destruction of an entity” (BDAG). 2 Peter 2:12 says that the wicked will be caught and “destroyed.” Galatians 6:8 uses the same Greek word and says that people who sow to the flesh reap “corruption,” while people who sow to the Spirit and reap everlasting life. Since *phthora* means “total destruction,” and in Galatians is contrasted with everlasting life, “total destruction” would be a good translation of *phthora* in both 2 Peter 2:12 (the wicked are totally destroyed) and in Galatians 6:8 (the wicked reap total destruction).
8. ***Thanatos*** (Strong’s #2288 θάνατος). *Thanatos* means “death; the termination of physical life” (BDAG). Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is “death” in contrast with the gift of God, which is “life.” The choice God gives people is the choice between life and death, not between “everlasting life in pleasure” and “everlasting life in pain.” Each person is given the choice between everlasting life and everlasting death. The end of people’s first life is “death”—no life, no body, no consciousness—until the resurrection. At the resurrection God raises the body from the dead and re-animates it with life. At that point, saved people go on and live forever, but the unsaved are thrown into the lake of fire which is called the “second death” precisely because it is like the first death; people burn to the point they have no life at all; they are annihilated. The second death is mentioned four times in Revelation (2:11; 20:6, 14; and 21:8). Since the Bible cannot contradict itself, it cannot say that the lake of fire is the second death and also say people live forever in torment. One category of those statements would have to be figurative, and we are seeing that the figurative verses are the few that seems to say people will burn forever; they are the figure hyperbole, exaggeration.

Some Bible teachers say that “death” is not really death (the total absence of life), but just “separation from God.” Although there are times when the word “death” is used in a limited way, such as when describing the “spiritual death” of an unsaved person (Eph. 2:1), the word death still means something is dead. For example, when a person is referred to as spiritually “dead,” their spiritual life is not just separated from God, it is “dead.”

The way to see whether the word “death” is used in a limited sense or its standard meaning is to study the whole scope of Scripture on the subject. In this case, the many clear verses that say the wicked will be destroyed lets us know that when God says the unsaved will die a second “death,” He is using “death” in the standard way, meaning there is no life at all. It is not as if God said in many different ways the wicked would be annihilated, but in saying they are “dead” undo the meaning of those clear verses.

Most orthodox theologians acknowledge that a sinner’s body is destroyed after he dies, but they assert that it is the “immortal soul” of a sinner that remains in torment forever. The concept of the “immortal soul” came mainly from Greek philosophy, which came into Christianity in two important ways. The first was from the Jews who adopted the belief after Alexander the Great conquered Israel and Egypt in 332 BC. The second was from the Greeks who converted to Christianity as the Christian Faith began to grow and spread.

It is widely believed that the “immortal soul” is a biblical concept, but it is never mentioned in the Bible. Much has been written showing the soul is not immortal, but it is

too much information to expound in this commentary article.³⁹ The most common use of “soul” in the Bible is its being used to mean a person, an individual, such as when Acts 27:37 says there were 276 “souls” on board the ship (KJV). This is true both in the Old Testament, where “soul” is a translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, (pronounced ně'-fesh) and the New Testament, where it is the translation of the Greek word *psuche* (pronounced soo'-kay). However, due to the common belief that the “soul” lives on after the body dies, it is important that we highlight some verses that show that the soul, as well as the body, is destroyed.

The clearest verse that shows the soul can be destroyed is Matthew 10:28. Jesus was teaching people not to be afraid of people, but to “be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna].” This clear teaching by Jesus should have settled the point that both the body and the soul are “destroyed” in the lake of fire. The soul does not live on forever in torment. Ezekiel 18:20 says that soul that sins will die (KJV). Hebrews 10:39 mentions people who “believe to the saving of the soul” (KJV; the word soul is in the Greek text, but not translated as “soul” in many versions). It contrasts those saved souls with the people who draw back from God resulting in destruction (annihilation; Greek = *apōleia*; see #1 above).

Jesus also taught, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matt. 16:25). In this verse, the word “life” is “soul” in the Greek text, and the word “lose” and “loses” is the Greek word *apollumi*, which was covered above and refers to destruction. So although it is not clear in most English translations, when the Greek text is more literally translated the meaning of the verse becomes clear: “For whoever wants to save his soul will destroy it...” The word “soul” in this verse refers to the life of the earthly body, hence its usual translation as “life,” but it does show that the soul can be destroyed. James 5:20 says the person who “converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death...” (KJV). Although “soul” in this verse seems to mean “person,” it includes the life of the person, the soul, which it says without salvation will die.

The verses above all show that the soul is not immortal, but can be destroyed, and more verses could be added from the Old Testament, such as those that say the “soul” of sinners will be “cut off” (Lev. 7:20; 18:29; Num. 15:30, 31). In concluding this point we need to restate that there is no such thing as the “immortal soul” in the Bible, and many Scriptures, and especially the teaching of Jesus, show us the “soul” can be destroyed.

More evidence that the soul can be destroyed comes from studying the Hebrew word *Sheol*. The Old Testament made it clear that when a person died, he went to *Sheol*. Neither Greek or English has a good equivalent word for *Sheol*, because it is not a “physical place” where dead people go, like the grave, but rather it is a “state of being;” it is the state of being dead (cp. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*; under “hell”). Perhaps a good English equivalent of *Sheol* would be “grave-dom,” the “reign of the grave.” That *Sheol* is the state of being dead can be easily confirmed by examining the uses of *Sheol* in the Old Testament. It is

³⁹ See, Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *Is There Death After Life* (Christian Educational Services, Indianapolis, 2004), pp. 17-28; Edward Fudge, *The Fire that Consumes* (Verdict Publications, Fallbrook, CA, 1982), pp. 65-76; Leroy E. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington DC, 1966), pp. 529- 802; Anthony Buzzard, *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven* (Restoration Fellowship, Atlanta, 2006), pp. 208-225.

undisputed that when a person dies, his body disintegrates and ceases to exist. But not only does the body cease to exist, the life (sometimes called “soul”) of the person does too. Thus, a person who is dead is dead in every way, not alive in heaven or “Hell.”

There are many verses that show that when the body died, the person, both body and soul, were totally dead. Death and being in *Sheol* is compared to sleep in many verses (Job 7:21; 14:12-14; Psalm 13:3; 90:5; Dan. 12:2; John 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10). The comparison is valid because just as there is no consciousness in sleep, there is none in death. Once a person dies, he does not remember God (Ps. 6:5). In fact, dead people “know nothing” (Ecc. 9:5). They cannot praise God or speak of His goodness (Ps. 30:9; 115:17; Isa. 38:18), they cannot thank God or hope in Him (Isa. 38:18); and they have no knowledge or wisdom (Ecc. 9:10). Obviously, these dead people are not rejoicing in heaven or suffering in “Hell.”

When a person dies he goes to *Sheol*, which, as we have just seen, is the state of being dead where there is no knowledge, wisdom, memory, praise, or hope. Similarly, when a person dies in the lake of fire and experiences the “second death,” he will again be in *Sheol* and have total non-existence. In that light, it is important that we notice that Psalm 9:17 (ESV) says, “The wicked shall return to *Sheol*, all the nations that forget God.” Although this verse may have a couple different meanings included in it, and may refer to the first death as well as the second death, the ESV translation is certainly correct that the verse does include the idea of the wicked making a “return” to *Sheol*. Wicked people die the first time and are in *Sheol*, then are resurrected to the Judgment. If they are judged unworthy of everlasting life, they are cast into the lake of fire and die again, thus returning to *Sheol*, the state of death. Thus Psalm 9:17 is another clear verse that teaches the wicked do not suffer forever in the lake of fire. Eventually the wicked return to *Sheol* and are totally dead.

Saying that the Devil and some wicked people will be tormented “for ever and ever” is the figure of speech hyperbole, or exaggeration. Hyperbole was common in the biblical culture, just as it is common in our culture today. Common hyperboles in Western culture are when we are hungry but we say, “I’m starving,” or when we are cold but we say “I’m freezing.” The hyperbole communicates both the intensity of the feeling and the emotion of discomfort that goes with the physical feeling itself. In his book, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger has six pages of examples of hyperboles found in the Bible, and there are many he did not list.

There are other examples of hyperbole that are associated with the Devil, the last days, and the Judgment. For example, by hyperbole the Devil is said to be accusing Christians before God “day and night.” Of course, this is not literal, because there are times when the Devil is on earth and leaves God’s presence (Job 1:12; 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). Also, Jesus used hyperbole to good effect when he taught about avoiding Gehenna. He said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away” (Matt. 5:29). Jesus did not expect anyone to literally obey him, but the hyperbole communicates well that, although we should not gouge out our eye, we should not be complacent about the sin in our lives, but should take drastic action to cleanse ourselves of sin. The hyperbole in Revelation 20:10, “to the ages of the ages” accomplishes two things. First, it graphically makes the point that the torment will go on for a long time and second, it elicits emotions such as horror, or perhaps satisfaction, that accompany the retribution that has come upon the wicked.

Perhaps another reason for God's use of hyperbole was the inability of the Greek and Latin languages to express a very large number. The Roman numerals used in biblical times had a "C" for 100, a "D" for 500, and an "M" for 1000, but nothing larger than that. Thus numbers in the billions could not be expressed in writing, or for that matter in oral communication. If we postulate that the Devil will burn only one year for every life he has ruined, the number would be in the billions, too much to express in Roman numerals and put in the Bible. Thus, the use of hyperbole here is a very fitting way to say that the Devil will be tormented longer than could be easily expressed, but not forever.

Scripture says people will receive punishment for what they have done, and that the punishment will be in proportion to the sin they have committed. Romans 2:5 says of stubborn people, "you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath." Just as godly people by their good works store up treasure for the life to come, wicked people store up wrath for themselves (for more about this, see the commentary on Romans 2:5). The clear message of Scripture is that unless people get forgiveness for their sins they will receive punishment for the evil they have done (Ps. 62:12; Ecc. 11:9; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23). Beings such as the Devil and his demons have stored up much wrath for themselves, and will be punished for a very long time before they are destroyed. God metes out two different types of justice: corrective justice and retributive justice. Corrective justice is punishment that is meant to correct a behavior, while retributive justice is retribution, or repayment for something that the person did (see commentary note on 2 Thess. 1:8). Torment and then destruction in the lake of fire is not corrective, but retributive; it is a righteous repayment for harm done. The demons knew this justice was coming, and so said to Jesus, "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Matt. 8:29).

In conclusion, the verses above are very descriptive of the final end of the wicked, which is total annihilation. No one should use the very few unclear verses that can seem to say that evil people will suffer forever to overturn the dozens of different verses and illustrations that tell us the wicked will be totally destroyed. The overwhelming biblical evidence in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is that wicked people are not tormented forever but are destroyed in the lake of fire, which is the second death.

For information on the fact that dead people are dead and not alive in any form, see the note on 1 Cor. 15:26; for more on the punishment of the wicked being in proportion to the wrong they have done, see commentary on Rom. 2:5.

20:11. "great white throne." What theologians refer to as "the Great White Throne Judgment" is the final judgment, and occurs at the "second resurrection." The vast majority of the dead who are raised in this judgment will be condemned to annihilation in gehenna (see commentary on Rev. 20:10). Jesus Christ will be the judge sitting on the throne (see commentary on Rom. 14:10).

21:3. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!").

21:5. "Look!" The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 ("Look!").

21:16. "stadia." A Roman stadia is about 600 feet. The distance is about 1,400 miles, or 2,200 kilometers. The city is probably a huge pyramid, with the throne of God and Jesus at the top. Thus it would be similar to the Holy Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom,

with the Temple at the top of the mountain of the Lord (see Schoenheit, *The Christian's Hope*, chapter 4).

21:18. “The city was pure gold, like pure glass.” This does not mean the gold is transparent, but rather that glass in the time of the apostle John could be made very pure and visibly so, and so he is saying that the gold will be pure also, not amalgamated or diluted.

22:7. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

22:12. “Look!” The Greek word is *idou* (#2400 ἴδο), and it is used to get our attention. See commentary on Matthew 1:20 (“Look!”).

22:15. “likes.” The Greek verb we translate as “likes” is *phileo* (#5368 φιλέω). If we say, “love,” as most versions do, we lose the meaning of *phileo* here, and confuse it with *agape* love. *Phileo* love has a deep attachment, like the attachment of true friends, while *agape* love does not necessary have any feeling of attachment at all, which is why we can “love” (*agape*) our enemies. The people in this verse do not “love” falsehood in the sense that they feel it is the right thing to do even though they do not enjoy it (that would be to confuse *phileo* with *agape*), rather, the people being referred to in this verse have a deep connection to, and friendship with, falsehood. For a more complete understanding of *phileo*, see the note on John 21:15.