

THE IDIOMATIC SOLUTION FOR REVELATION 20:4,5 AND 6

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There seems to be proof that the expression found in Rev. 20: 4 and 6 is an idiom. Let us examine the evidence. We read the expression as found in these two verses: V. 4, ". . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;" V. 6, ". . . and shall reign with him a thousand years." Now notice what V. 5 says, "THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION." "The First Resurrection" then is identified with the "living and reigning with Christ a thousand years." What about the timing of the "First Resurrection?" -- are all resurrected at the same time? We know they are not. "The First Resurrection" of the saints takes time to accomplish. First, there is the resurrection of the sleeping saints at the return of our Lord -- "his first official act" as we learned from the parable. Then what? As the living saints finish their course, they are changed "in the twinkling of an eye." All of this takes TIME.

We note what Paul says in 1 Thess. 4:15 to 17, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the, dead in Christ shall RISE FIRST; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Paul adds something more for our information in 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. The Apostle John expresses much the same thought, but in different language, Rev. 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." All of this strongly suggests that we have an idiom in Rev. 20:4 and 6. But what is an idiom? The American College Dictionary defines an idiom as follows: "1. a form of expression peculiar to a language. 2. a variety or form of a language; a dialect. 3. the language peculiar to a people. 4. the peculiar character of genius of a language."

We have picked out 3 idioms from the Bible: 2 are from the New Testament and 1 is from the Old Testament. All 3 involve periods of time. The first one is Matt. 12:40, "For as Jonas was 3 days and 3 nights in the whale's belly: so shall the Son of man be 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth." Now we note from Acts 10:40 that the foregoing verse from Matt. 12:40 is an idiom, for Acts 10:40 tells us that literally Jesus was not in the heart of the earth for a full 3 days and 3 nights -- "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly." We have confirmation of this from Matt. 28:1, Mark 16:2 Luke 24:1 and John 20:1. Note, for example the words of John 20:1, "The first day of the week

came Mary Magdaline early, when it was yet dark." Our second idiom is found in Acts 1:3, "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Literally our Lord was seen but a very short time and on only a few occasions during the 40 day period. Weymouth renders the verse as follows: "He had also, after His Passion, shown Himself alive to them with many sure proofs, appearing to them at intervals during forty days."

The idiom from the Old Testament is found in 2 Chron. 10:5, 12, "And he said unto them, Come again unto me after 3 days." "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the 3rd day as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the 3rd day." The idiom is expressed as AFTER 3 days, but literally the time of meeting was not after the third day, but on the 3rd day. These three idioms are sufficient to establish the fact that idioms are definitely used in the Scriptures.

The groundwork has been laid now to point out unmistakably that Rev. 20:4 and 6 contain an idiom. We refer particularly to the fact that the first resurrection of the church is accomplished over a period of time, and V. 5 links the "first resurrection" with the expression of V. 4 – "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This 1,000 year period includes the resurrection of the church, the first part of it, in fact, and as the first resurrection is not all accomplished at the time our Lord first returned, then we know that literally the entire church does not live and reign with Christ the full thousand years.

Let us illustrate the foregoing with a graph which should be sufficiently striking to convince the mind that we are indeed dealing with an idiom in Rev. 20:4 and 6. For the sake of convenience, let us assume that there were 100,000 sleeping saints raised by our Lord. And let us assume that it takes 100 years to complete the raising of all the saints, or rather the changing of the remaining number of the saints, the number of which would be 44,000. Let us assume further that there is an even number of saints changed in every ten-year period of this 100 years. This would mean that 4,400 saints would be changed in each ten-year period of this 100 years. Now consider the graph below:

100,000 sleeping saints raised at first
104,400 saints resurrected by end of first ten years
108,800 saints resurrected by end of second ten years
113,200 saints resurrected by end of third ten years
117,600 saints resurrected by end of fourth ten years
122,000 saints resurrected by end of fifth ten years
126,400 saints resurrected by end of sixth ten years
130,800 saints resurrected by end of seventh ten years
135,200 saints resurrected by end of eighth ten years
139,600 saints resurrected by end of ninth ten years

(2 - Idiom)

144,000 saints resurrected by end of tenth ten years

Could we have any more convincing proof that Rev. 20:4 and 6 contain an idiom? and that the expression "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;" and the companion expression, "shall reign with him a thousand years," are not to be taken literally, but understood as idioms?

The Idiomatic solution for Rev. 20:4, 5 and 6 confirms what our Pastor has written on the prophecies pertaining to our day. The last chapter of Volume III is entitled "Thy God Reigneth" and this is Scripturally sound, we believe.