

Thousand or thousands in Revelation 20:1-7

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The question whether *a thousand years*, or *thousands of years*, best represents the thought of Revelation 20:1-7, is raised by the translation offered in the [Tischendorf 8th Edition](#) of the Greek New Testament, where the expression χίλιοι ἔτος is used, meaning *thousands of years*, as *chilioi* is plural. Most texts have χίλια ἔτη, *a thousand years*.

If *chilioi* is the correct word, rather than *chilia*, the idea that Christ will return to reign upon earth for one thousand years in the future is discredited. A spiritual interpretation of the reigns of the saints who are *beheaded*, and *do not worship the beast or his image*, seems more promising.

Kenneth Fortier compares *urias* (myriad) and *urioi* (myriads) with *chilias* and *chilioi*, in his article, [A Preliminary Study of the Greek Word Thousand and Thousands](#).

Revelation 5:11 contains both words, *myriads*, and *thousands*. Fortier offers as a translation: "And I saw, and I heard a sound of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was myriads (of) myriads and thousands (of) thousands."

In [discrete millennialism](#), the thousand years in Revelation 20:1-7 is symbolic. It applies to the reigns of individual believers, rather than the whole age of the church. The reign of Jesus is forever, and is not limited to a thousand years, but the lives and reigns of believers in the present age are of limited duration. Just as specific lengths of reign are assigned to each of the kings of Israel and Judah in the biblical books of Kings and Chronicles, in John's prophecy, the label χίλιοι ἔτος, or a thousand years, applies to Christians in a symbolic way.

To be *beheaded* is figurative, and pictures those who submit to Christ as Lord. For them, Satan is bound. James said, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." They reign with Christ, because they are "raised up together," and made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as Paul said in Ephesians 2:6. The number a *thousand* is symbolic, as it represents their reign as kings and priests in the present age, and this is a foretaste, or token, of

future glory. When speaking of the saints collectively, John could refer to *thousands* of years, as many believers reign with Christ, and they are all included.

If a person's reign with Christ ends prematurely, the thousand years can be said to come to an end, for that individual, and typically, deception follows. In Revelation 20:8-9, deceived people aligned with Gog and Magog compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, which is the church. The apostle Peter refers to them in 2 Peter 2:1-3.

William D. Mounce has the following information about the word *chilioi* translated "thousand" in Revelation 20:1-7.

Adjective: χίλιοι (*chilioi*), GK 5943 (S 5507), 11x. *chilioi* is the cardinal number "one thousand." It is used interchangeably with *chilias* in the NT, although the latter is more than twice as common. Except for two uses in 2 Pet. 3:8 ("With the Lord a day is like a *thousand* years, and a *thousand* years are like a day"), *chilioi* only appears in Revelation. Six of its uses there describe the thousand-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), otherwise known as the millennium; two occurrences refer to the 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6); and one refers to the distance that blood flows out of the winepress, namely, 1,600 stadia (14:20 [KJV: "furlongs"]).

[William D. Mounce. [Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#). Zondervan, 2009.]

John's use of *chilioi* in Revelation 20 is probably intended to suggest a link to 2 Peter 3:8.

Strong's says that χίλιοι is used 10 times in the NT, at [2 Peter 3:8](#); [Revelation 11:3](#); [12:6](#); [14:20](#); [20:2](#); [20:3](#); [20:4](#); [20:5](#); [20:6](#); [20:7](#).

[Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words](#) indicates that the word is plural.