

## **Revelation - Week 17 - April 7**

### **Revelation 20:11-15**

#### **“The Judgment”**

#### **Intro**

- we are fast approaching the end of the book! Probably only 3 weeks left
- After we are done Revelation we are gonna take a few weeks break just with so many things going on and then restart our Wednesday Bible studies in a few weeks
- Last week we looked at the first half of Revelation 20
- And we talked about the fact that this is a highly debated 10 verses in the Bible. And there are 3 main views of what this 1000 years is.
- Premillennialism = Jesus returns BEFORE the 1000 years
- Postmillennialism = Jesus returns AFTER the 1000 years
- Amillennialism = the 1000 year reign is happening right now
  
- So I hold to an amillennial view, and believe that verses 1-6 are describing a spiritual rule and reign ongoing right now - Jesus is King; he is on his throne right now; he is ruling and reigning
- So this 1000 years is describing the time between Jesus 1st and 2nd coming
- Satan has been bound - and verse 3 tells us in which way - so that he might not deceive the nations (so Satan can still operate and deceive and he primarily does so through the beasts, but he cannot deceive all the nations for this final conflict with the saints and Jesus until God allows it)
- And then we have a picture of the saints, those who died for their faith ruling and reigning with Jesus in the spiritual realm
- Verses 7-10 then describe again what we've seen in chapter 16 and in chapter 20 - this final battle between Satan, the beasts and the nations and Jesus
- And Jesus wins - Satan and the beasts are thrown into the lake of fire forever and ever
- So now, the rest of chapter 20 - verses 11-15 describe the final judgment before God's throne
- We want to read verses 11-15 together and then talk about the final judgment and hell and what it all means.

**Read Revelation 20:11-15**

## Verse 11

- so this scene begins with John seeing a great white throne and him who was seated on it
- Since 4:2, John has used this word 38 times - the whole drama of Revelation is relative to the throne and who is on it:

Revelation 4:1-5:14 - the throne room scene

Revelation 7:9-17 - worship around the throne

Revelation 8:1-4 - silence in heaven/prayers of the saints

Revelation 11:15-18 - 7th trumpet/worship around the throne

Revelation 16:17-19:5 - fall of Babylon/worship around the throne

- and then our text is judgment around the great white throne
- Notice too, in previous texts about the throne there is a lot of stuff going on (singing, worshiping, elders, living creatures, other thrones)
- NOW, the throne is front and centre - no singing, no rainbow, no 24 thrones, no 4 living creatures, no 7 lamps of fire, no incense
- JUST the throne
- White = represents purity and justice
- Who is seated on the throne?

Matthew 25:31-32 - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

John 5:21-22 - “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son.”

Acts 17:31 - “...because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed: and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Romans 14:10 - “Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God...”

2 Corinthians 5:10 - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

- so Jesus is seated on the throne of judgment
- And this throne of judgment is alluding primarily to Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1

Daniel 7:9 - “As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.”

Ezekiel 1:26 - “And above the expanse over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness with a human appearance.”

- then John says at the end of verse 11 that earth and sky fled away and no place was found for them
- We've seen this language already in Revelation:

6:14 - “The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”

16:20 - “And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.”

### **Verse 12-13**

- then John sees the dead, great and small standing before the and books were opened
- And then another book was opened - the book of life
- And the dead were judged by what was written in the books - according to what they had done
- And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.
- Great and Small = a way to say everybody - no one escapes this judgment - just because you are great - doesn't make you exempt - just because you are small - doesn't mean your overlooked
- Books (plural) are opened and then THE book (singular) is opened
- Books being opened remind us of:

Daniel 7:10 - “A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; and court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.”

Luke 12:2-3 - “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.”

- the sea - represent chaos, could represent the realm of evil
  - Revelation 13:1 = the beast rises out of the sea
  - Revelation 15:2 = you have the sea stilled and calm
- the sea is probably parallel to death and Hades
- Death and Hades also gave up the dead - they are personified again, like in chapter 6
- Hades = the grave, the place of the departed (it isn't good or bad)
- So twice, we are told, the dead are judged by what was written in the books - judged according to what they had done! (Is this salvation by works??)
- No. Because deeds reveal values, and character and allegiance
- The things we do reveal what we really believe

Romans 2:6 - “He will render to each one according to his works...”

2 Corinthians 5:10 - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

2 Corinthians 9:6 - “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

- Deeds are the fruit of faith! We cannot have faith in Jesus and not have that faith affect the way we live and act

Luke 6:46 - “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?”

- even James 1 talks about Faith apart from works being dead faith
- You can't say I have faith in Jesus and not have deeds be the outpouring of that faith.
- now here's what's comforting - books are opened, but that's not the end of it: the Lamb's book of life is opened as well.
- And verse 15 clearly states - if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
- So salvation is clearly only found in Jesus - having your name written in the book of life
- But some sort of judgment happens - and reward for those in Christ - based on what we do

Revelation 13:8 - "...everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain."

- given the power of sin, no one would ever choose to get their name on that list (the names were written before the foundation of the world)
- If you are afraid that your name isn't in the book of life, it most likely is - because if it wasn't there - you wouldn't be bothered by it
- So basically what this section is teaching us is = one day each and every one of us is going to stand before the throne and give an account of our lives
- Sometimes I think Christians believe that since salvation is in Christ alone, by faith - it's like we get in no questions asked
- But this passage shows us every single human being will stand before the judgment throne - our salvation is secure because our name is in the book of life, but we are still judged by what we do
- This means, what you do in this life matters!!

## **Verses 14-15**

- then Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire
- John says this is the second death, the lake of fire
- And anyone who's name was not written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire
- it is interesting how John words 1st death, 1st resurrection, 2nd resurrection and 2nd death
- 1st death = the death we all die (physical death)

- 1st resurrection (vs. 5) = is what happens when believers face the 1st death - they are with Jesus immediately
- 2nd resurrection = when Jesus returns, the dead are raised and judged
- 2nd death = is what happens to those who do not repent - eternal separation from God, eternal regret and anguish
- followers of Jesus, those with their names in the Lamb's book of life do not have to face the second death
- So we need to talk about the Lake of Fire and the doctrine of hell
- Hell is talked about quite a bit in the New Testament and a lot of imagery is used:

Matthew 25:30 - "And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 25:41 - "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"

Mark 9:43 - "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire."

Mark 9:48 - "...where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched."

Luke 16:22-24, 28 - "The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment...send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame...lest they also come to this place of torment."

Revelation 14:9-11 - "...drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, tormented with fire and sulphur...the smoke goes up forever and ever, they have no rest, day or night."

- hell is awful! It is unending, conscious punishment for all consigned to it
- Now, is it literally a lake of fire? Literally worms? Literally darkness? How can it be darkness and fire?

- I think the Bible and the writers are trying to use imagery that is as awful as you can imagine - I think hell is actually way worse than any description given

Romans 9:2-3 - "...that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Ezekiel 33:11 - "Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live, turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

Matthew 23:37-38 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate."

- so don't get the image wrong! God is not laughing maniacally as he kicks people into hell
- We've seen in the book of Revelation over and over God gives time, and he is patient, and he does things and sends judgments SO THAT people have time to repent
- And we've over and over in the book of Revelation people harden their hearts and refuse to repent
- And so hell is God giving people what they want ultimately - an eternity without him

Doctrine of final judgment does a few things for us:

1. Satisfies our inward sense of a need for justice in the world.
- Colossians 3:25 - "For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality."
2. Enables us to forgive people freely.
- Romans 12:19 - "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"

3. Gives us a motive for righteous living.
  - Matthew 6:20 - "...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."
4. Gives us motivation for evangelism.