

Volume 4, Issue 1
Fall 2022-23



Copyright © 2022 BCC Academic Press

New Orleans, LA, United States of America

All rights reserved.

Except for brief quotations in academic papers, critical articles, or reviews, no part of this journal may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from BCC Academic Press.

*Journal of Biblical
Pentecostalism
Volume 4
Issue 1
Fall 2022-23*

Editors

Richard Miller, Ph.D.

Justus Freeman, Ph.D.

David Craun, Ed.S.

Introduction to the Journal

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism is to bless the church with pentecostal scholarship from the faculty of Bridges Christian College. One part of the journal is exegetical and the other part is more practical in nature. The rationale for such a broad scope is so that there will be literature for the biblical researcher and the ministerial practitioner.

Mission of the Journal

The *Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* presents biblical exegesis, ministerial training literature, and research of church history through a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Goals of the Journal

This Journal has the following goals.

1. To present exegesis of the Scriptures with a Pentecostal hermeneutic to help the church understand the Bible and its theological principles.
2. To demonstrate the unity of the Scriptures through intertextual interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament.
3. To apply Scriptural principles to a Pentecostal, practical ministry environment.
4. To present research of the roots and traditions of the Pentecostal movement throughout church history.

Journal Categories

This Journal will present articles that are separated into the following categories:

1. Biblical Studies
 - This category presents interpretation of the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective. Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
 - This section is primarily focused on research on the biblical text.
2. Spirit-Empowered Ministry
 - This category presents articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry topics.
 - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are taken into consideration. The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

TWO RESURRECTIONS: THE MEANING OF ἐξήσαν IN REVELATION 20:4-5.

Justus Anthony Freeman, PhD
jfreeman@bridgeschristiancollege.com

1. Introduction

How one understands the nature of the millennial reign of Christ in Revelation 20 greatly influences how he or she interprets the rest of the Book of Revelation. The premillennial position argues that Christ will literally reign on earth for one thousand years after the Great Tribulation and when Jesus returns on a white horse (Rev 19), but before establishing the new heaven and new earth.¹ The postmillennial position argues that the millennial reign of Christ began after Christ's resurrection and will culminate with his return.² The amillennial position argues that the thousand-year reign is only a figurative representation of Christ's literal victory and not a literal reign on earth.³ In this article, I will attempt to answer the question concerning whether Revelation 20:4-5 supports the premillennial or amillennial position.

I am primarily concerned with how to understand ἐξήσαν⁴ (came back to life) in Revelation 20:4-5 since this is a key text relating to understanding the nature of Christ's millennial reign. Amillennialists argue that ἐξήσαν in Revelation 20:4 refers to a spiritual resurrection, or spiritual rebirth at conversion, while ἐξήσαν in 20:5 refers to a physical resurrection. Those who hold to the premillennial position argue that one should understand ἐξήσαν in 20:4 and 20:5 in the same way.

Moreover, I will also respond to a section of Robert P. Menzies's recent work, *The End of History: Pentecostals and a Fresh Approach to the Apocalypse*, that argues for an amillennial reading of Revelation 20:1-6.⁵ According to Menzies, Revelation 20:1-6 is best understood as the current church age, not a precursor to a literal millennial reign.⁶ Due to the focus of this article, I will narrow my response to Menzies's interpretation of ἐξήσαν Revelation 20:4-5 since the rendering of ἐξήσαν (came back to life) influences one's interpretation of the millennial reign.

¹ William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2012), 232-36.

² Ibid., 232-33.

³ Ibid., 233.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Greek text is from Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). The typical abbreviation for this Greek edition is NA28.

⁵ Robert P. Menzies, *The End of History: Pentecostals and a Fresh Approach to the Apocalypse* (Springfield, MO: ACPT Press, 2022), 67-76.

⁶ Ibid., 67.

1.2 Thesis Statement

In the following article, I will argue the following thesis: Revelation 20:4-5 is best interpreted, in light of its literary context and Greek syntax, as supporting the premillennial position of a future, literal resurrection of the saints who were martyred during the Great Tribulation that precedes a literal thousand-year reign of Christ after his return. I arrive at this thesis because it is hermeneutically consistent to do so if one follows the historical-grammatical methodology of interpretation.

1.3 Methodology and Outline

I will attempt to prove my thesis by a presentation of the following seven points of argument: (1) The context in Revelation 20:4-5 supports the premise that one should understand ζάω (to live) as a literal, physical resurrection in both verses, (2) ζάω in the literary context of the book of Revelation supports a literal physical resurrection in 20:4-5, (3) ζάω is often used in Johannine literature in reference to a literal and physical resurrection, (4) Johannine literature presents a clear understanding that eternal life includes a physical resurrection, (5) the amillennial position is unable to create complete parallels between Ezekiel 36-39 and Revelation 20:4-5, and (6) it is contextually inconsistent to create a dichotomy between spiritual and physical resurrection in Johannine literature.

I recognize that scholars have spilled much ink on the subjects of premillennialism and amillennialism. Indeed, scholars like Grant R. Osborne,⁷ Walter A. Elwell,⁸ Ben Witherington III,⁹ George Eldon Ladd,¹⁰ John F. Walvoord,¹¹ Stanley Horton,¹² Buist M. Fanning¹³, and Robert H. Mounce¹⁴ advocate for a premillennial reading of Revelation 20:1-6 that interprets the first and second resurrection (vv. 4-5) as physical ones in contrast to the amillennial interpretation.¹⁵ So, I recognize I am entering into a thoroughly researched discussion, yet, the publication of Robert P. Menzies's work, *The End of History*, has recently generated debate in Assemblies of God circles regarding premillennial versus amillennial views. Thus, as a Pentecostal Assemblies

⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 707.

⁸ Walter A. Elwell, "Revelation" in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 1226.

⁹ Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 249-250.

¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 266.

¹¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1966), 297.

¹² Stanley M. Horton, *The Ultimate Victory: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House), 293-294.

¹³ Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 503.

¹⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 366.

¹⁵ Although, not all of these scholars would agree with my position of a pre-tribulation rapture.

of God scholar who supports the premillennial reading of Revelation 20:1-6, I hope the following article contributes to the discussion.

I will spend much time in this article discussing ἔζησαν, and so that my reader is not confused by some of the Greek terminologies, I want to provide my rationale for using ζάω at times in the following article and ἔζησαν in other situations. ἔζησαν is a Greek verb in the aorist tense (past tense) of the present tense verb, ζάω, which means “to live.” When a Greek verb is in the aorist tense, it is usually translated in the past tense and undefined. I will be using ζάω primarily, but at times, I might use ἔζησαν when it is found in that form in the Greek text. My reader should note that when I use the stem tense of the verb (lexical) ζάω, I am doing so because the word is in a different form in the Greek text, and I want to simply use the lexical (dictionary) form.

2. A Consistent Hermeneutic in Revelation 20:4-5

2.1 ζάω in Revelation 20:4-5

One should interpret the language and syntax of Revelation 20:4-5 consistently as it relates to the topic of the resurrection. Indeed, the term ἐζήσαν (“came to life”) refers to a physical resurrection in verse 4 and verse 5. It is hermeneutically inconsistent to interpret ἐζήσαν in two different ways in the text as those who hold to the amillennial position do.

The Greek verb ζάω is found in the exact form (the aorist ἐζήσαν) in Revelation 20:4 as in 20:5. The text reads:

4 Then I saw thrones and they sat on them and they were given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded because their witness of Jesus and because of the Word of God, and those who did not worship the beast or his image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came back to life (ἐζήσαν)¹⁶ and ruled with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come back to life (ἐζήσαν) until the thousand years had finished. This is the first resurrection.¹⁷

There is no reason to understand ἐζήσαν differently in verses 4 and 5. Furthermore, John did not indicate in his writing that one should understand ἐζήσαν as figurative in verse 4.

An examination of the Greek terminology in Revelation 20:4-5 in its context reveals John intended ἐζήσαν, or ζάω in its lexical form, to convey a literal physical resurrection. Robert H. Mounce correctly states, “If ‘they came to life’ in verse 4 means a spiritual resurrection to new life in Christ, then we are faced with the problem of discovering within the context some persuasive reason to interpret the same verb differently within one concise unit. No such reason

¹⁶ I prefer to contextually understand this aorist verb, ἐζήσαν in verses 4 and 5, in a constative aspect. In other words, the action is completed as a whole. G. K. Beale prefers to understand the aorist verb ἐζήσαν in verse 4 as ingressive, or the beginning of the action of coming back to life. However, I prefer to view ἐζήσαν in verses 4-5 as constative because the context of Revelation presents the aorist verb in a constative aspect. It is used in Revelation 2:8 in reference to Jesus’ resurrection, which Revelation 2:8 presents as a complete event. Jesus is risen according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-8), and is described as the “living one” (Rev 1:18). Furthermore, it is evident in Revelation 20:5 that emphasis is placed on a constative aspect regarding the rest of the dead coming to life. Thus, the conclusion of Revelation 20:4 affirms that the deceased saints “came back to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 1000–1001.

¹⁷ My translation of 4 Καὶ εἶδον θρόνους καὶ ἐκάθισαν ἐπ’ αὐτοὺς καὶ κρίμα ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς, καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν πεπελεκισμένων διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἵτινες οὐ προσεκύνησαν τὸ θηρίον οὐδὲ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἔλαβον τὸ χάραγμα ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῶν. καὶ ἐζήσαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια ἔτη. 5 οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν οὐκ ἐζήσαν ἄχρι τελεσθῆ τὰ χίλια ἔτη. Αὕτη ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη.

can be found.”¹⁸ Likewise, George Eldon Ladd states, “The language of the passage is quite clear and unambiguous. There is no necessity to interpret either word spiritually in order to introduce meaning to the passage.”¹⁹ This point is especially true since the term is repeated in the same exact form in both verses.²⁰ It defies standard hermeneutical practice to understand the same similar terminology in different ways when they are in such close proximity to each other; unless the author provides clear indications to the reader that the terminology is to be understood symbolically or uses language that makes more sense symbolically. John did not indicate that he intended the reader to understand ἔζησαν as spiritual only in verse 4; instead, the text points to a literal and physical resurrection in verses 4 and 5.

If one is to be consistent hermeneutically, then one should interpret ἔζησαν in the same fashion in both verses 4 and 5 of Revelation 20. Moreover, John does not provide any clues that he intended ἔζησαν verse 4 to mean something different than verse 5. These textual factors support the premillennial interpretation of 20:4-5.

2.2 ζάω in the Literary Context of Revelation

The use of ζάω in the literary context of Revelation supports a premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6. The verb is commonly used in the rest of Revelation in reference to a physical resurrection. The texts supporting this thesis contain ζάω about Jesus' resurrection (Rev 1), the beast's resurrection (Rev 13), and the resurrection of the martyred saints in Revelation 20:4.

Revelation 1:18 contains ζάω in reference to a physical resurrection. In Revelation 1:18, Jesus described himself as the “living one” (ὁ ζῶν). The text refers to his physical resurrection because he later stated in verse 18, “I was dead, and I am alive.” Jesus was referring to his crucifixion and resurrection, which were both physical (Luke 24:1-49; John 20:19-29). The physical resurrection of Jesus was a major part of the early Christian *kerygma* (His message), so it is no surprise Revelation presents the Jesus' resurrection early in the book.²¹ Thus, ζάω refers to a physical resurrection in Revelation 1:18.

Revelation 2:8 repeats a similar proclamation as 1:18. Jesus “was dead and has come to life” (ἔζησεν).²² The verb in 2:8 is in precisely the same form (aorist) as in 20:4, 5. Commenting on the use of ἔζησεν in 2:8 and 20:4,5, Ben Witherington III, “The parallel suggests that we should see the reference to be to bodily resurrection in both cases.”²³ Witherington's comment rightly highlights the importance of understanding how an author of a New Testament book

¹⁸ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 366.

¹⁹ Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 266.

²⁰ Interpreters must pay attention to repeated terms in the context of a Scriptural passage. See J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 123.

²¹ Leon Morris, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 60.

²² My translation of ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν.

²³ Witherington III, *Revelation*, 249.

consistently uses a term. In the case of Revelation, the author consistently used the term in reference to a physical resurrection.

Revelation 13 contains ζάω as a term relating to the healing of the beast. John saw a beast come out of the sea to deceive people and blaspheme God (vv. 1-6). The beast's followers are contrasted with the followers of "the Lamb who was slain" (v. 7). The contrast between the beast and lamb establishes a parallel between them in the passage. The beast is described as one who "came back to life" (ἐζήσεν) in 13:14 or healed from a "wound of death" (v. 3).²⁴ Since the Lamb, Christ, is contrasted with the beast in Revelation chapter 13, I interpret the beast as a metaphor for a physical individual who experiences some sort of healing in John's vision. My reader needs to keep in mind that ἐζήσεν in this passage is used in a way that is consistent with Revelation 1:18 and 2:8.

An evaluation of the relevant texts in Revelation demonstrates that one should interpret ζάω as referring to a physical resurrection. The literary context of Revelation supports the premillennial interpretation of the verb ζάω in Revelation 20:4-5. Biblical readers and students should not ignore the consistency of John's terminology in his writings.

2.3 ζάω in the Rest of Johannine Literature

John's literary use of ζάω²⁵ supports an understanding of a literal resurrection in Revelation 20:4-5. The literary context of the Gospel of John, 1 John, and the book of Revelation all indicate that ζάω is best understood as a term for physical resurrection as an expectation of one's faith in Jesus. The theme of "already/not-yet" concepts of salvation in the New Testament certainly play a significant part in understanding John's use of ζάω. I will explain the concept of "already/not-yet" in this section. For the sake of space, I will only focus on the relevant Johannine passages that use the verb ζάω and not the noun form of the word. This rationale is also because Revelation 20:4-5 contains the verb, not the noun.

The Gospel of John contains a few uses of ζάω that relate to one's salvation and foreshadow a physical resurrection for the Christian. Each of the uses of ζάω in John's Gospel should be understood as a promise of a spiritual resurrection of the believer that will result in a physical resurrection. There does not seem to be a separation between the two; one necessitates the other. One is already saved at the point of faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16-17; Rom 10:9-10), pending he or she is faithful (Heb 3:12-13, 10:19-25), but salvation is consummated when the resurrection and rapture occurs (1 Cor 15:50-57). This theme in Scripture is referred to as an "already/not-yet" concept of salvation.

In John 5:24-29, Jesus explained that the righteous would experience the "resurrection of life." According to John, Jesus said:

²⁴ My translation of ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου.

²⁵ I want to remind the reader that ζάω is the lexical form of ἐζήσεν. In this section, I will refer to the lexical form of the term.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you that the one who hears my Word and believes in Him who sent Me shall have eternal life and shall not come into judgment but has passed over from death into life. 25 Truly, truly, I say to you that the hour shall come and is now that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those hearing will live (ζάω). 26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so, he granted the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he gave him the authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not be astonished at this, because the hour shall come in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and will come out, those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, but those who practice bad deeds to a resurrection of judgment.²⁶

The passage refers to spiritual regeneration, but it also includes the physical resurrection. Menzies argues that this passage supports the amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5.²⁷ Menzies claims, “John’s language here, then, closely parallels the references to resurrection or life in Rev. 20:4-5 and supports the amillennial interpretation.”²⁸ No doubt the parallels exist, but amillennialists have to explain how this parallel supports the notion of a spiritual regeneration only in Revelation 20:4 and a physical resurrection in 20:5. If anything, this parallel strengthens the premillennial position that one should understand both resurrections in the same way. If there is a physical resurrection of the wicked to judgment in John 5:29, then it stands to reason that the resurrection of the righteous to life is also physical. Of course, spiritual regeneration by faith presupposes the physical resurrection of the righteous, and John 5:29 presents the result of the perseverant saint who will experience resurrection unto life.

In John 6:51-58, ζάω references eternal life for the believer. In John 6:51, Jesus described himself as the “living bread” (ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν) and stated, “If anyone eats from this bread, he will live (ζάω) for eternity.”²⁹ In 6:54, Jesus also explained that one who figuratively eats his flesh and drinks his blood has “eternal life” (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), and Jesus will “raise him up on the last day.”³⁰ The language is descriptive of a physical resurrection in the future.³¹ Then Jesus said in 6:58, “The one who eats this bread will live (ζάω) for eternity.”³² Eternal life would include physical resurrection for the follower of Jesus.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he taught Martha a spiritual principle about the resurrection. In John 11:25, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes

²⁶ My translation of 24 Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν. 25 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν. 26 ὡς περὶ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, οὕτως ἔχει καὶ τῷ υἱῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ. 27 καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν, ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν. 28 μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα ἐν ἧ ἅπαντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ 29 καὶ ἐκπορεύονται οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς, οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως.

²⁷ Menzies, *The End of History*, 70.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ My translation of εἰάν τις φάγη ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

³⁰ The NASB rendering of καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

³¹ Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 176.

³² My translation of ὁ τρώγων τοῦτον τὸν ἄρτον ζήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

in me shall live (ζάω) even if he dies.”³³ It is apparent in the text that physical death is in view. According to Jesus, the Christian does not have to fear physical death because he or she will experience a physical resurrection. Moreover, even though Jesus did not mention his second advent,³⁴ it seems apparent that his physical raising of Lazarus (11:39-46) served as an object lesson of a future physical resurrection for those who put their trust in Him. Regarding the return of Jesus, Merrill C. Tenney comments, “Jesus was saying that he embodied the resurrection life that could overcome death and that believers would be assured of the inheritance in the age to come.”³⁵ Tenney’s observation is consistent with the idea that believers have an already/not-yet expectation of salvation, and this salvation ultimately results in a physical resurrection.³⁶

When talking about his future crucifixion and eventual resurrection from the dead in John 14:19, Jesus told his disciples, “Because I live (ζάω), then you will live (ζάω).”³⁷ Jesus’ statement was meant as an encouragement to the disciples that they would witness his resurrected body and live in the truth of that resurrection.³⁸ The phraseology in the context of John’s Gospel (John 6:40 and 11:25) promotes a physical resurrection from the dead for the Christian, and it is reasonable to assume the same interpretation applies to John 14:19 where Jesus discussed the resurrection.

1 John 3:14 – 4:17 contextually indicates ζάω refers to a physical resurrection to life. 1 John 3:14-15 reads, “We know that we have passed over from death into life because we love the brethren. The one who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that any murderer shall not have eternal life (ζωήν)³⁹ remain in him.”⁴⁰ At first glance, this seems to imply that spiritual regeneration of the Christian's life on earth could refer to a physical resurrection as the amillennialist proposes. However, one must continue reading the context. 1 John 4:9 reads, “By this God’s love was revealed in us, that God sent his only begotten son into the world so that we might live (ζάω) through him.”⁴¹ Indeed, 1 John 4:9

³³ My translation of ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ κἀν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται.

³⁴ Merrill C. Tenney, “The Gospel of John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 9* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 118.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Christians who died prior to the Great Tribulation will experience a resurrection during the rapture (1 Cor 15:50-56; 1 Thess 4:13-18). This event will take place prior to the Great Tribulation and is different from the resurrection of the martyred saints in Revelation 20:4. Indeed, there are multiple resurrections throughout the New Testament. For example, the New Testament presents the resurrection of Christ (Matt 28:1-6) and the resurrection of many saints at Jesus’ resurrection (Matt 27:51-52); each of these are separate and unique from the rapture (1 Cor 15:50-56; 1 Thess 4:13-18), resurrection of the martyrs (Rev 20:4), and resurrection of the wicked (Rev 20:5). The resurrection of Revelation 20:4 is first in that it is before the second resurrection of the wicked dead (20:5). See John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 980.

³⁷ My translation of ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε.

³⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 502.

³⁹ This is the noun form of ζάω.

⁴⁰ My translation of 14 ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ. 15 πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν.

⁴¹ My translation of ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ.

conveys the principle of salvation from spiritual death,⁴² but this salvation includes eternal life⁴³ that results in a physical resurrection of the believer's body (Rom 6; 1 Cor 15:50-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18). Also, a few verses later, verse 17 reads, "By this, love is made complete with us, so that we might have confidence on the day of judgment."⁴⁴ Why warn about the judgment on the day of the Lord if only a spiritual regeneration is intended? Once again, the context demonstrates an already/not-yet concept of a spiritual regeneration that is a precursor to a physical resurrection.

A reading of Johannine literature in the New Testament indicates that John understood a spiritual resurrection of the believer as a guarantee of a physical resurrection. According to the Gospel of John (e.g., John 3:16) and other Scriptures, Eternal life includes both a spiritual resurrection and a physical one. An examination of John's use of ζάω in his writings of the New Testament reveals consistency with understanding Revelation 20:4-5 as promoting a physical resurrection of the dead in both verses.

2.4 The Theme of Eternal Life in John 6:40

John 6:40 provides ample evidence to demonstrate that Johannine literature presents eternal life as presupposing and including a physical resurrection. Jesus said in 6:40, "For this is the will of my father, that anyone who looks at the Son and believes in him will have eternal life (ζωήν), and I will resurrect him on the last day."⁴⁵ This text, along with John 11:25, reveals a contextual pattern in Johannine literature that combines spiritual regeneration with the promise of a physical resurrection. One presupposes the other, pending the Christian remains faithful (1 John 3:14-15). The Christian experiences new life on earth (spiritual regeneration), but he or she also expects this to culminate with a physical resurrection in the future.⁴⁶

2.5 Ezekiel 36-37 and Revelation 20:4-5

Some argue that the structural elements echoing Ezekiel 36-37 in Revelation 20:1-10 support the interpretation that ἔζησαν in verse 4 refers to a spiritual resurrection of the saints. However, a good reason exists to disagree with this interpretation. G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough highlight the parallelism of the resurrection of God's people in Revelation 20:4 with Ezekiel

⁴² Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, vol. 38, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 179–180.

⁴³ James B. De Young, "1 John," in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 1184.

⁴⁴ My translation of ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως.

⁴⁵ My translation of τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πιστευὼν εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

⁴⁶ Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, vol. 4, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 163; See also Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 4, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 171–172.

37:1-14.⁴⁷ Indeed, the Septuagint translation of Ezekiel 37:10 contains ἔζησαν. The text reads, “And I prophesied just as he commanded me, and the Spirit went into them, and they lived (ἔζησαν).”⁴⁸ However, all this does not provide substantial evidence that John intended two different interpretations of ἔζησαν in verses 4 and 5.

Even though similar Greek terminology exists between Revelation 20:4-5 and Ezekiel 37:1-14, the amillennialists force the parallelism regarding the first resurrection of the saints. Even if, for the sake of argument, a parallel exists between the first resurrection of the saints in Revelation 20:4 and Ezekiel 37:1-14, one must resolve the difficulty of finding a parallel for the second resurrection of the wicked dead in Revelation 20:5 and Ezekiel 37:1-14. Would one not expect to find an equivalent parallel in the Old Testament for the second resurrection of the wicked dead as well? One promotes inconsistency if he or she understands ἔζησαν in Revelation 20:4 as paralleled in Ezekiel 37:10, but not ἔζησαν in verse 5. This factor fosters a hermeneutical conundrum for the amillennialist. Understanding Revelation 20:4-5 within its literary context resolves the conundrum.

Also, Ezekiel's silence about a thousand-year reign weakens the amillennialist position.⁴⁹ Amillennialist's proposed parallel to 20:1-6 remains incomplete. No doubt, Revelation 20 is supported by themes in Ezekiel,⁵⁰ but Revelation 20 does not contain complete parallels to Ezekiel's text. This demonstrates that revelation of Scripture is progressive in nature, and it establishes the uniqueness of John's prophecy.⁵¹

Therefore, I find the attempts of amillennialists to tie Ezekiel 36-37 to Revelation 20:4-5 unconvincing. The contexts of both passages do not provide complete parallels, because Revelation 20:4-5 is a different apocalyptic context than Ezekiel 36-37.

2.6 Spiritual or Physical Resurrection in Revelation 20:4-5?

* * *

⁴⁷ G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1148.

⁴⁸ My translation of καὶ ἐπροφήτευσά καθότι ἐνετείλατό μοι· καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς αὐτοὺς τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ ἔζησαν. See *Septuaginta*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), Ezekiel 37:10.

⁴⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Background Commentary: New Testament*, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 770.

⁵⁰ Although not Holy Scripture, there was a Jewish concept of an intermediate messianic age followed by a final kingdom. These ideas were prominent in Jewish apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period. Of course, the Book of Revelation is inspired Scripture and none of the Jewish apocalyptic non-canonical literature speak of a thousand-year reign. The concept of an intermediate messianic age is found in 1 Enoch 91:7-17, 2 Esdras 7:26-38, 2 Baruch 29:1-30:5, 40:1-4, and 72:2-74:3

⁵¹ The same principle rings true for Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8. The mention of Gog and Magog in 20:8 is another example of progressive revelation from God that is unique and is not a complete parallel of Ezekiel 38-39. As in the case of the valley of dry bones (Ezek 36-37), the parallel between Ezekiel 38-39 (Gog and Magog) and Revelation 20:8 is also incomplete. For one, there is no reference to a millennial reign in the context of Ezekiel 38-39. Further, there is no mention of any deceiver (Satan) in Ezekiel 38-39. The parallels between Ezekiel 38-39 are once again incomplete. Gog and Magog are mentioned as illustrative of the battle between Jesus and the nations at the end of the millennium, but Ezekiel 38-39 is referring to a different conflict, not the one in Revelation 20. See Horton, *The Ultimate Victory*, 299.

Robert P. Menzies argues that the resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 20:4 only refers to the believer's regeneration.⁵² I showed earlier how John 5:24-29 refers to spiritual regeneration, but John intended a physical resurrection of the righteous. He also cites John 3:5 and 20:22 as proof texts for his interpretation of Revelation 20:4.⁵³ Since I already responded to the challenges of relating Ezekiel 36-39 to Revelation 20:4-5, I will restrict my comments to John 3:5 and 20:22.

First, John 3:5 refers to spiritual regeneration, but it lacks clear evidence that would limit the resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 20:4 to spiritual regeneration. It is true that Ezekiel 36:25-27 is probably foundational for understanding the images of being born of "water and spirit" in John 3:5,⁵⁴ but the parallel between John 3:5 and Revelation 20:4 is still found wanting. For one, the image of water is not found in Revelation 20:1-6. Nevertheless, the image of the "water of life" is found in Revelation 7:17, 21:6, 22:1, and 22:17. Each of these passages in Revelation refers to the salvation that awaits those after the physical resurrection in the New Heavens and New Earth. Thus, John 3:5 refers to a spiritual regeneration that presupposes a future physical resurrection of the persevering Christian.

Next, in John 20:22, Jesus breathed on the disciples and told them to "Receive the Holy Spirit." As I have already argued, this passage speaks of spiritual regeneration. However, I need to see the clear parallels to Revelation 20:4 that would limit the resurrection of the righteous to only spiritual regeneration. The Greek verb for "breathed" in John 20:22, *ἐμφυσάω*, is also found in the Septuagint translation of Genesis 2:7, where the Lord breathed life into Adam. It is also found in the Apocryphal work, Wisdom of Solomon 15:11, which is based on Genesis 2:7. Also, the verb is found in Ezekiel 37:9. Due to John's use of this rare Greek verb and its use in Ezekiel 37:9, Menzies used John 20:22 as another proof text to support an amillennial reading of Revelation 20:4.⁵⁵ However, the issue is not whether spiritual regeneration is intended in John 20:22 but whether there is enough paralleled evidence to limit the resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 20:4 to only a spiritual regeneration. There is not enough textual evidence to make this case.

An evaluation of some of the proof texts Menzies provides fails to make a solid case for the amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5. John 3:5 and 20:22 both refer to spiritual regeneration, but that does not mean one should understand the physical resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 20:4 as being limited to only spiritual regeneration. The spiritual regeneration of the believer is certainly tied to a future physical resurrection, and the physical resurrection of the righteous is presented in Revelation 20:4.⁵⁶

⁵² Menzies, *The End of History*, 70-83.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 82.

⁵⁵ Menzies, *The End of History*, 70-71.

⁵⁶ The resurrection of Revelation 20:4 would be of the martyrs in the Great Tribulation. The righteous dead prior to the Great Tribulation would be resurrected during the rapture (1 Cor 15:50-56; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

3. Conclusion

The premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5 best accounts for the Greek terminology and the context of Scripture. One has to ignore clear contextual clues to arrive at an amillennial interpretation of 20:4-5. Walter Elwell says it well when he comments, "All things considered, the premillennial view seems closest to what John had in mind."⁵⁷ Although, I would take Elwell's comment a step further and say that the context indicates this is what John had in mind when he wrote what he saw. I arrive at that conclusion based on the following points.

First, amillennialists have to ignore the physical resurrection of the rest of the dead in Revelation 20:5 in order to make their model work. There is no basis in the Greek for this interpretation, and it is fraught with grammatical difficulties. The more natural reading is to understand *ἐζήσαν* verses 4 and 5 in the same way. Thus, *ἐζήσαν* is best rendered and interpreted as referring to a physical resurrection from the dead in both verses, thereby supporting the premillennial reading.

Second, *ζάω* consistently refers to a physical resurrection in the context of Revelation. This is evident in passages such as 1:18, 2:8, and chapter 13. The literary context of Revelation lends strong support to the premillennial reading of 20:4-5. It is difficult, indeed inconsistent, to divorce *ζάω* in 20:4 from its normal use in the rest of Revelation. If one is to be hermeneutically accurate, then allowing the text and terminology within the whole literary context is a must.

Third, *ζάω* Johannine literature makes the most sense hermeneutically when it is tied to a physical resurrection. In many Johannine texts where *ζάω* is found (5:24-29; 6:51-58; 11:25; 14:19; 1 John 4:9), a spiritual regeneration may be intended, but the context does not necessarily limit the meaning to exclude a physical resurrection. The burden of proof is on the interpreter who uses Johannine texts as proof to support an amillennial reading of 20:4-5. I find in Johannine literature that a spiritual regeneration of the Christian necessitates an eventual physical resurrection, pending the Christian perseveres.

Fourth, there is textual evidence in Johannine literature that eternal life involves a spiritual regeneration and a future physical resurrection. Texts like John 6:40 and 11:25 combine the spiritual regeneration of the Christian with an expectation of a future physical resurrection. These texts imply that a premillennial reading of Revelation 20:4-5 makes sense from a Johannine perspective.

Fifth, the attempts by amillennialists to tie Ezekiel 36-39, John 3:5, and 20:22 to Revelation 20:4-5 are unconvincing and lack substantive parallels. The proposed parallels are incomplete. Old Testament themes are discernible in Revelation 20, but John presents Revelation 20 as distinctly prophetic about the end times. This demonstrates that Revelation 20 is a unique prophetic passage that, while it has Old Testament influence, is not entirely bound to the limitations of Old Testament texts like Ezekiel 36-39.

To add one final thought, the "already/not-yet" view of salvation (spiritual regeneration and physical resurrection) is in keeping with the idea of reading the New Testament through the lens of progressive revelation. It should not be surprising to find aspects of progressive revelation in New Testament Scripture. The book of Revelation expands on topics such as the

⁵⁷ Elwell, "Revelation," 1226.

rapture, the Great Tribulation, the millennial reign, and other topics in greater detail because that is its function as a prophetic book that concludes the canon of Scripture (Rev 1:3; 22:19). While Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 provide base texts regarding the rapture and Great Tribulation, the Book of Revelation, is wholly devoted to describing in greater detail these future events. When commenting on the nature of progressive revelation within the New Testament, Daniel Wallace says:

It is not valid to argue against premillennialism simply because the distinction between the eternal state and the earthly temporary kingdom is not made until Rev 20. Earlier revelation must yield to later revelation in this matter, just as it does in other theological areas (such as the Trinity). What gives us a right to argue for a thousand-year kingdom? The 1000 years are mentioned both in the prophecy and its interpretation.⁵⁸

Wallace's comment highlights the importance of interpreting the context. The premillennial interpretation, which holds to a literal millennial reign, is validated by reading the New Testament in its literary context.

The premillennial interpretation of Revelation 20:4-5 stands under the scrutiny of hermeneutical considerations. Revelation is a unique New Testament book that requires consideration of its context. The premillennial view of Revelation 20:4-5 best accounts for the literary context of the book.

⁵⁸ Daniel Wallace, "New Testament Eschatology in the Light of Progressive Revelation," Bible.org, May 25, 2004, accessed December 14, 2022. <https://bible.org/article/new-testament-eschatology-light-progressive-revelation>.