

They Lived and Reigned with Christ a Thousand Years

☩ **death of the dragon (vv.1-3)**

☩ **Life in the Lord (vv.4-6)**

In the name of Jesus, our crucified, risen and ascended Savior, dearly redeemed:

Military minds among us could explain “counter measures” better. Books and movies show how distracting torpedoes can prevent holes in your ship. Heat seeking missiles can explode somewhere else besides your jet engine. An “Iron Dome” can intercept rockets before they destroy your neighborhoods.

All of us with combat experience in the Lord’s army fight spiritual distractions. Blessings like family and relationships, income and investments, the enemy uses to distract God’s warrior. The stakes are eternal for the bodies and souls of men, women and children. Could this explain at least some of the UFO sightings lately? National security requires investigating every threat. But if the enemy of our souls can confuse God’s people about aliens instead of angels, life on distant planets instead of “*God so loved the world...*,” the effect is the same. Fear and guilt assault our souls and can rob us of God’s peace.

Especially in the early centuries Christ’s Church Militant was suffering persecution. By the time John wrote Revelation, he was the only one of Twelve apostles still alive. The rest were martyred for their faithful witness. With John in exile, everything Christian eyes told them about the confiscation of their property, arrest, imprisonment of leaders, gladiators executing men, women and children for pagan entertainment – all their visuals screamed *Defeat!* And yet God’s people “*walk by faith, not by sight.*” (2 Corinthians 5:7 EHV¹) God’s gift of saving faith He strengthens by *The Distant Triumph Song*² of our victorious Savior Jesus. True of us too: **They Lived and Reigned with Christ a Thousand Years.**

☩ **death of the dragon (vv.1-3)**

The war is already won. The **death of the dragon** is imminent. That’s why the *enemy Satan*, a.k.a. the *Devil liar* is “*full of rage, because he knows that his time is short.*” (Revelation 12:12 EHV)

He’s also extremely frustrated by the *angel coming down out of heaven*. This Angel-Messenger is God’s spokesman to the world (Hebrews 1:1), the Old Testament *Angel of the LORD* who holds “*the keys of death and hell.*” (1:18) His name is Jesus, God’s own Son. He has conquered death by rising from the dead and rules all things for the good of His Church. Picture God’s angry love, His holy zeal diving like a fighter jet to seize Satan, bind him with a great chain and lock him up in the abyss. Jesus told the religious experts in today’s Gospel, “*No one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.*” (Mark 3:27) Jesus delivers from our demons by tying up the Devil and delivering our souls from death to life. But He’s not done with the *dragon*.

Our Lord Jesus holds the keys to all the treasures of heaven. He has the power to give or withhold according to his will. In John’s Gospel account, he often summarizes our Savior’s spiritual treasures in one word: *life*. Our sainted Seminary Professor Dr. Becker defined *life* as *the enjoyment of God’s blessings*. Withholding these treasures is *death*. The key that opens heaven locks hell, and the key that opens hell locks heaven. Jesus shows He holds the *keys* to unfailing love, life and peace eternal.

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. (NPH: 800-662-6022), Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

² Becker, Siegbert W. *REVELATION The Distant Triumph Song*. NPH, 1985. (NPH: 800-662-6022), www.logos.com.

A steel chain could not hold a spirit being or keep Satan from raging against God and His people. Like a junk yard dog he tears around as far as his **“great chain”** will reach. The Holy Spirit inspired Jude to speak of the rebellious angel-demons being **“kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”** (Jude 6) Yet they are able to roam on earth as far as God allows. The Good News of Jesus Christ preached to the nations put many souls like ours out of Satan’s reach. Satan is **“loosed”** (KJV) a little when churches are distracted from preaching Christ-crucified and risen as the only Savior from sin, death and hell. That **“great chain”** is shortened on the junk yard dog by the pure Gospel.

Jesus holds this **“great chain”** of the Gospel **“in his hand.”** Jesus’ *hands* were nail-pierced for us on the cross, but also we hear through Isaiah: **“...I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”** (49:16) **“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”** (Isaiah 41:10 NIV84) Out of Satan’s reach: **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** (James 4:7 EHV) Say it loud and proud: **“I am baptized.”**

The all-powerful Christ brings the **death of the dragon** in the rest of Revelation 20. At first it seems his forces of evil are winning: **They came up over the broad expanse of the earth, and they surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.** But with lightning speed **fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.** (Revelation 20:9 EHV) In a flash God burns up all the hopes, all the works, all the struggles of all who reject God’s Son as Lord and Savior. They end up on the wrong side of His-story. The **death of the dragon** spells **Life in the Lord** for all who trust in Christ alone.

Life in the Lord (vv.4-6)

Christ’s Church is on offense as our Champion promises that **the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church.** Trusting in Jesus, we have **Life in the Lord.** Enjoy the power of Christ in you!

Satan is bound **for a thousand years.** John also writes: **“Then I saw thrones, and those who were sitting on them were given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast and his image, and they did not receive his mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years came to an end.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them. Instead they will be priests of God and of Christ. And they will reign with him for a thousand years.”**

The Holy Spirit begins Jesus’ Apocalypse by telling us to take it figuratively, saying **“Christ expressed this revelation by means of symbols.”** (1:1 EHV) He also tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ **“will reign forever and ever.”** (1:16) Millennialists confuse Christians by insisting Christ will reign on earth visibly for a thousand years. In a lay-led Bible class at Lino Lakes Corrections, one inmate kept spouting millennialism. Whenever he did, the other inmates kept whispering Jesus’ words to Pontius Pilate – **not of this world...not of this world: “My kingdom is not of this world.”** (Jn 18:36)

So what is the **thousand years?** In Revelation numbers it’s the triple-complete time of grace called the New Testament era, the 10x10x10 Last Days between Christ’s Ascension and Judgment Day. Satan is bound wherever God’s Word is taught in its truth and purity. Not the bodies, but **the souls of those who had been beheaded** are sitting on the thrones and given **the authority to judge** with Jesus as Scripture says elsewhere too. (1 Corinthians 6:2) Blessed in **the first resurrection** is what Jesus describes in John’s Gospel account: **“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life.”** And to Martha after brother Lazarus died: **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in me will never perish....”** (John 5:24; 11:25f EHV) Your eternal life began as soon as you believed in Jesus as your Savior, whether through the Gospel in the word-powered water of Baptism or by the faithful witness of a Christian friend. Your eternal life

continues throughout this complete New Testament era and never ends for all eternity. As a Chinese brother, John Li, says, “We journey through life with the hope of a bright future always before us.”

Christ is our **“living hope.”** (1 Peter 1:3) By Word and sacrament He empowers us to carry the Gospel banners forward in the triumph of the saints even over suffering and pain, persecution and death.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice confidently on the basis of our hope for the glory of God. ³ Not only this, but we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, ⁴ and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. ⁵ And hope will not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us.” (Romans 5:1-5 EHV)

Our **share in the first resurrection** is to be saved from **“the fierceness of God’s wrath”** (16:19) for an eternal day of bliss and glory with God. The **“second death”** is eternal death, the forever dying of body and soul designed for Satan and the damned in hell. They will be consciously and painfully thrust forever from the loving presence of the living God. Up in heaven **“there will be no more death.”** (21:4) Death will no longer exist in God’s eternal kingdom of light and everlasting bliss.

As God’s **“chosen people, a royal priesthood”** you **“declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** (1 Peter 2:9 NIV84) You’ve been doing this throughout this worship service as soldiers of the cross and priests of God. We’re about to sing another song of triumph by that blind poet and hymnwriter named Fanny Crosby. During this triple-complete New Testament era we live by faith and reign with Christ as royal priests. By our prayers we intercede for loved ones and for our enemies – sinners all. By our prayers we also rule with Christ who is seated at God’s right hand in the most powerful position over all God’s creation. **“Therefore, because you were raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”** (Colossians 3:1-4 EHV)

God speed the Day. Amen.