

The Blessedness of the Intermediate State

Revelation
20:4-6



⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.



Option 1

**This Age | 1000 years | Age to
Come**

Option 2

This Age | Age to Come



Option 1

**Rev 19
Battle**

1000 Years

**Rev 20
Battle**

Option 1

The 1000 years of Rev 20 is literal and futuristic on this earth distinct from the age to come.

Option 2

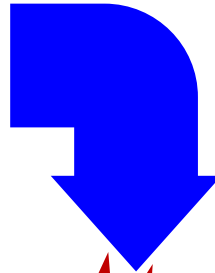
The 1000 years is symbolic of a very long time and the 1000 year kingdom is in heaven presently.



Option 2

John is describing the intermediate state after death and before the bodily resurrection @ the Second Coming of Christ

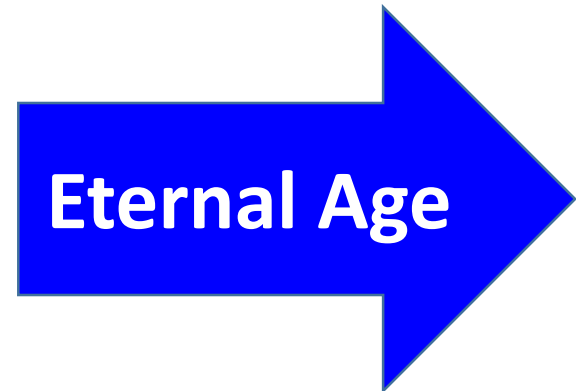
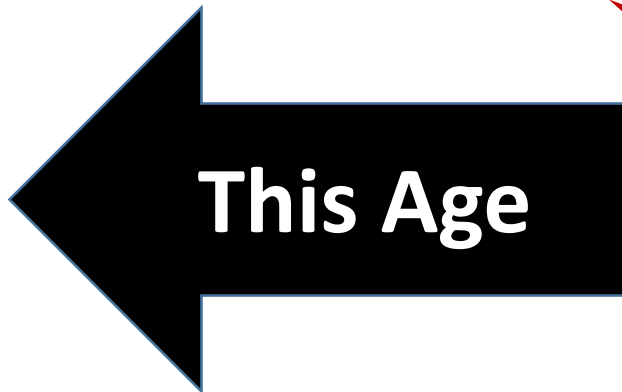
1000+ Years in Heaven



This Age

**Final
Battle**

Eternal Age



The major advantage to Option 2 is the degree to which John is now describing something that both Jesus and Paul affirm to be true.



The **intermediate state is the time between death and the bodily resurrection at the coming of Jesus in heaven.**

Let's be absolutely clear:

**We are not having a discussion
as to the legitimacy of the
intermediate state.**

**That is a biblical fact without
Revelation 20.**



The truth is:

Without Revelation 20, scholars would not believe in a literal 1000 year kingdom on this earth before the eternal kingdom.

And the intermediate state doesn't need Rev. 20.



Jesus describes the “intermediate state” as a kingdom. Paul teaches the reality of the intermediate state and also describes it as a kingdom:

- **Luke 23:42-43**
- **John 18:36**
- **2 Corinthians 5:8**
- **Phil 1:23**
- **Hebrews 12:23**



Luke 23:42–43

- And he said, “Jesus, remember me **when you come into your kingdom.**”
- And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, **today you will be with me in paradise.**”



John 18:36

- Jesus answered, “**My kingdom is not of this world.** If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. **But my kingdom is not from the world.**”



2 Corinthians 5:8

- Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be **away from the body and at home with the Lord.**



Philippians 1:23

- I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is **to depart and be with Christ,** for that is far better.



Hebrews 12:22–23

- But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,



**Paul also affirms the
reality that there is
presently a heavenly
kingdom.**



Colossians 1:13

- He has delivered us from the domain of darkness **and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,**



2 Timothy 4:18

- The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and **bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.** To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.



#1 The first reason I believe John is describing the **Intermediate State** is the degree to which this interpretation can be supported by other NT passages.

I am NOT denying the existence of a 1000 year kingdom. Instead, I am saying:

a. It exists in heaven.

b. It is longer than a 1000 years in length.



Revelation 20:4



- **Then I saw thrones,**
and seated on them were those to
whom the authority to judge was
committed.

**This goes all the way back to
Chap 4**

#2 The second reason I believe John is describing the **Intermediate State** is the specific description of seeing thrones which are all previously described as being in heaven.

**Where are these thrones
that John saw?**



**There is not a single
references to thrones on the
earth in Revelation.**



Revelation 4:2



- At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, **a throne stood in heaven,** with one seated on the throne.

Revelation 4:4



- Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.

Revelation 11:16



- And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,

Look Back @

Revelation 3:21

**to a promise given to
those who conquer**



Revelation 3:21



- **The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.**

Where is the throne that Jesus is describing here?

Is Jesus presently reigning? Yes. Jesus said,

“My kingdom is NOT of this world.”

If Christ is presently reigning and He grants to us the privilege of being seated with Him on His throne are we not reigning with Him?

And where is Christ presently reigning from?



#3 The third reason I believe John is describing the Intermediate State comes from a comparison of Revelation 6:9 to 20:4.

The language is too identical for me to ignore the similarities.



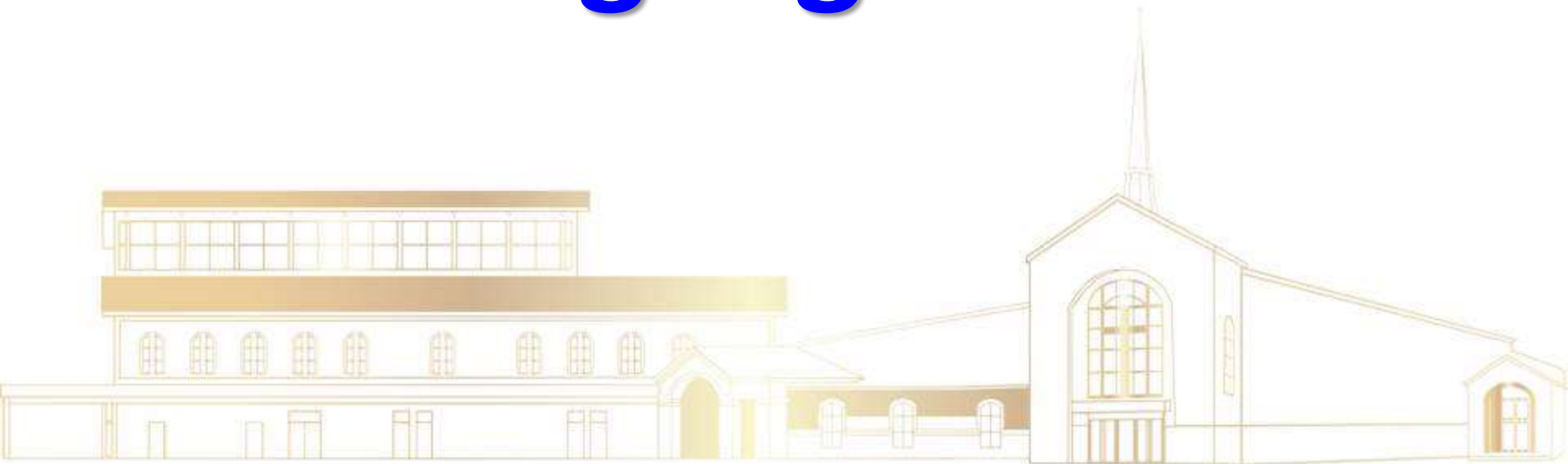
Revelation 20:4b



- Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God,

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**Where have we heard
this language before?**



Comparing Revelation 6:9 to 20:4

6:9	20:4
Now when the Lamb opened the fifth seal,	Then I saw thrones and seated on them were those who had been given authority to judge.
I saw	I also saw
under the altar the souls	the souls
of those who had been violently killed	Of those who had been beheaded
because of the word of God	because of the word of God
because of the testimony they had given.	because of the testimony about Jesus
	These had not worshiped the beast or his image and had refused to receive his mark on their forehead or hand. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Truth

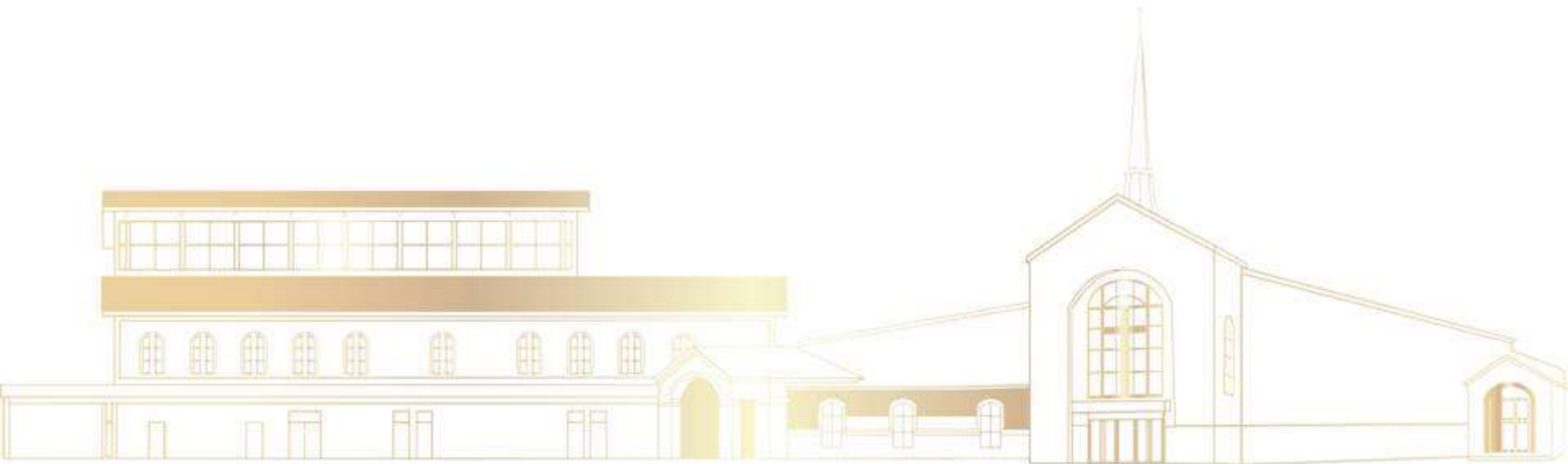
Everyone (many Bible scholars) agree that Revelation 6:9 is describing the Intermediate State.

The issue is: Do we let Revelation 6:9 inform our thinking on chapter 20 or ignore it.



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**And NOT just those
who were beheaded**



Revelation 20:4



- **and those** who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

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**If we get very literal in
our interpretation we
have a big problem.**



If option 1 is correct and John is referring to a literal 1000 year kingdom of this earth after the return of Christ then according to 20:4 only those who were beheaded and only those who did not take the mark of the beast or worship its image will get to enter that kingdom.

They are the ones who came to life and reigned with Christ for 1000 years.



Revelation 20:4



- Also I saw the souls of **those** who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and **those** who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They** came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Some Bible scholars see Isaiah 11 as further proof of a 1000 year kingdom because the language in the chapter.

For example,

“The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra...”

But the same chapter says,

“and together they [Judah and Ephraim] shall plunder the people of the east.”



**What if John is NOT
describing a future 1000 year
kingdom?**

Is that a problem?



What is the most compelling biblical reason why we need another 1000 years of life on this earth with sin, the flesh, death and another giant battle before we enter the eternal age to come?

I have NOT found an answer.

Even with Satan eliminated there will still be sin, temptation, sickness, and death.



What if John is writing to encourage those believers who have lost a loved one, a family member, a husband, a father, their preacher to the persecution of the beast?

What does he say to them?



Revelation 20:4



- **They came to life**

**These are the words
we need to focus upon.**

Yes, they were beheaded
BUT THEY CAME TO LIFE!

Yes, they suffered a brutal and violent death
BUT THEY CAME TO LIFE!

Yes, they were burnt to death
BUT THEY CAME TO LIFE!

Yes, they were fed to the lions
BUT THEY CAME TO LIFE!



Revelation 20:5



- **The rest of the dead**
did not come to life until the
thousand years were ended.

The rest of the dead refers to unbelievers—those who are NOT saved.

- **These are the earth dwellers.**
- **They took the mark of the beast.**
- **They worshipped the image.**



Revelation 20:5



- The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

The thousand years is a symbolic number representing the ultimate in completion.

$10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$ or 10 cubed.

It is very similar to the 144,000.

Which is $12 \times 12 \times 1000$.

Only God knows the length of the intermediate state but it is a very long time.



Thousand: A Semitic way of saying “an infinitely large number.”

John MacArthur

2 Peter 3:8

Now, dear friends, do not let this one thing escape your notice, that a single day is like a thousand years with the Lord and a thousand years are like a single day.

Psalms 50:10

For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.

Deuteronomy 1:11

May the LORD, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you!

Deuteronomy 7:9

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,



Revelation 20:5



- The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

**The rest of the dead come
to life in order to be judged
from the books described in
v. 12.**

**Turn back to
Revelation 11:18**



Revelation 11:18



- The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

Four Things Happen in Revelation 11:8

- 1. The wrath of God is poured out.**
- 2. The dead are judged (this requires their resurrection).**
- 3. The saints and servants of God are rewarded (this sounds like the JSofC).**
- 4. The destroyers (Satan, beast, false prophet, demons) are destroyed.**



When an unbeliever dies:

- 1. Their soul immediately goes to hell.**
- 2. At the return of Christ they are resurrected to be judged.**
- 3. At which time they are judged and subsequently thrown into the lake of fire.**



Acts 24:15

- having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that
there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.



Biblical Fact

Apart from Rev. 20:5

There isn't any other Bible verse that chronologically separates the resurrection of the saved and unsaved.

Not one.



Turn to
John 5:25-29



John 5:25

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, **an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.**



Who are the dead in John 5:25?

Everyone agrees they are the spiritually dead who if they believe the gospel will live.

Yet in the same conversation, in the same pericope, Jesus moves to discussing those who are in the tombs or are physically dead.



John 5:26

- For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.



John 5:27–28

- And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice



John 5:29

- and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life,
- and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.



Now lets' talk about the words
“first resurrection.”

**Only John adds “first” in front of
resurrection.**



Revelation 20:5



- The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.
- This is the first resurrection.

Turn Back to
Matthew
22:31-32



Matthew 22:29–30

- And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? **He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”**



John calls this the first resurrection to establish a contract between the resurrection of the body that will occur when Christ returns.

At this point, John is writing to encourage those where were martyred (beheaded/slain) for the cause of Christ.

You, early church, believer need to know that your loved one who died for not taking the mark of the beast is now alive with Christ.



**Notice how John establishes a
“second death” in v. 6.**

**Again no other writer employs
the term “second death.”**



Revelation 20:6



- **Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.**

John is NOT creating a 1000 year gap in time between the resurrection of the just and the unjust.

Instead, John is explaining that those who do not die in Christ do not experience life when they die and they are not in heaven.

They instead are waiting for the 'second' resurrection where they will be judged out of what was written in the books.

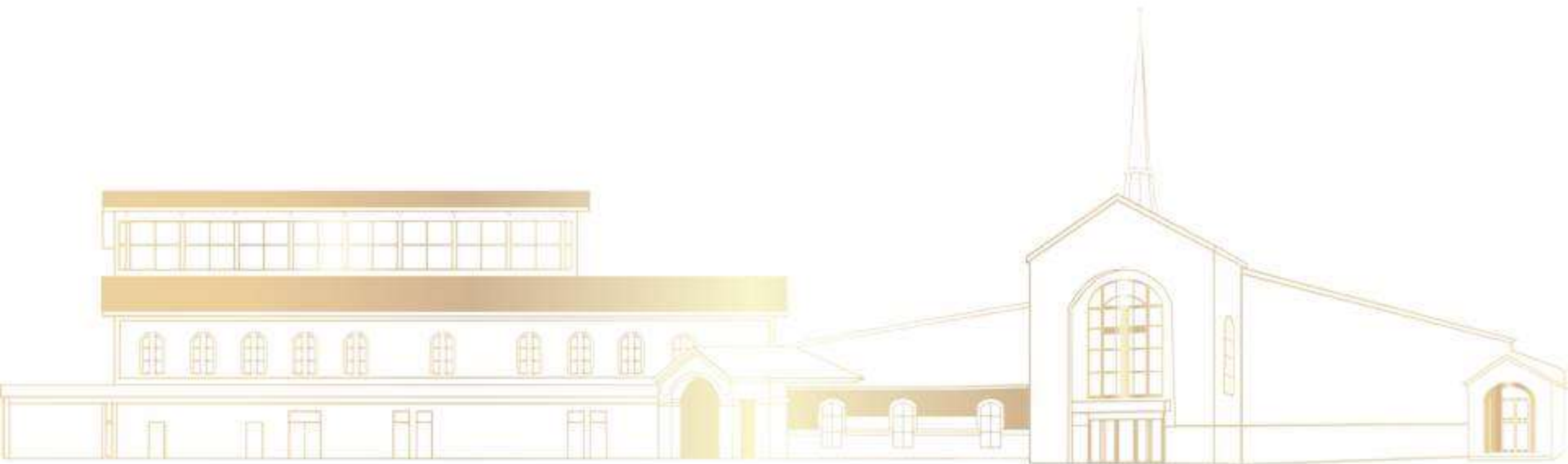


John's use of First Resurrection and Second Death in Revelation

Death (physical)	Second Death (eternal punishment in the lake of fire)
First Resurrection (soul life in heaven)	Second Resurrection (bodily)

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**This is not John's first
use of Second Death**



Revelation 2:10–11



- Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

Comparing Revelation 2:10-11 to 20:4 & 6

2:10-11

Be faithful **unto death**,

give you **the crown**

Of life

The one who conquers
will **not be hurt by the
second death.**

20:4 & 6

who had been **beheaded**

and **reigned** with Christ for
1000 years.

Came to life

Over such **the second death
has no power**, but they will
be priests of God and of
Christ, and they will reign
with him for a thousand
years.

One of the arguments presented for a 1000 year kingdom on the earth after the return of Christ is the necessity of reigning with Christ, but Revelation describes this as happening presently in heaven and in the future forever.



Revelation 22:5



- And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they [his servants] will reign forever and ever.

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Next Week

Great White Throne Judgment

