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Life and Death, Eternal Life and Eternal Death in the Book of  
Revelation: the connection between ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and λίμνη  
τοῦ πυρός

Thesis Booklet Summary

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# 1. Introduction

In this dissertation, the theme of life and death in the Book of Revelation (Rev) is explored through the connection of ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and λίμνη τοῦ πυρός.

Our starting point is that ἄδης always appears together with death (θάνατος; Rev 1:18; 6:7–8; 20:13–14). Secondly, the direct relation of ἄβυσσος and θάνατος can be seen well (e.g. Jel 9,1–12). Thirdly, the lake of fire<sup>1</sup> appears two times with “second death” (ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος). The latter can be grasped as the opposite of eternal life (Rev 20:14; 21:8). Besides this, the terms are connected to the question of life, as well. Getting the key of ἄδης, equals the resurrection of Jesus (Rev 1:18). Before the first resurrection, the beast is expelled to the lake of fire, and the Satan is cast to the ἄβυσσος (Rev 19:20; 20,1–3). Finally, throwing ἄδης to the lake of fire (death of the dead) can be seen as a manifestation of eternal life. These examples show, that the question of life and death in Rev could be understood through these spheres.

In the Rev, the ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and lake of fire mark a separate term. It is essential to note because some scholars conclude that ἄδης and ἄβυσσος are synonyms. Others suppose, that the ἄβυσσος and lake of fire are equal. Sadly, these opinions have effect on the bible translations as well. Consequently, the problem affects wider audience too. For example, ἄδης in several Hungarian bible translations appears as “hell” (ÚFO, RÚF).

Besides the lack of distinction, another issue is emerging. Some suggest, that there is no significant connection between ἄδης and ἄβυσσος. Contrarily, our starting point is that we can explore important connection between all three terms. Our aim is to examine the relevant connection and their message, throughout Rev.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of readability, we translate “λίμνη τοῦ πυρός” as “lake of fire.”

## 2. Methods of Investigation

This study mainly relies on the method of narrative-criticism. Resseguie, who investigates the Rev by the method of narrative-criticism – following Uspensky – highlights four aspects, which are essential to investigate a narrative. 1. The phraseological dimension focuses on the words and expressions occurring in the narrative. 2. The spatial-temporal aspect answers the question of “where” and “when.” 3. The psychological aspect focuses on the characters’ thoughts, behavior and improvement. 4. The ideological dimension shows the value and the worldview of the narrator.

There are many academic writings, where the narrative-criticism is strengthened by another method. The narrative-critical commentaries of Resseguie and Campbell count with intertextuality and the narrator’s social, cultural and religious situation, as well. In our work, the intertextuality – and the additional aspects – can be the foundation of the narrative reading.

## 3. Thesis Groups

### Thesis (Group) I.: Dynamism

#### *Thesis I. 1. Dynamic Cosmology*

The creation, according to Rev is changing. This process starts with the creation (Rev 4:11; 14:7) and culminates in the new creation (Rev 21:5). Throughout this, some spheres cease to exist (Rev 20:14), others renew (Rev 21:5). The locked regions are opened (Rev 1:18; 4:1; 9:1; 20:8). To grasp these aspects, we introduce the concept of dynamic cosmology.

#### *Thesis I. 2.: The Dynamism of Life and Death*

In the spatial-temporal framework of Rev the dynamism of life and death, and eternal life and eternal death can be depicting well. In this process, one can explore the radicalization of the character of life and death. In spite of life, eternal life can be grasped as the main hope. In spite of death, the second death marks the most significant threat (Rev 2:10).

## Thesis (Group) II.: The Structure of Cosmos

### *Thesis II. 1.: The role of key (κλείς)*

The cosmos of Rev can be structured and understood by the symbol of the key (κλείς: Rev 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1). Besides the key there are some connecting words, which support our framing (κλειώ: Jel 3:7; 11:6; 20:3; θύρα: Jel 4:1; φρέαρ: Jel 9:1.2 [3x]).

### *Thesis II. 2.: The structure of the first creation*

The first creation can be structured as follows: οὐρανός-γῆ-ἄδης-ἄβυσσος and lake of fire. However, the lake of fire is not an integral part of the cosmos, it cannot be the part of the old nor of the new creation.

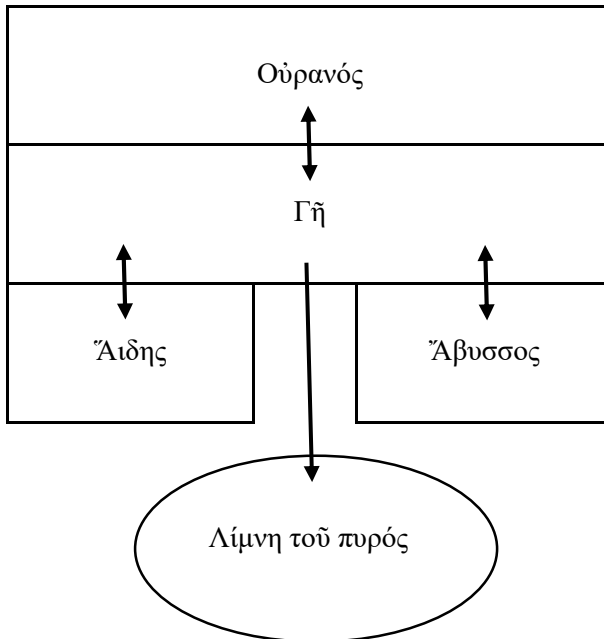


Figure 1: The structure of the first creation

### *Thesis II. 3.: The structure of the new creation*

In the new creation, the symbol of key is missing. The lack of key signifies that the boundary between the new heaven and the new earth will disappear.

The ἄδης and the ἄβυσσος are not part of the new creation. The ἄδης is being thrown into the lake of fire, as well as the inhabitants of the ἄβυσσος (Rev 19:20; 20,10). The new creation of the Rev – according to Garrow’s figure – can be seen as follows: <sup>2</sup>



Figure 2: The structure of the new creation

### **Thesis III.: ἄδης**

In the Rev, ἄδης occurs four times, along with θάνατος (Rev 1:18; 6:8; 20:13.14). Each verse shows the limit of ἄδης. The keys of ἄδης and θάνατος are in the hands of Jesus (Rev 1:18), the authority of ἄδης is limited to the fourth of the earth (Rev 6:8), at the last judgment, ἄδης will give up the dead (Rev 20:13), and the ἄδης will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14).

### **Thesis IV.: ἄβυσσος**

In the Rev, ἄβυσσος can be grasped as a demonic realm. The inhabitants of the ἄβυσσος can threaten everyone, because the demonic host stands up against the unsealed (Rev 9:6) and God’s witnesses (Rev 11:7).

<sup>2</sup> GARROW, A. J. P.: *Revelation*. London–New York, 1997, Routledge, 117. p.

## Thesis (Group) V.: The connection of ἄδης and ἄβυσσος

### *Thesis V. 1.: Rev 9:1–12*

According to Rev 9,1–11, the inhabitants of ἄβυσσος are torturing the unsealed, which is more painful than death. In the Rev 6,7–8, the appearance of θάνατος and ἄδης is the most serious threat, in the Rev 9,1–11, the lack of these entities – included with torturing – marks the punishment of God (Rev 9:6).

### *Thesis V. 2.: Rev 17,1–16*

In Rev 17, the beast from the ἄβυσσος shows himself as he overcame death. The appearance of the beast is deceptive, because he came from ἄβυσσος, not ἄδης.

## Thesis (Group) VI.: λίμνη τοῦ πυρός

### *Thesis VI. 1.: The lake of Fire as encouragement*

Most interpreters speak of the lake of fire only in connection with personal salvation and damnation. Yet the lake of fire is a considerably broader concept. It is essential, that all negativity stays outside the new creation by being thrown into the lake of fire (θάνατος, ἄδης, and the creatures and demonic forces of ἄβυσσος).

*Thesis VI. 2.: Related terms*

There are some related terms with the lake of fire.

Term	Verse (Rev)	Character
Lake of Fire	19:20; 20:10.14[2x].15; 21:8	Beast, false prophet, Satan, θάνατος and ἄδης, followers of beast
Second Death (δεύτερος θάνατος)	2:11; 20:6; 20:14[2x]; 21:8	Whose name is missing from the book of life
Destruction (ἀπόλεια)	17:8.11	Beast
Torture (βασανισμός, βασανίζω)	14:10–11; 20:10	Beast, false prophet, followers of Satan

Table 1.: Related terms

*Thesis VI. 3.: The related terms make transitions between ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and lake of fire*

The former terms are essential to understand the connection between ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and lake of fire. 1. The second death is more frightening (which is in connection with the lake of fire), than the first death (which is in connection with ἄδης). 2. The beast from ἄβυσσος goes to destruction (Rev 17:8.11). The “destruction” refers to the more frightening lake of fire. 3. The beings from ἄβυσσος anticipate the anguish of the lake of fire (Rev 9:5; 20:10).

## 4. Summary

This study seeks to grasp the relation between ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and the lake of fire in the Book of Revelation by the method of narrative-criticism. Our work has two starting points. 1. Each term can be distinguished well. 2. Beside this, the terms are deeply interconnected. These points, which are in connection with the question of life and death, are crying for a thorough investigation.

One of our premises is that each term marks a separate local entity. In order to prove this, the first major chapter investigates these entities in the larger context of the cosmology of Rev. We conclude, that the cosmos of Rev can be structured and understood by the symbol of key (κλεις).

The next chapters investigate the appearance of ἄδης, ἄβυσσος and the lake of fire. These chapters mainly focus on the context of Rev and especially on the narrower context of the book. Following these, we prove the aforementioned theses.

## 5. Own Publications Pertaining to Theses

NAGY József: A ἄδης szó használata, különös tekintettel a Jelenések könyvében. In Czentnár Simon – Nagy József – Nagy Levente (Eds.): *Beszélgétek el dicsőségét: Conferentia Rerum Divinarum 6*. Budapest, 2019, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem–L'Harmattan, 37–51. p.

NAGY József: A Jelenések könyvének kozmológiája. *KRE-DIT: A KRE-DOK Online Tudományos Folyóirata*, vol. 2 (2019) no. 1. 1–12. p. <http://www.kre-dit.hu/tanulmanyok/nagy-jozsef-a-jelenések-könyvének-kozmologiaja/> downloaded: 2019.12.02.

NAGY József: Bevezetés a Jelenések könyvéhez. *KRE-DIT: A KRE-DOK Online Tudományos Folyóirata*, vol. 2 (2019) no. 2. 1–30. p. <http://www.kre-dit.hu/tanulmanyok/nagy-jozsef-bevezetes-a-jelenések-könyvéhez/> downloaded: 2020.01.17.

NAGY József: Gallusz László: Jézus hét reformációs üzenete a Jelenések könyvében: Kortörténeti szempontok, mai vonatkozások. *Vallástudományi Szemle*, vol. 13 (2017) no. 3. 141–143. p.

NAGY József: Kísérlet a negyedik evangélium zóé (αιόνιος) fogalmának megértésére a szinoptikus felfogás tükrében. In Zila Gábor (Ed.): *"Uram, hogy lássak!"*. Budapest, 2016, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, 236–250. p.