

Revelation 20:7-15

"After The 1,000-Year Reign of Christ"

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to Revelation 20:7. And we're getting pretty close to the end here. I think we have four more weeks or so, and we will have finished the entire book. You guys have been faithful to be here every week. It's a hard book to work through, and you've done well. We have spent, gosh, almost eight, nine, ten-and-a-half months or so going through this final book. It's a great book because it starts in verse 1 of chapter 1 with the Lord saying, "Blessed are those who would read this and keep the lessons found in it." And we've been talking much about what the future holds. For us, as Christians, pretty exciting what the future holds. For the world, pretty frightening what the future holds before the Lord's throne. So I'm always interested that the Lord gives us so much information about the days after we're taken out. Right? In other words, in chapter 4:1, you're raptured, and you're done. You're with the Lord from that time forward. And yet God lays all of these things out to us, and I have to believe, more than anything, it's to be sure that we look at the world through His eyes and see the desire that He has to see them come to know Him and that He doesn't want them to have to go through those. That's not God's will, ever. And so I think a lot of the book is written ahead of time so that we might be aware of what is coming and use our time wisely to share the Lord with people that we love and pray a lot for the world around us.

So, as we get to the end of the book, everything kind of speeds up in terms of timing. And, as far as verses, we don't find near as many; there's just not as much information, if you will. All of our studies are in the Archives. All of the notes are in the book store. You're welcome to get those and use those. I think it's hard to remember everything all at once, certainly. But, at the same time, we've been telling you the last couple of weeks, especially, that the Lord seems to get briefer and briefer in His explanation of what is coming.

When we get to the Battle of Armageddon, for example, where the Lord gathers all of the nations of the world that now are opposing the Lord, He comes back with the saints - with the Old Testament saints, with the Tribulation saints - in the midst of that battle and takes on all of these rebels, if you will, led by the Antichrist and by the false prophet. And just one word from Jesus' mouth, and the battle's pretty much over. A lot of people will lose their lives. The brightness

of His coming, we read (2 Thessalonians 2:8), decides the blow, if you will. And then, at the end of chapter 19, we saw that the Lord took these leaders - these fake leaders, the Antichrist and the false prophet - and they become the first ones that the Lord puts into *Gehenna*; *Gehenna*, that final place not of rest but of punishment that the Lord had prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). We learned also that Jesus, upon His return, would gather the nations of the earth together (Daniel tells us - Daniel 12:11-12) in about a 45-day judgment period around His throne in Jerusalem. And much of their judgments would rely, it does seem, biblically, upon their treatment of Israel during this time. To stand with Israel was certainly death to you, for the most part. And yet, at the same time, the Lord kept some of these *Gentile* kingdoms, if you will, alive. Matthew 25 talks about that to us specifically. And then there's that remnant, that 1/3 of all of Israel that will be saved at the Lord's return. They'll see Him whom they had pierced (Zechariah 12:10), and it'll be a mass national conversion. All of those folks are going to go into the Kingdom Age, if you will.

We saw last week, in the first six verses, that Satan will be taken by one of the angels of the Lord and chained in a place called the "*abyssos*." It means bottomless pit. He will be held there for the entire time that Jesus is ruling upon the earth, during the Kingdom Age. It is that place that the demons know well. In fact, you might remember that story in Luke 8 as Jesus goes to *Gadara*, and He runs into that man in the tombs, that demoniac. And as He casts these demons - "Legion" they were called - out of this man, they begged the Lord, it says, that He wouldn't send them to this place, to the "*abyssos*," this place of being locked up and held, if you will. So, during the Millennial Kingdom - and we talked a lot about it last week - life on the earth will be as glorious as it can be, aside from heaven, with the Lord ruling and reigning, and yet there'll still be some sin involved. So it's about as good as it gets before we're all taken away from that influence entirely. But even last week we said that whole 1,000 years is covered in six verses. And we went around and bounced around with you last week to get everything that we could. We know that the environment, the land, will be restored. Sin will not be tolerated. Jesus will rule, we read, with a rod of iron. And it is possible, it seems, to be able to live that 1,000 years and not die; that the life span for many will be just like it was before the Flood in the days of Noah, where there'll be temperate climates and no polar ice caps and not big changes in temperature and all. So there're a lot of folks going to be by the millions upon the earth living their days out under the rulership of Jesus. We are told in the Scriptures that there'll be a population explosion. If most people seem to have lost their life during the *Great Tribulation* or they were

taken to the Lord, it won't take long; 1,000 years - if you live that long, oh my goodness, the planet'll be packed, and the whole planet will be inhabitable. Not like it is today where a lot of places you really can't live.

But during that 1,000 years there'll be little opportunity for you to do anything but obey. Right? The devil's locked up. Jesus is on the throne. You're living in your flesh, so there's temptation, but you're not going to have a lot of opportunities to exercise it. And I think when you do, that rod of iron will kick in, and the Lord will deal severely with those who don't follow His rules. So, it seems like disobedience during that time would be too high of a price to pay. We believe, biblically, that not many people will choose or opt out to take that route, at least during that time of Jesus' rule - where you'll be ruling and reigning with Him as well.

Most of the folks outwardly will go along with the program even if their hearts aren't in it. And so there'll be some kind of feigned, "I'll bow my knee." What did it say in Psalm 66:3 where it says, "Through the greatness of Your power Your enemies shall submit themselves to You." They'll nod in agreement; whether they truly believe it or not is another story. But they'll feign commitment, and maybe they'll need to do that to survive.

I don't know if you were around the church when, let's say, the Gulf War started, or when we had the Northridge or the Whittier earthquakes, or when 9/11 took place. The place was packed. I mean, there were hundreds more people than we've ever seen in our life. Everyone ran to church. And three weeks later, they were gone. But during that time, "Oh, God, we need help! We don't know what to do." And I suspect there'll be a lot of this fear of the Lord happening but not necessarily a love for the Lord. And so there'll be a lot of unspoken objections, motions without emotion. And we read last week at the end, there'll be a release of the devil for "a little while" to then say to people, "Well, here's the alternative. The alternatives are that you can follow me." And the Lord will give to man a final choice - one that will reveal where their hearts really are. But all that in these six verses. Not much to go on. I wish there were fourteen, fifteen chapters we could read. But there aren't. So I always just conclude, "Well, this is what God wants me to know, and there's a lot that I would ask but He doesn't want me to know." So there's bits of information, and I guess it leaves you just thirsty enough and hungry enough to wait to see. I can't wait to see.

But tonight we will continue, and we will cover a lot today. We will cover the end of the 1,000-year reign, we will cover the Great White Throne Judgment that Jesus will bring all of unbelieving man to, and then next week we will pick up (in two weeks, I think) the new earth, the New Jerusalem and then a final word from the Lord about the rivers of life that now are available to those who want to look to Him. But it follows kind of the same traditions that God has established, and that is these are really big, important events, and we literally have a few verses: Armageddon, Millennial Kingdom, reign of Jesus. They're almost postscripts. They're very brief kind of descriptions.

But we'll start tonight in verse 7 because, as we told you last week, after those six verses it says, "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea."

Imagine the fury built up in Satan as he's had to sit in chains for 1,000 years like a caged animal. He was used to runnin' around and creating havoc, stalking his prey, deceiving the hearts of men. So he knows exactly when he's released what he's going to do. He doesn't waste a second. He goes immediately for the jugular. Men are still sinners, and sinning is what they do, so he comes quickly to inflame their passions. "Let's gather together, let's revolt against this authoritative Jesus." And he immediately resorts to his own ways. And notice he runs in every direction. He runs throughout the whole earth. Man has not seen war for 1,000 years. There hasn't been much trouble among people for a long time. But now, from the four corners of the earth, millions of people....why millions? Well, it says at the end of verse 8, the "number is as the sand of the sea." It's one of those colloquial phrases. In Greek, that literally means we can't count them. It's just an innumerable amount of folks who join this rebellion.

And Satan, as he travels the earth, gets people to sign up with his final assault on Jesus and His government. And it's like a prairie fire; it seems to just race across the planet. I think - and we mentioned it last week - that if you read this carefully, it sure shows you where much of the strife in our life comes from. Because if the Lord's in charge, there's peace. But when Satan gets his little foot in there, already there's this side-choosing and war and hatred and fighting. And Satan, at his little dirty best, seeks to destroy man by appealing to their sinful

natures. And especially in this case, "Don't you want to be free of the rulership of Jesus? Don't you want to have it your way rather than His way?"

Now, I read this and I want to say, "Lord, just leave him locked up. We know what he's all about." But the main reason of course is that God wants every man to have a choice. Right? You can't go to a shotgun wedding and say, "Oh, they just loved each other." No. There's a shotgun involved. Right? You don't have much of a choice. God wants love from a willing heart. And in order to force people by rule of law - which He has been demonstrating to them for 1,000 years, the benefits of living under His care and how good life was - and I imagine it's far better than it is today, certainly. Man never had a real choice here because he was forced to just toe the line, follow the rules. And now when he gets a chance to just spread his wings, he's going to buy into this lie. When Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes 8:11, he said God doesn't quickly bring sentence against an evil work because He wants the heart of the sons of men fully set in them to do evil. Or, if you will, God is patient because if He waits long enough, you really can't excuse your behavior. This is the life I chose. This is the way I chose to go.

And, in reality, through the Bible, Satan is a created being. So he works for God in the sense that he's only allowed to do what God allows him to do. You know, we are fearful of him, and oh, man, he's created such havoc. But, at the same time, he serves God's purposes. And you remember, in chapter 1 of Job, the LORD said to Satan, "Have you seen My servant Job? There's nobody like him in the earth, man! Upright, loves God, serves well." And Satan goes, "Well, of course he does! You've hedged him in. You've watched over his household. You've held him on every side. You've blessed the work of his hands. He's got possessions of all, his increase of lands. Look, You put Your hand out against him and his stuff, he'll curse You to Your face." And the LORD said, "All right. Take his stuff away, but leave your hand off of him." And it didn't work. He lost a lot of possessions, but he still worshipped God. And it was again Satan that went back and said, "All right. What I meant was if You lay Your hand on him.....if he got sick, well then certainly then he's going to fall." And the LORD said, "All right. Lay your hand on his body, but don't take his life." And again it didn't work. And so Satan is one that certainly he's limited by the Lord. He is submitted to God's authority. Even when he does the worst of things, God uses it for His own devices. And certainly that's the case here at the end. People get a choice: here's the Lord's rule, and here's the devil's lies. And it has always been the same. So, "for a little while" - we read that in verse 3 - he is released by the Lord, free to invite men to turn from God's ways

and to rule over their own lives. And, I don't know, I read it, and I think to myself, "How would anyone be convinced it's a good idea? That anyone would buy into the foolishness of Satan."

But like I said to you last week, the valuable lesson is: even under the most ideal circumstances, sin can still flourish, and it isn't the circumstances that oftentimes bring us to the Lord. It's not our environment that causes the problem; it's our hearts. We need to be right with God. You can put a person in the perfect environment. Let Jesus rule for 1,000 years. "How's that been goin'?" "It's perfect! Every day's a joy!" And here comes the devil. "You like this? You want to go with me this way?" "Oh, yeah. I like to do that." You can't blame the environment. Jesus didn't make any mistakes here. He raised them and led them in the ways of the Lord. But man has a problem. Sin is his problem. Only God can change the heart. So, I think men realize it. Psychologists call it behavior disorders, and sociologists call it social lag, and minorities call it racism, and Communists in China call it class struggle. The Bible just calls it sin. Sin is just going to destroy. Never stops. Even under the righteous and holy reign of Jesus.

It's the sin nature that has no cure until you get a proper diagnosis, and the diagnosis is you need a new heart, man. You need to let the Lord in. Jesus tells us it is sin that has left us dead to the Lord, separated from Him, and we need to be born again through faith in His Son. It's the only way. But we see it even at the end, where the whole of the world, the billions of people living under His rule, there's a ton of people at the end going, "I think I'll try the other way," even though you couldn't improve. Sometimes you'll hear people - especially these days with the cost of living in California and a lot of people like to move out of the area because it's cheaper - but it used to be, "Let's just move out of the troubled areas. And somehow, if we move to a more rural place, I'll have a better chance of walking with the Lord."

Which sounds good because avoiding temptation is certainly helpful. But the problem is if you move to a rural area, you'll still be there. (Laughing) "I'm goin' to Hawaii." "Well, that's great, but you'll still be there." And that's the problem. It's us and our hearts before the Lord. It's not the environment. It's neither the cause nor is it the cure. A new birth brings life to those dead in sin. That's the cure. I mean, just think about Joseph for a minute. You've, I'm sure, all read the story of Joseph. Godly man. One of the few people in the Bible that there's not one word spoken against his walk, and you have his whole life laid out before you.

Not five or six verses but chapter upon chapter. Here's Joseph as a little kid, and here's what he did later, here's how he spent his years in prison, and here's how he came to know what God's plans for his life were. It's just all laid out. Not one stumble in Joseph's life that I can read about. He's one of those guys like Daniel - you don't like very well because you can't relate to 'em. You like Peter, you like Paul - they all messed up. Not these guys. They're that elite trophy case of saints. Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers who were wicked enough to go and tell their dad he got killed. They sold him to a family that was passing through, knew nothing of his culture. He was taken to Egypt. He lived as a slave in a heathen home, and he flourished. Even the heathens went, "Man, he is a good guy!" He was falsely accused, falsely imprisoned, forgotten by his friends, forsaken by everyone except the LORD; and he was sure of that. Yet you won't find one chink in his armor. He lived an exemplary life. It isn't the environment that you find yourself in; it's the relationship that you can have with God.

We have several kids in our high school and junior high ministries that have come from pretty harsh world kind of situations. You've probably heard from some of them coming up to share. And, man, some of these kids turned out amazing when they shouldn't have. There was everything working against them and yet, because of their faith in Christ, He just kept them, and they flourished.

Well, even in the best of situations here upon the earth, with Jesus ruling, the depravity of man's heart can even see people turning away from the Lord and, by countless numbers, following Satan for a little while.

Now, we read in verse 7 that he goes out into the world, "in the four corners of the earth," basically around the planet to gather together Gog and Magog again to come to Jerusalem, verse 9, and fight against the Lord. "One more time. Let's see if we can pull this off." Because Satan's will is still the same 1,000 years later. "I want to rule and remove God's rule." Right? That has been driving him since day one.

Gog and Magog. Gog is first mentioned in the Scriptures way back in 1 Chronicles 5, and he was a descendent of Joel from the tribe of Reuben. Later on he is mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 as being part of a land mass of people that the Lord will draw down with a hook in their mouth towards the south. It is to the north of Israel. It is certainly from a land mass.....Russia and all of its former provinces, if you will. And they are led by the Lord down to the south where the

Lord will destroy them as they come to battle against Israel. And the destruction - Ezekiel 38 and 39 - will open the path for the Antichrist to come to power out of Europe somewhere. So they'll be removed as an influence, if you will, and they are named by the names Gog and Magog which normally, prophetically, refer to the Russian provinces, if you will. That was 1,000 years earlier, if you will. Magog is introduced in the Bible as a grandson of Noah; it's back in chapter 10 of Genesis. He also appears, like I said, in this 38 and 39 Ezekiel prophecy. And I think like the name "Babylon," which was used primarily in chapters 18 and 19, here Gog and Magog is not a reference to a land mass because they are really gathered from all corners of the earth; they are representative of, if you will, those who - an innumerable amount of people - stand against God's will. They represent like "Babylon" except in a fighting stance, their willingness to be in opposition to Almighty God. When Ezekiel names these wicked nations that God will draw with a hook in their mouth, Ezekiel tells us the dead bodies of those are marked and laid around for seven months; nobody touches them. But here it is symbolically attached to the final world rebellion of the millennial dwellers who have spent 1,000 years under Jesus' rule but now, from all corners of the earth, decide that they're going to join in attacking God's people and going after His headquarters in Jerusalem. And, again, like always here's Satan behind the scenes, stirring it up, deceiving men, though they've seen God's best. But now there's more than just your flesh. Now there's the flesh and the appeal of the enemy; now there's a spiritual warfare. So I think that the names Gog and Magog here might kind of be like if you used the word "Waterloo." We use that terms sometimes to say that's a battle that's doomed to fail, they've met their "Waterloo." I think that's kind of the way it's repeated here. Here comes the opposition against the Lord. And, like I said, God wiped them out then, and He will wipe them out here.

In fact we read, in verse 9, "They went up on the breadth of the earth" (so they came from everywhere) "and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire" (Gehenna) "and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are." (They were put there 1,000 years earlier.) "And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

So "the breadth of the earth." There're a lot of people involved in this. I guess that's the big shocking point. Right? As many "as the sand of the sea." And, again, "the breadth of the earth, the four corners." You just want to shake your head. There's no logic here. Right? This is spiritual warfare at its finest, but we

shouldn't be surprised that people are so quickly able to be deceived. Satan is still after Jesus' throne, and there're a lot of people involved because there's this complex nature of evil in the hearts of every man that God needs to defeat as we look to Him.

This time the judgment doesn't last very long. It comes very swiftly. It comes without discussion from the Father in heaven who sends fire upon them that consumes them all. Now this isn't the first time the Lord has intervened to say, "That's enough." He sent fire down on Sodom and Gomorrah in chapter 19 of Genesis. He sent fire down upon the land of Magog; we just mentioned them in Ezekiel 39. He sent fire down on Gog into the mountains in chapter 38 of Ezekiel. He sent fire down upon those who arrived to arrest Elijah, you might remember, in 2 Kings 1. So the Lord has, in times past, just said, "This is enough. This rebellion I can't deal with anymore." And so, as everyone is gathered together here, the Lord makes an instant judgment.

And, again, those who join the rebellion are going to very quickly learn they've chosen the wrong side. "Oh, my gosh, what have we done? How dumb is this?" But it's too late. It's kind of like you get your choices all of your life, but the minute you die, it's too late. Too late. "Can I go back? I'd like to do it over. I'd like a do-over." No do-overs. You're no match for the Lord and His Word. So I think reading it as a Christian you want to say to yourself how important that we convince the world around us that Jesus is alive. Right? That we pray that God would anoint us.

Notice here, in verse 10, that the deceiver is now taken, and he's cast into the lake of fire, into Gehenna. That's where he's going to spend eternity. By the way, Matthew 25:41 says that that was "prepared for the devil and his angels." God never prepared Gehenna for man. He knew someone was going to end up there, certainly. He's God. But His intention was to judge the rebellion of the angels in heaven. But you, He desires that you would be saved. So, unfortunately the people will end up there because they decide to follow the wicked ways of the enemy. In fact, verse 15, the last verse of our chapter, says, "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into" (Gehenna) "the lake of fire." Horrible. Horrible. So notice that we read here the Antichrist, who was the beast, and the false prophet had been cast in 1,000 years earlier. But I want you to notice they're still there. Eternal suffering. Right? Eternal separation. 1,000 years have gone by as if it's a day. It's a horrible fate, a horrible place, and God wants to spare you from

it. It is horrible, it is so horrible....here's how horrible it is: God sent His Son to die in your place so you don't have to go there. That's a huge sacrifice. He did it to keep you from this place. It is so horrible that Jesus warns about it even more than He speaks of the glory of heaven. It is so horrible that when the Lord speaks of this place, He uses the kind of language that is supposed to upset you when you hear it and move you. Matthew 5:29 the Lord said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out." What?!!! "For it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Hell" (Gehenna). God doesn't want you to go there. That's for sure. The fact that that door is going to be open one day for judgment is equally as sure, and it is something that we should hang on to. There's a lot of writing, especially if you read Christian theological thoughts from various people that are "in the know," I guess, that they won't have rejected the doctrine of a conscious eternal place of torment for unrepentant man. And most of the arguments that you hear against this Hell are from a philosophical ground, that, "How could God, who is so loving, create a place like that? Better He just wipe us out." Now, I can't explain to you God's judgment except I know that it is right. It is arrogant for me or for you to question the Lord's infinite wisdom over ours. He does what He wants. He does it as He sees fit. He's revealed it to us. And even if, in our ignorance, we don't see any sufficient reason for it or somehow can't make a case for it, I think, at this point, you just read this and go, "All right, Lord. Thank You for telling me. I don't want to go there." And we take it to heart. It is the most unbelievable act of conceit, though, and foolishness to attempt to dogmatize how a God of infinite wisdom must act. You can't do it. You have to let God be God. And right now God is God here. This is no more discussion. Right? This is all at the end of things, if you will. And we know how God's going to act, we know what God's going to do. I would just suggest to you - read these words with fear and trembling, and just leave it at that. Right?

Having seen the disposition of the opposition and their leader, the devil, once and for all, John now puts a period to that, if you will, in verse 10, and he turns to the next event on the calendar, which is the resurrection and the judgment of the unbelieving dead. Remember we know where everyone is. Right? The believers are in heaven with the Lord - the Old Testament saints that had their resurrected body given to them at His second coming, still have the Tribulation saints - they're ruling and reigning with Jesus. We know those that have gone into the land and now that 1,000 years are over and judgment has taken place. So all we have left now is for God to finalize the judgment of those who have died all of these years who have not stood yet before the Lord, have not received their glorified bodies

(glorified in the sense that they're going to last forever), and have not come to this final resting place, which is not a resting place at all but is a place where the devil and his angels are placed and those who join the opposition. They're going to be sent to Gehenna. And that action is going to take place after, if you will, this 1,000-year reign of Christ and this opposition that rises up and is quickly put down. This final judgment of God in the Bible is known as the second death.

Verse 11, "Then" (John said) "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them." So we are introduced to this Great White Throne Judgment. I think the word "throne" is used thirty-eight different times in the book of Revelation, but this one is very unique, and it is only mentioned here in that context. It is located somewhere other than heaven or earth because heaven and earth flee away. Don't know where. But I know right after this the Lord is going to bring in a new heaven and a new earth. So whatever we think of in terms of heaven and earth, somewhere else this meeting takes place. And again, only have a few verses. I can't really tell you where it might be, but it is a place where the unbelievers will come and be dealt with; where the believers - you and I - will never have to appear because you've been saved and delivered by the blood of the Lamb. In Daniel 7's vision (verses 9-10), Daniel said that he saw in a vision "the thrones put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire." And then it says, "The court was seated, and the books were opened." So Daniel saw this coming down the road, very much in a vision. There in that vision of Daniel's, it really was the judgment of the Father on behalf of His Son to terminate the reign of the Antichrist, in context anyway; whereas this is now the Lord judging the earth. You remember that the Lord said, in John 5:22, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son." So that's what this is. Right?

In fact, this is Jesus' judgment at the end of things, and I think the very words could strike terror into your heart. "Great" because in front of the Infinite, the Lord, the finite are about to arrive to give an answer for their lives. And it is "white," it is pure, it is holy, it is all that. And it is a "throne." God is unlimited in power. When Jesus sits down upon this very important throne, the heavens and the earth flee. There's no place found for them. And, like I said, it does seem like since chapter 21 brings in the new heaven and the new earth, this is the end of things as we know them, arriving about the same time as this judgment. If that's

the case, and do you remember Jesus said, in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away"? So here's heaven and earth passing away. Right? In fact, if you're a Bible student, and you like little facts and figures, if you will, this event marks the end of the words "Day of the Lord" in the Bible. This is the end of the "Day of the Lord." Okay? So, in Bible prophecy.

What happens to the old earth? Well, we're told that in a bunch of places. Right? Peter, writing in 2 Peter 3:10-15, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." And then Peter says, "If you know this is getting burnt up, what kind of life are you going to live? Are you going to invest in something that's not going to last?" That was his point. Isaiah wrote, in chapter 34:4, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree." It'll just all come apart. It'll be burned up. What we see will be burned up. We'll read that in Revelation 21:1, that this new heaven and this new earth will replace the one that we know about. Now, how is God going to do that? I don't know. There's a great verse in Colossians 1:17 where, speaking of Jesus, it says "by Him all things consist," and the word "consist" literally means to be held together. In other words, Jesus holds everything we see together. So it might very well be as simple as Him just going, "I'm going to let go of it. I've watched over it, I've protected it, I've held it, I've provided, and now I don't need it anymore." And that impact of just letting go might very well just burn up everything around us.

So we've seen the first resurrection, right? And now we have a second resurrection. But this is the resurrection of the bodies to the souls of unbelievers delivered up to stand before Almighty God. We have the story in Luke 16 of Lazarus and the rich man. You remember that story? And how that the rich man died, and he went to Hades, the grave. Right? That place where the dead were kept. And there was a gulf between them. One is Abraham's bosom, where the believers - Old Testament saints, if you will - were kept. On the other side, there were the dead who died in unbelief waiting for God's judgment. Now when Jesus rose from the dead, He went and got these guys on this side, took them to glory, delivered them. But over here, the dead still wait; judgment. Well this is their

day of judgment. And the believers at the rapture, the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints at the second coming, we all got our bodies. But now the lost come to stand before God and will be placed into eternal Hell, into Gehenna, with a body that will endure the sufferings for all of eternity. It's a horrible thought. But the only way to get here is to just tell Jesus "no" every day of your life. Because this is what He likes to do (Pastor Jack knocks on the podium), "Let Me in. Let Me in. I'm standing, and I'm knocking."

So we read, in verse 12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." So, in reality, the Great White Throne Judgment is really not a place of judgment, but it is a place of sentencing. It's like the sentencing phase. Right? The penalty phase for everything you've done. We're going to go over what you've done, and you're going to be judged by what you've done, and what you've done is going to leave you short. Right? "The wages of sin.... death" (Romans 6:23). You don't have a Savior. "It is appointed unto man once to die," Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "and then will come this judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

So, verse 12, notice the words "small and great," "the dead, small and great." Notice that the position you held in life will have no impact once you're dead. You can be the "small," or you can be the "great." It doesn't make any difference to the Lord. Same judgment. Right? You're going to face the same judgment. The well-known and the unknown are both going to appear before the judgment seat. And the cross stands as the great equalizer among people of faith. Right? It doesn't matter what you are in this life. When you get saved, we're all coming to kneel down before the cross. We're all going to Jesus the same way. Right? I don't care how successful you are in this life. We all need Christ. We might be as separate as people can be in this room, but we all have this in common: we've come to Jesus. On the other side of things, if you will, this place of judgment, this throne, will level the lost. It doesn't matter who you are. You'll all have the judgment the same before the Lord.

And notice these words - they are "standing before God." I can't imagine looking in Jesus' face or into His eyes or the face that was spit upon and mocked, or the face that had the beard torn out, or the body beaten so bad that Isaiah wrote that you can't recognize Him for who He was (Isaiah 52:14), this body that still bears the marks of the crucifixion, and having to then answer for the position I decided to take against Him. But that's the scenario. Right? "Standing before God." I can't imagine the fear that would grip your heart. The body comes out of the grave, the soul is delivered up from the holding cell, and you stand before Almighty God at this Great White Throne Judgment. And everyone you look at, nobody's a believer (they're long gone) - you're all in the same boat, unfortunately heading in the same direction.

How is the judgment carried out? We're told that the "books were opened," and out of these books they will be judged. But there is not a Book of Life for them. At least they're not found in it so that we are left to look up their books of accomplishment. Their works will fail them, and they'll come up short as you just can't measure up. But notice that the results will be the same for every unbeliever who stands before God in their own performance. Because if you don't have a Savior, then you are forced to rely upon your accomplishments. Right? That's the big issue in the world. "I'm going to get to heaven." Why? "Because I try hard, I do good, I'm nice to people, I give to the poor, I don't swear too much, I only drink on the weekends." I can make a whole list of things that you think are pretty valuable and important. But the determining factor will be if you're a works-reliant, Christ-rejecting individual whose name is not in the Book of Life, you'll be required to answer for your own sin. And unfortunately that won't work. You'll die forever. I suspect if you were to stand outside this Great White Throne Judgment that you would determine, "Gosh, that guy did better than the guy before him. This guy was pretty good. This guy was not very good at all. Some were kinder, others were more tolerant. Some actually made a sacrifice." But here's the problem: none of them made it. I remember Pastor Chuck used to tell us when we were young, "It's kind of like going to Huntington Beach and saying, 'All right. Run off the edge of the pier, and jump to Catalina.'" He said, "Some people go 10 feet, some guys'll fall right off the edge. No one's going to hit the land." That's how it is with the Lord.

So it does interest me that the Lord keeps record of every person's life. They've got a book. What you did and didn't do. What you thought you did. Why you did it. There're a lot of pages. Every action, every thought, every intent, every motive,

every reaction, every whispered word. It was Solomon who wrote, in chapter 12:14 of his book of Ecclesiastes, "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." God knows. It's going to be a horrible time.

So you want to know if there's instant replay? Apparently there is in heaven or wherever this throne is. You might recall, if you've been reading at all through the prophets, that there was a time when Ezekiel (chapter 8) was taken by the LORD into the minds of the priests working at the Temple. And the LORD said to Ezekiel, "What do you see here?" and he goes, "These pornographic images on the walls of the Temple, the place of worship. What is this place?" And the LORD said, "This is the minds of the priests, and this is why I'm forsaking this place." So God knows. The priests thought that God did not see. Ezekiel came to whisper in our ears, "Oh, He sees just fine, thank you."

So the replays, I think, will quickly reveal that, indeed, all of us are sinners who have fallen short (Romans 3:23). Their works will prove insufficient, and eternal damnation will be their reward. Now that's frightening. But God is fair in His judgments. Jesus, in Matthew 11:21, said to the folks, "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. But you didn't." In other words, "You saw far more of God's glory than they did, and they were judged, and now you are judged." And it does appear, Luke 12:48, the Lord says, "If you commit things worthy of many stripes but you didn't know it, you'll be beaten with few. But if you are aware of what you did, much is given to you, much will be required of you as well." So I suspect, from what we can read in the Bible, that there will be levels of suffering in Gehenna based on what you know and didn't know. God is a fair God. There will be degrees of punishment depending on your level of knowledge. So it comes down to us. You can have a fair trial in that day, or you can turn to Jesus now and get a full pardon. Get a pass. Get a "mark me in." Give me the deal on my arm. I belong to Him. To receive your pardon, all you have to do is confess your sins, plead for mercy at the cross, receive Jesus by faith, and live for Him. It's pretty straightforward. Because you're going to meet Him one way or the other. This is not the place you want to meet Him.

So, verse 14, if you die, it's too late. Notice from this point forward there're no reversals at the throne, no judgments that are corrected, no appeals process. The judgment is sure, and the judgment is lethal. And an eternity of torment with the

devil and his angels awaits those who joined him, if you will, in his fall. The big question obviously is: is your name in the Book of Life. That's the Book you want to be in. That's the VIP Book, there. Right? Is Jesus dwelling in your heart? Have you been born again?

If you look ahead to chapter 21, I think it's towards the end, in verse 27 it says, "Only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" will be able to enter the New Jerusalem. So it is sometimes called the Lamb's Book of Life that contains everyone who would give Jesus their life. We know from chapter 17:8 of this book that this Lamb's Book of Life was written before man was created, before the world was created. Because, again, God knew those who would belong to Him. To the Sardis church, in Revelation 3:5, Jesus said, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name from the Book of Life," which leads me to believe that, at least in God's heart, every name should be there. But we also can read in another place that their name was never written there. So I think that the big picture is the Lord would like everyone's name there. He knows who's coming and who doesn't. He's recorded that. You didn't stumble in by accident. God is aware of the decisions that you will make. But isn't it amazing that you could have your name blotted out? Because God's intention is to save, but you've decided you'd rather do something else.

We read, in verse 15, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into" (Gehenna) "the lake of fire." Here's what Psalm 69:20-28 says, "Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see; and make their loins shake continually. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents. For they persecute the ones You have struck, and talk of the grief of those You have wounded. Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." That, written prophetically, of Jesus' death and the world's rejection of Him. "Let them suffer the worst that you could imagine because they've set You aside." Prophetically, here in chapter 20:15, the bad news is everyone that shows up at this trial, at this judgment seat, will end up in the lake of fire. And here's why -

they get to join the god that they served; they get what they wanted, which is horrible.

So, aren't you glad your name is in the Book of Life? What a sobering conclusion to this chapter, to this book, to the history of man on this planet, which now disappears. Right? This is the end of things as far as we know it. No one can say God has hidden the truth from us. We know what's coming. We've just got to be sure we're ready to stand before Him.

Here's what I would say tonight: God doesn't send people to Hell. Instead, God blocks their way. God so loved the world, He sent His only Son so that if you believe in Him, you don't perish. He didn't come into the world to judge the world, to condemn the world. The world's condemned already. He came to save it (John 3:16-18). And so even when you read these very horrifying chapters, look, you can go in the first resurrection. There's still time. You can get right with Jesus. But there's coming a day when that's it. And I think the church, if nothing else, we ought to be motivated to go out into the world and say, "You've got to get right with God," and be serious about it. It's a big deal. Right? And I know that this is thousands of years down the road, but your life could be over tomorrow. So, even though the working out of all that God says is going to take some time, we only have today. People only have today, and then that's over for them. They die, that's it. They either await the judgment, or they go with the Lord and are ready to return with Him at His coming for the church. Still time.

Next week, new housing. Two weeks from now, New Jerusalem. Three weeks from now, we're going to look at the last chapter in one week because it's so good. Such a wonderful way to end God's testimony of all that He came to do. Four weeks from now, Jason Lisle with Creation Research will be here to share. And five weeks from today, Lord be willing, we're going to start Romans 1. So, something to be praying for.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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