

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #90

7/09/2008

The Great White Throne Judgment: Part 4

“The Second Death”

Revelation 20:11-15

A description of the finality of this creation, as we know it, concludes Revelation twenty. When we move into chapter twenty-one we will begin to consider what God tells us about **“the new heaven and new earth,”** and it will undoubtedly be a venture into territory totally new and different for us which we have little ability to comprehend. Before we enter chapter twenty-one with its fantastic descriptions of eternity we must complete our study of chapter twenty and forever be done with this sin-tainted creation.

We divided the last five verses into eight statements which are:

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 the last lesson we studied the fourth through the sixth statements. What we learned there influences what we will learn from the last two statements, seven and eight, in this lesson.

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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We first of all remind ourselves that no one who belongs to Christ Jesus is involved in the **“Great White Throne Judgment”** for each believer has participated in the **“first resurrection:”**

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power ...” (Rev. 20:6).

We should not leave the matter of the lost appearing before the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting upon His Great White Throne of Judgment, until we make sure that all understand what happens there.

First, noting that there are to be different degrees of rewards for God’s faithful servants (Matthew 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 3:12-15) we also take note that there will be degrees of punishment for the wicked (Matthew 24:45-51; 25:14-30). This distinction indicating the degrees of rewards and punishment is most clear in what Jesus said in Luke 12:42-48:

***“And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. FOR UNTO WHOMSOEVER MUCH IS GIVEN, OF HIM SHALL BE MUCH REQUIRED: AND TO WHOM MEN HAVE COMMITTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK THE MORE.**”*

We do not know everything about how God determines who will be punished more and who will receive the lesser punishment, but we do know that ***He searches the heart to discover the hidden things such as motive and intent and how much a person knows and is accountable for. Responsibility increases with knowledge and privilege, and, therefore, accountability.*** We have already seen what God says in Jeremiah 17:9-10 that ***“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”***

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Besides this, we have seen *“... nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad”* (Luke 8:17. *“...There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops”* (Luke 12:2-3).

God judges a man according to his work, his deeds, as well as his intents. The degree of wickedness determines the degree of suffering the wicked will experience in his final destination, **“the lake of fire burning with brimstone.”** God misses nothing. Nothing is hid from God and He tells us that He searches the heart to unveil the intents of a man, the unseen thoughts and purposes in a man’s heart. He does this to judge justly that He might *“...give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”* This point is strengthened when we join it what is said in Revelation 20:12 and 13. God closes both verses by saying: **“... and they were judged every man according to their works.”** Thus, God reinforces the idea that there are degrees of punishment for the wicked.

Not only will the wicked suffer according to what God finds in their hearts and sees in their wicked deeds, but another form of suffering seems to be suggested in Revelation 22:11: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still...”* The fires of wickedness burn incessantly in the perverted hearts of the wicked and no matter how much evil they participate in, they can never satisfy the burning of sinful desires deep within their sin-diseased souls. This verse indicates that, even in the burning fires of the **“lake of fire burning with brimstone”** for eternity, these wicked will forever and ever be unable to find any rest from the inner torment of their evil lusts. Wickedness produces its own suffering. Wicked men and women will have to deal with their unrequited lusts and hatred for eternity without ever finding any relief or satisfaction.

The word **“resurrection”** means that a person receives a new body designed for eternity. As a result, another point that should not be overlooked is this: Those who participate in the **“first resurrection”** receive new bodies created and designed to enable them to enjoy the blessings of heaven to the fullest extent. It is also true that those who **“are resurrected unto damnation”** (John 5:29) receive bodies designed to be extremely sensitive to pain and suffering so that their torment and pain might be experienced to the fullest extent for eternity. Afterall, they receive bodies that can never be consumed by fire even while experiencing all of the pain that fire can produce.

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God tells us that **“...death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”** This is prophesied in both the Old and New Testaments for there is no more need for death or **sheol** or **hades**, the Old and New Testament words for the holding places of the dead. In the Old Testament it is recorded that God said: **“...O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction...”** (Hosea 13:14). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55: **“...Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”** The fear of death and the grave never again will haunt man for **“...death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death”** (Revelation 20:14).

“The second death” is the eternal destiny of the wicked which is described in Revelation 20:15: **“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

Notice the specifics of this last statement about all rebellious sinners. The fact that determines their destiny is whether their names can be found **“written by the blood of the lamb in the Lamb’s book of life”** (Revelation 20:15; 21:27). Just as God said in John 3:18, **“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”** That is the simple and clear criteria which determines where a person spends eternity. If they have not allowed God to write their names with the blood of His **“only begotten Son”** into **“the Lamb’s book of life,”** they will then be cast into **“the lake of fire.”**

With such a statement of horror, God closes the book on this sin-tainted creation. When God first created this world, it was perfect. It might well have lasted for eternity, a place where man, whom God had created to be the object of His blessings, could fellowship with his Creator in perfect bliss, but it was not to be. When Adam sinned he allowed sin to pervert everything God had created, specifically himself and all his descendants who would be born with his sin-diseased nature. Even inanimate creation had **“groaned”** under the burden of man’s sin as it **“...waited for the manifestation of the sons of God. For it was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself waited to be delivered from the bondage of corruption...”** (Romans 8:19-21).

Now it could be true — this creation would be no more. The next words we read in God’s Word tell us what John saw and what we will next study: **“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”** (Revelation 21:1).