

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #88

6/25/2008

The Great White Throne Judgment: Part 2

The Finality of Human History

Revelation 20:11-15

We began our study of Revelation 20:11-15 by identifying the statements in the passage as follows and we focused on the first two statements:

First, John tells us the focus of this passage which captured his attention: **“I saw a great white throne.”**

Second, John emphasizes **Who** was on the **“Great White Throne:”** **“... and him that sat on it.”**

Third, John describes an awesome happening, something that has never happened before: **“... from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”**

Fourth, John sees what is surely the eeriest scene ever presented to man. He sees all of the spiritually dead, of all ages, brought back from their graves and reconstituted in their bodies: **“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”**

Fifth, John sees God open some books: **“...and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”**

Sixth, John provides some further explanation to the events described in verse twelve: **“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”**

Seventh, John describes another awesome scene, one that has never been seen or conceived before: **“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”**

Eight, and finally, John, with one last explanatory comment of the events of verse twelve, provides the concluding statement to all life in this created universe, and it is the most fearful final statement ever written or spoken concerning the eternal destiny of the unsaved: **“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

In this lesson, as we move to statement three: **“... from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”**

This statement describes something so awesome that we will quickly have to acknowledge that comprehending it is likely to be beyond our ability, but we will attempt to understand what God has told us.

Revelation 20:11-15

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

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The first part of the statement, “**...whose face,**” is undoubtedly referring to **the face of the One Who is seen upon the throne.**

John makes no attempt to describe that face. It is likely impossible for him to do so. Either, what he sees, is not describable with human words or he is not allowed to describe what he sees.

We have already identified “**...him that sat on the throne**” as the Lord, God the Son, “**Who is the image of the invisible God**” (Colossians 1:15). And, thus, the One Whom John sees is the totality of the Triune God in the Person of God the Son. Never before have human eyes beheld such a sight. What God told Moses in Exodus 33:20, “**...Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live,**” would still be true and applicable to John.

The holy righteousness of God, expressed by His brilliant glory, is so pure that it either cleanses or consumes . This holy glory, known in the Old Testament as *shekinah glory*, cannot be beheld in its fullness by the eyes of sinful man (contrast Adam with Moses). By virtue of its purity, it is such a powerful expression of God’s omnipotence, that no sinner can afford to be exposed to its fullness lest he be consumed by the fire that exudes from its expression. God has given us some examples of what happens when a sinner is exposed to His holy righteousness. One of two results take place:

1) It cleanses the sinner.

When the sinner confesses and repents, therefore rejecting his sin and turning to God in absolute trust, God’s holiness purifies the sinner by consuming the sin and thereby enables the sinner to enter his presence. In reference to the extremely sinful condition of Israel in the last days of the Old Testament time, we read what God tells us about His cleansing of the people from their sin:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years” (Malachi 3:1-4).

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2 It consumes the sinner along with his sin.

God's holiness consumes the sinner who clings to his sin and refuses to reject it by repenting of it. That is what we have here. In Leviticus 10:1-3 we have the example of what happened to two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, when they refused to respect the holiness of God and decided to do things their own way instead of God's way:

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

The sin of Nadab and Abihu specifically regarded their sin of not respecting God's holiness and rebelling against His instructions about how to approach Him. God dealt with it swiftly and severely. The next example regards Korah, a cousin of Moses, and those who followed him in rebellion against Moses, God's designated representative.

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. ... And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Moses spoke unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground cleaved asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense” (Numbers 16:20-21,23-26,30-35).

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Each of these examples demonstrates what happens to the sinner and his sin when he is exposed to the almighty power of God's holy glory. A fuller manifestation of this power was described in Rev. 20:9 where we are told that **"...fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them"** (those who followed Satan in his rebellion against God after the completion of the Millennial Kingdom).

Throughout the Bible can be found a number of times when this awesome power is expressed so forcefully that sinful man cannot withstand it. One such example is found in John 18:4-7, when Jesus simply opened His mouth and spoke one word (in the Greek), **"I am"** to the **"band of soldiers"** who came to arrest Him in the Garden. The entire group of soldiers was blasted to the ground by the force that exuded from His mouth:

"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth."

This same power was first exhibited in the creation of this universe. Genesis 1:1-3 tells us:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

To express His holy almighty power then, God simply spoke and brought into existence that which had never existed before. Modern scientists have observed signs that such an indescribable power was at work in the beginning and, to accommodate what they think they have learned, have developed various theories. One such theory is called the **"Big Bang Theory"** which postulates that originally there existed one little dot. Something, some form of energy (they are unable to explain this apart from the Bible), caused the electrons to come together into molecules and eventually expand into what is now known as our universe. Along with this view came the so-called **"Gap Theory"** which is held by some Christians as an effort to accommodate the billions of years which these scientists think was needed for their theory to work.

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Some of these same scientists, such as the reknown Stephen Hawking, also think that they see signs of a disintegration or collapse of the universe which Hawking calls the **“Big Crunch.”** By this term, Hawking expresses the theory of the atheistic scientist, trying to explain what he thinks he sees at work in our universe, i.e., that what came into being in a **“Big Bang”** will inversely disintegrate. These same scientists, who observe physical forces at work, also admit that they do not understand how these things happen.

God explains both their ignorance and what will happen in His Word:

“They are willingly ignorant of ... But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:5,7-13),

Notice that God says men will refuse to read and believe what He tells us in His Word, and, therefore be ignorant of both what has happened and what is going to happen. Then God specifically addresses the idea of time and duration (that which prompts even Bible students to allow billions of years to transpire to explain the aethistic view of creation) and tells us that we can’t measure God and His actions by the time dimension in which man lives. When we do that we ignore the fact that God not only created time, but also is outside of time and not affected by it. It might take billions of years for man to do what God does in **“the twinkling of an eye,”** even if man could do these things.

When Jesus said: **“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”** (Matthew 24:35), He was giving us both a warning and a promise. It will happen when He is ready for it to happen.

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Notice that, even written many years ago, Peter's words, dictated by the Holy Spirit, are scientifically accurate:

“... the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... and “... all these things shall be dissolved ... the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

The Greek word for **“The elements”** meant the fundamental components of matter, or what we know as electrons, protons and molecules, and was so used by early scientists. **“Dissolved”** means something is destroyed. The means of this destruction is **“fire”** and **“fervent heat”** which flows from **“the face of the One Who is upon the throne.”**

Of course, that which is described in Revelation 20:11, the phrase **“from whose face the earth and heaven fled away,”** is beyond our understanding for nothing like it has ever happened before. However, with the expression of His awesome holiness, first seen in His work of creation and then sometimes in His radiant glory, but now seen as the unrestricted flow of His energy to dissolve what He brought into existence, the Lord acts to instantly remove all of the universe that has been so terribly affected by man's sinful rebellion against Him.

The mind of man can no more comprehend what God does in the future than it can comprehend what He did when He brought it all into existence. Since man cannot bring into existence even one molecule that does not exist, but only work with and rearrange what God has already provided, man has no ability to comprehend how something can come out of nothing.

But it is no mystery to the Creator. The gravitational and electromagnetic forces of energy, which God created and uses to hold this universe together and make it functional, and will be summoned to dissolve it. With a huge burst of energy flowing from His holy and pure presence, God acts and this universe, and all that is in it, is to be no more. To explain it further would be of no help to man. This is particularly true for those, who, looking at all of the physical evidence of His creative work, reject what He has left among us as evidence to be studied and examined. All of it tells us what He has done, but none of it explains how He did it. That bit of information cannot be grasped by man's little mind. Man does best when he recognizes that certain actions of God are simply beyond the ability of his mind to fully grasp. That certainly applies to His creative work, whether it is the creation of a physical universe or the creation of a new creature in Christ Jesus. If one will not accept the truths presented by the physical evidences of His creative work, he will find it to be of even greater difficulty to accept what God says about His work in the spiritual realm which he cannot see nor touch.

What God created, God dissolves! It all belongs to Him!