

UNDERSTANDING THAT WEIRD BOOK OF REVELATION - Part twenty-seven

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MILLENNIUM, RESURRECTION, AND JUDGMENT (Part 2)

Revelation 20:1-15 - "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. [2] And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, [3] and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.[4] Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.[7] And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. [9] And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, [10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.[11] Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] 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. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Last week we studied two points under this topic. Today we will consider points 3 and four:

3) **SATAN FREED AND DOOMED**

Revelation 20:7-10 - "And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison [8] and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. [9] And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, [10] and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Two thoughts here:

- a) Perhaps the most difficult and perplexing issue of a literal millennium is this release of Satan after the completion of the thousand years. What possible purpose could this serve? Why must Christ reign on this present earth - **temporally** - only to release Satan to deceive the nations once again?

This is only speculation (John certainly doesn't **tell** us very many "whys" in his visions), but let me at least put forward a theory that may be helpful. I think we are given this picture of Satan's release after Christ has personally reigned a thousand years right here on earth to help **magnify God's justice** and **demonstrate the true root of human wickedness**.

Take a look around our present situation. Look at all the explanations for human wickedness. Sin is explained away **socially, economically, and psychologically**. But after the millennium, before God's final judgment takes place, we will find people giving in to the lies and deceptions and temptations of the Devil even in the perfect environment of Christ's earthly kingdom.

In other words, what God has said all along will be made perfectly manifest. Sin has its root in the human heart. There is no one to blame but the wicked, fallen human self. Perhaps this is why Paul says every mouth will be stopped when God's final judgment takes place.

- b) Notice the nature of the punishment of the lake of fire. Much is being touted today about **“conditional immortality.”** This is the idea that only the righteous live forever (hence, immortality is conditional). The wicked are simply annihilated in God’s final judgment.

But this is very hard to reckon with this text. Notice, however long you make the millennium, the beast and the false prophet are still present in the lake of fire at the close of the millennium. They were cast into the lake of fire **before** the millennium. They are still there suffering in the same place at the **close** of the millennium. And the significant point for us to remember is their similarity with us as temporal, created beings.

4) THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Revelation 20:11-15 - “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] 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. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Let’s consider three ideas:

- a) ***The final judgment of God will include the complete renovation of the physical realm - Revelation 20:11*** - “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.”

We’ve studied this event in different words in our morning teaching through Hebrews - **Hebrews 12:27** - “This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.”

This ties in with what we have already seen in **Revelation 6:12-14** - “When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, [13] and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. [14] The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”

Remember how we said the three sevens in Revelation - **seals, trumpets, and bowls** - all take us right up to the very end and the second coming of Jesus. You start to see this as the letter unfolds.

Obviously we have only a sketchy picture of this enormous event, but Peter confirms what John sees in his vision - **2 Peter 3:13** - “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

- b) ***The mention of the two different names for the books opened is of great importance.*** While all are **judged** by the record of their deeds, no one is mentioned as being **saved** by their good works. There will be no injustice with God. People will stand (especially at the close of the millennium) with no excuse for their deeds. But it is only in the opening of the **other book** - the **“book of life”** that we find any hope for salvation and eternal life.

John again reaffirms there is no other hope for salvation than having one’s name recorded in the book of life - **Rev 20:15** - “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

These two books, while different, don’t contradict each other. The book of life contains those given grace through Jesus Christ. But that faith manifests itself in good deeds. There is no final contradiction between the two books.

- c) ***The final manifestation of Christ’s victory is the destruction of death and hades themselves in the lake of fire - Rev 20:13-14*** - “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. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

There is wonderful theology here. True, the Scriptures clearly affirm Christ's victory over death and the grave on the cross - **2 Timothy 1:10** - **"... and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...."**But people still die every day. The grave still claims every one of us.

But John sees in his vision the **full fruit** of the victory Christ purchased for each of us in His own death on Calvary. We don't see this yet - **Hebrews 2:8** - **"....Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him."**We don't see all of this finished yet. God's not done. But we will one day find God's grand plan fully accomplished when Jesus comes again. What a hope!