

REVELATION 20

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 20 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

In this chapter there is a lot to talk about, but before we get to this, because this is the focus, we need to understand what this Millennial reign of Christ is, this one-thousand-year reign of Christ.

So let me take a few minutes to go over the three main views about this period of time and I will show you what I believe the Scriptures are telling us and what we believe here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc.

The first view that many hold onto in the Christian church is – **AMILLENNIALISM!**

This is a view that is held by the Lutheran, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Reformed churches and I don't believe this is Scriptural. Not at all.

What is this all about?

It is very simple. They do not believe this is a literal one-thousand years, but it is a symbolic term.

What Scriptural support do they use?

Psalm 90:4 is one they will use, and it tells us, "**For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.**"

And to go along with that they go to II Peter 3:8 and that tells us, "**But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**"

Because of that they do not see a period of time between the First and Second Comings of Jesus, there is no age of grace, and we are in the Millennial Kingdom now!

And there are many reasons why that is wrong but to make their point, they will tell you that the binding of Satan that we see in Revelation 20:2 took place when Jesus defeated Satan on the cross of Calvary!

I don't know about you, but when I look at things, if Satan is bound, then he has a very long chain and is still affecting us today. But they don't see it that way! And Satan is not bound, not yet and we will deal with that more as we get to our text this evening.

Now, make no mistake about it, Satan is a defeated foe as Jesus defeated him on the cross of Calvary. But he is still free to attack God's people and to try to stop the work of God.

I will give you one verse to show you that Satan is not bound. In I Peter 5:8 we are told, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”**

Now, let me ask you a question. Is Satan bound?

And the answer is simple, and it is not based on what I have said or anyone else. It is based upon the Scriptures and Peter clearly tells us that he is still active and seeking to destroy lives!

And here in Revelation chapter 20, the words **“a thousand years”** appears six times. So if the Holy Spirit does not mean a thousand years, why would He repeat that phrase so many times!

And, interestingly enough, in Revelation 20:3 we are told of Satan, that **“after these things he must be released for a little while.”** After these thousand years Satan will be loosed for a short period of time and we will deal with that in our study, the reason for that.

And believe it or not, this got started after Constantine made Christianity the state religion and they thought they were in the Kingdom Age as Christianity became the world religion.

If this is the Kingdom Age, I am very disappointed! But it is not!

Never doubt the Scriptures. This Amillennialism is not Scriptural and thus, we can let it go!

From there we go to – ***POSTMILLENNIALISM!***

This view that was very popular before World War I and then faded away, has come on strong again!

They do believe in a literal one-thousand years, and they believe it is after this one-thousand years that Jesus will return!

In other words, Christianity will grow and grow until the whole world is Christian and righteousness will fill this land, apart from Christ ruling and reigning, of course!

It is then, at the end of our thousand-year reign, I guess you can put it that way, that Christ will come back to this peaceful world and take possession of it.

It is interesting because, over a hundred years ago, the French novelist Victor Hugo wrote, ***“In the twentieth century war will be dead. The scaffold will be dead. Hatred will be dead. Frontier boundaries will be dead. Dogmas will be dead. But man will live. He will possess something higher than all these: a great country, the whole earth, a great hope, the whole heaven.”***

But to the shock of many who held this view, there was World War I and World War II and the Korean War, the Viet Nam War. The world was not getting better, but the 20th century was one of the bloodiest in history and it continues on here into the 21st century.

But this view is coming back under a new label, Kingdom Now or Dominion Theology. And once again the idea is that Christians will take over the world.

When President Trump was in office, look at the Christians that surrounded him. They were of this group, Kingdom Now. But look at what happened in the last election, their leader did not get re-elected.

Once again this is against what the Scriptures teach. It is Jesus Christ who will come back to a world in utter chaos, a world drowning in immorality and wickedness, and He will right the wrong and set up His Kingdom where He will rule and reign for one-thousand years!

The last one and the one I believe is what the Scriptures teach, is –

PREMILLENNIALISM!

This is what we believe here at Calvary Chapel Manitowoc. This period of time is a literal one-thousand-year reign of Christ on this earth that occurs immediately after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, at the end of the Tribulation Period.

Jesus Christ is the one who establishes this Kingdom, not man or Christians.

That is what the Scriptures teach, that Jesus will rule and reign for one-thousand-years from the throne of David as He promised to the Jewish people.

Thus, what we believe is ***PRETRIBULATION*** or that the church will be called home to be with the Lord prior to the start of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

And we believe in ***PREMILLENNIALISM*** or that the Lord is coming back to set up His Kingdom at the end of the Tribulation Period.

I hope that is clear and yes you can have all kinds of views on this and people do, but what do the Scriptures teach? That is what I hope you have seen that the other views do not fit what the Bible tells us is coming!

Think of it like this regarding this coming Kingdom being literal. We are told,

There is a story told to the effect that a Jew, being in the company of a Christian, took up a New Testament and opened it to Luke 1:32, 33.

“The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.”

Turning to his Christian friend the Jew asked, ***“How do you understand that Scripture?”***

The Christian answered, ***“Oh, it’s figurative language, descriptive of Christ’s spiritual reign over the church.”***

“Then you do not take it literally?” asked the Jew.

“Certainly not,” replied the Christian.

The Jew made this further remark, ***“Then why should you expect me to take literally what precedes, where the Scriptures say that this Son of David shall be born of a virgin? Do you believe that literally?”***

“Surely,” answered the Christian.

The Jew continued, ***“Why do you accept verse 31 as literal, but explain verses 32 and 33 as figurative?”***

“Because,” answered the Christian, ***“verse 31 has become a fact - Jesus was so born. It is indisputable evidence.”***

“Ah,” said the Jew, ***“I see! You believe the Scriptures when you see them fulfilled. I believe them because they are the Word of God.”***

Who was right in principle?

An interesting question and I think one that can be easily answered. We need to believe what the Word is God is telling us and not try to water it down or make it say what we want it to say!

Like I have said, in Revelation chapter 20 we see the literal number 1,000 spoken of 6 times in just 15 verses!

This is not symbolic, but literal, as we shall see this evening.

In fact, the Millennial Reign of Christ is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets said would take place. Jesus will rule and reign from the throne of David! (See II Samuel 7:12-16)

I guess you can say that as we begin our study tonight, we are moving into a new era. The Tribulation Period has ended as the Lord has returned and is establishing His Kingdom on this earth. He will destroy rebellious man or the goats, and the sheep or believers who have made it through the Tribulation Period will enter into the Kingdom Age with Him.

Can you imagine a world filled with righteousness?

There will be no injustice, everyone will be treated fairly.

There will be peace throughout the land and people will enjoy good health, living hundreds of years.

The environment will be restored to like it was in the Garden of Eden, where there will be peace even among the animal kingdom.

In Isaiah 11:6-9 we are told, **“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.”**

And along with all this, Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, dealing with any rebellion instantly! It is something that man is longing for, he even tries to make this peace on his own, this lifestyle, but apart from the Lord, this will never happen!

Tonight, we will cover that 1,000-year reign of Christ, from its beginnings to the end.

Yes, there is a lot of ground to cover but keep in mind that John is giving to us the big picture of what will transpire during this period of time.

Now, last time we saw the Lord return with His bride, the Church, and destroy the armies who gathered together to fight against Him.

Then the Antichrist and the false prophet were cast alive into the Lake of Fire that is burning with brimstone.

That is where we will pick-up our study this evening, immediately after this event here in Revelation chapter 19.

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in Revelation chapter 20, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

REVELATION 20**VERSES 1-3**

The wording that John uses here indicates a chronological order or progression.

After the Lord returns, after the Battle of Armageddon, these events will take place, Satan will be bound.

We don't know who this angel is, but he comes down to bind Satan into the bottomless pit, the Abyss or *ABUSSOS* in the Greek.

This is not the Lake of Fire where the Antichrist and the false prophet were cast.

John is speaking of the place where those demonic locusts, the worst of the fallen angels were kept until God allowed Satan to open the door to this pit and free them and this takes place in Revelation chapter 9, which is the fifth trumpet judgment!

But think about this for a minute. Satan is bound not by the Lord, not by a host of angels, not even by Michael the archangel. He is bound by a single, unnamed angel.

One writer put it like this,

We often imagine a huge cosmic struggle going on constantly between God and Satan.

Oh, we know God will win ultimately - but for now, we assume its touch and go.

Not true. Satan is not the evil counterpart of God. God is God. There is none like Him, none who can even begin to challenge Him (Deuteronomy 4:39).

Satan, previously known as the archangel Lucifer, has always been a created being.

Thus, if there is a counterpart to Satan, it would be an archangel like Michael or Gabriel - but not God.

So, after the Tribulation Period, during the Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan is locked up, righteousness fills the land, but what has happened to all of the fallen angel's during this period of time?

I will throw this out to you because it would seem like they too are cast into this bottomless pit with Satan for a period of time.

In Isaiah 24:21-22 we are told, **“It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished.”**

As you read this it would seem like the kings of the earth will be punished differently than the host of exalted ones or these demonic beings. Those on the earth will go to a temporary holding place, Hades or Sheol until the Great White Throne Judgment.

And these fallen angels will be locked in the bottomless pit with Satan until the Kingdom Age is over and then they will be loosed for a short time. And we will look at the reason for that in a few minutes.

Here's the thing, when the Lord rules on this earth, they are not around to influence man, but those who have made it through the Tribulation Period, believers, will have children and those children who are born during this period of time will have to make a choice, and we will see that in a little bit.

And notice, Satan continues to effectively deceive today, but one day he will not be able to do that.

One writer put it like this, *“People not only make falsehoods, speak falsehoods, print falsehoods, and believe falsehoods; but they eat them, and drink them, and wear them, and act them, and live them, and make them one of the great elements of their being.”* (Seiss)

I like what Spurgeon wrote regarding this coming Millennial Reign of Christ. He wrote, *Let us rejoice that Scripture is so clear and so explicit upon this great doctrine of the future triumph of Christ over the whole world . . . We believe that the Jews will be converted, and that they will be restored to their own land. We believe that Jerusalem will be the central metropolis of Christ’s kingdom; we also believe that all the nations shall walk in the light of the glorious city which shall be built at Jerusalem. We expect that the glory which shall have its center there, shall spread over the whole world, covering it as with a sea of holiness, happiness, and delight. For this we look with joyful expectation.*

- C. H. Spurgeon

That day is coming!

VERSE 4

Notice how John starts out, **“And I saw thrones and they sat on them . . .”**

Who is seated upon these thrones?

We don’t have to guess because John tells us. These are the Tribulation Saints who were martyred for their faith in Jesus, beheaded!

This is the last group of saints that will sit on thrones and reign with Christ in His Kingdom.

Now the Greek word for “**beheaded**” can mean exactly that but it can also mean any kind of execution, it has a much broader meaning than just beheaded although I believe that may be how some are martyred.

Remember that these are the souls we saw under the altar, put to death because they refused to renounce the Lord and bow the knee to the Antichrist.

It is as Paul told Timothy, “**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**” II Timothy 3:12.

This is happening today, but this persecution and martyrdom will reach its climax in the Tribulation Period as millions of saints will be put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ and now, they will be rewarded for their faithfulness as they reign with the Lord for 1,000 years!

Now there are others who will reign with Christ besides these martyred Tribulation Saints.

In Daniel 7:27 the Lord promised the *Old Testament saints* that they will also reign in the Millennial Kingdom, “**Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him.**”

Jesus made this promise to the Apostles in Matthew 19:28, “**Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**”

Also, there are *New Testament saints* who are also promised to reign with the Lord in His Kingdom as we are told in I Corinthians 6:2, “**Do you not know that the saints will judge the world . . .**”

Also, in II Timothy 2:12 we are told, **“If we endure, We shall also reign with Him . . .”**

And Jesus tells us in Revelation 2:26, **“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.”**

In Revelation 3:21 we are told, **“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”**

And in Revelation 5:10 we are told, **“And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”**

Thus, in the Kingdom Age we will see Old Testament Saints, the Apostles, New Testament Saints and these martyred Tribulation Saints ruling and reigning with the Lord!

VERSES 5-6

John starts out by speaking of the dead and that they did not live again until after the thousand-year reign of Christ.

Who are the dead that John is speaking of here?

He is speaking of all the unbelieving dead throughout the ages!

You see, John just got done speaking of the Tribulation Saints and how they will reign with the Lord and then he says, **“But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”** And this has to be speaking of unbelievers here.

You see, they are waiting in Hades or Sheol until the final judgment, which will take place after the Millennial Reign of Christ.

And as we read on, we are told that **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power. . .”** Revelation 20:6.

How can Revelation 20:5 speak of a judgment of unbelievers with the first resurrection and here in Revelation 20:6 this first resurrection speaks of a blessing?

We have to remember both believers and unbelievers will be raised from the dead, they will get resurrection bodies. Some to everlasting life and some to everlasting separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

So yes, here in Revelation 20:5 it is speaking of these unbelievers being raised from Hades or Sheol to come before the Lord at the Great White Throne judgment and we will deal with that more as we move on.

Let me say this. For believers, this first resurrection is not speaking of a specific point in time but rather a period of time that began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ as Paul tells us in I Corinthians chapter 15, **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”** I Corinthians 15:20-23.

Thus, this includes believers who died before the Rapture and those who were caught up to be with the Lord in the Rapture.

Paul put it like this in I Thessalonians chapter 4, **“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. . . . Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”** I Thessalonians 4:14,17.

It also includes those who were martyred for their faith in Jesus during the Tribulation Period as we saw in Revelation 20:4, **“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”**

And it also includes the Old Testament Saints who believed in the coming of the Messiah but died before He came.

So the first resurrection includes believers throughout the ages! All true believers whether they are Old Testament saints; New Testament saints or Tribulation saints will be part of the first resurrection.

Now what about this second resurrection or death, what is that all about?

In John 5:28-29 Jesus speaks of two resurrections. He said, **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”**

These two events are separated by a period of time and the second resurrection or this second death speaks of eternal separation from God, and we will deal with this more as we finish up our study tonight looking at the Great White Throne Judgment!

All unbelievers will be a part of the second death.

Let me explain it like this. If you are born once, you will die twice. But, if you are born twice, you will die once.

What do I mean by that?

Simple.

If you are born into this world and have not come and received the gift of life, you will die a physical death and you are spiritually dead, causing you to be eternally separated from God.

If you are born twice, that is born into this world, physical birth and born again, spiritual birth, you will only die once and that is a physical death! There is the blessing!

VERSES 7-9

Here is a question I will throw out to you after you have heard what John tells us here in Revelation 20:7-9. ***“Why in the world does God let Satan out of the prison he was locked in for a thousand years, and probably his demons with him, and cause this paradise that man was living in to become violent again as we see this rebellion against God?”***

It is a great question, and the answer is simple when you think about it. The reason being is that there will be millions upon millions of people born during the Kingdom Age who have never had a chance to make a choice between the Lord and Satan, the only two choices there are.

Man’s heart is evil, and we see that here. Yes, outwardly they were pretending to love the Lord but when they had a choice to make, they went with Satan!

It is like the story of a father and his three-year-old son who disobeyed his father. And the father placed him in the corner and told him to sit down. But the boy stood defiantly. This went on three times before the father went over and placed his hands on the boy’s shoulders and gently forced him to sit down.

And under his breath the little boy responded, ***“I may be sitting down on the outside, but I am standing on the inside!”***

That is the heart of man and when a choice is given, many will turn from the Lord!

You see, without a choice, there is no love involved! And God wants a love relationship with Him!

And what does Satan do as he is released from this prison? He immediately begins to deceive people!

He has had one-thousand years to work on it and he gets many to believe his lies once again.

Man is so quick to blame others for his failures, his problems, like *“The Devil made me do it!”* or *“I am a product of my environment!”* or whatever.

But, as Hoste said, *“It will be proved once more that man, whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and new birth, remains a heart only evil and at enmity with God.”*

How true that is. Man’s heart is evil and only God can change that!

John MacArthur puts it like this. He wrote,

When Satan is loosed, he will provide the cohesive supernatural leadership needed to bring to the surface all the latent sin and rebellion left in the universe. He will pull together all the rebels, revealing the true character and intent of those Christ-rejecting sinners and making it evident that God’s judgment of them is just.

Satan’s desperate wickedness and violent hatred of God and Christ will not be altered by his thousand years of imprisonment in the abyss. When he is released, he will immediately set about fomenting [inciting] his final act of rebellion.

- John MacArthur

How long will this rebellion last?

I don't believe the rebellion will last a very long time, but he will quickly gather his people, those who have now rejected Jesus from all over the world, even though they have been with the Lord for a long time, and they will come against the Lord.

Now that phrase, "**the four corners of the earth**" is speaking of the entire world, it is not saying that the earth is flat!

And here John calls this group of people "**Gog and Magog**". Folks, this is not the same group of nations, Russia and her Muslim allies that come down against Israel prior to the start of the Tribulation Period, spoken of in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39.

I believe that John is using it symbolically, speaking of man's rebellion against God that is seen in what Gog and Magog did!

Let me give you an example and I think you will see what I mean.

Most of you have heard of Waterloo, it historically speaks of Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, Belgium.

But it also speaks symbolically of any great defeat, "***That person has met his Waterloo!***" you might say.

And notice what they do. They gather together and circle the saints of God in the Beloved City, Jerusalem.

We can read of Jerusalem being the place where the Lord will reign from in Isaiah chapter 2, beginning in verse 2, which says **“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”** Isaiah 2:2-4.

Now as these people circle the city, think about this, what did these saints of God do to cause these people to come against them to destroy them?

Absolutely nothing except they lived a life that was pleasing to God. And because of that, the darkness does not like the light, and they try to put it out, extinguish it.

And as they prepare to destroy the saints of God, the judgment of God comes upon them swiftly and without discussion, destroying them with fire.

Satan’s forces will be physically killed, and their souls will go into Hades, the temporary place of incarceration for the unbelieving dead where they will await their final sentencing to eternal hell, which will take place shortly. (Revelation 20:11-15)

If these people only could see their future living apart from God before they made the wrong choice.

But God did warn them, and I am sure they will regret their choice and they will have an eternity to think about it.

Can you imagine living with the Lord for one-thousand years, seeing only His goodness, and then turning against Him? How foolish! Man was offered deliverance and they rejected it.

And people are no different today, God extends His hand of forgiveness, and they reject Him and try to silence the saints of God. And they will not win!

VERSE 10

Finally, the Devil is done; he is cast into the Lake of Fire along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet who have been there for one-thousand years already!

Now I do realize some people have a hard time believing in eternal punishment and they hold onto the false idea of the annihilation of the wicked, that they just cease to exist.

Nice thought but it is wrong.

Do you know in the Greek when it says that they will be “**tormented day and night forever and ever**” what it means?

It means that they will be “**tormented day and night forever and ever,**” they will experience eternal pain and suffering! You see, the words mean exactly what they say.

Walvoord puts it like this. He wrote,

There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than here in mentioning both day and night and the expression “forever and ever,” literally “to the ages of ages.”

- John Walvoord

Now I do understand that some people and probably many people laugh at the idea of Hell or eternal punishment, like it is some kind of joke, that it is not real.

Folks, Jesus spoke more about Hell and punishment than anyone else in the Scriptures.

And think about it. If it was not real, why did Jesus waste so much time talking about it?

He wouldn't!

In Mark chapter 9 Jesus is warning people of what is ahead for those who reject Him, those who go down this destructive path to Gehenna, the Lake of Fire or outer darkness.

In Mark 9:44 Jesus said it is a place, "**where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'**"

As you read that it doesn't sound too good, and it is not good.

And this is what I believe Jesus is trying to illustrate for us. The word for "**worm**" is maggots. Thus, you have been given this eternal body and these maggots will feed on you for eternity!

Not only that, but your eternal body will be fuel for the fire, but you will never be consumed!

I know what you're thinking, that is gross, that is shocking!

Guess what? That is exactly the point that Jesus is trying to make here.

Why have eternal life apart from Him in the Lake of Fire when you can have eternal life with Him, abundant life that is only found in Jesus!

As we read on, in the last five verses of this chapter we will be looking at the Great White Throne Judgment.

This judgment will take place after Satan is bound, after the Millennial Kingdom, after Satan is loosed for a season and the Lord for good puts down his rebellion and he is cast into the Lake of Fire.

And it would seem that this judgment takes place prior to the Lord destroying the heavens and the earth and creating a new heaven and a new earth that are eternal and we will see that as we get into Revelation chapter 21 next time.

In this judgment, as we will see, all the wicked will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire, Gehenna or outer darkness for eternity!

This is the second death!

VERSE 11

Here we see The Great White Throne Judgment. And who is doing the judging here? I believe it is Jesus who will be the Judge.

In John 5:22-30 we are told, **“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”**

This judgment will be fair, it will be just, it will be righteous, there will be no arguments by the guilty as they bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords!

One more point before we move on, and this is important for us to understand. This judgment is not for believers, it is not for Christians but for unbelievers!

Why is that?

Because our sins have already been judged as Jesus bore our sins on the cross of Calvary. We don't necessarily escape God's judgment, we have it satisfied in Jesus by receiving Him as Lord and Savior and as we do His blood cleanses us from all our sins.

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

But we do need to remember that we as Christians will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Bema Seat of Christ.

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:10, **“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”**

This is not a judgment for salvation or punishment but one of rewards. The Lord will not only look at what we have done in this life but also, He will judge what the motives behind our actions were. We are told in I Corinthians 3:12-15, **“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”**

You see, it is not for punishment, but rewards and folks, some of the things we have done with the wrong motives will be burned in the fire, we will lose our reward, but not our salvation!

Notice how this judgment for unbelievers will encompass everyone who has rejected Jesus!

VERSES 12-15

Here we see all the dead who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior move from Hades in the Greek and Sheol is the Hebrew word, and they will stand before Jesus who is sitting on the throne of judgment.

You see, at this point, when you are dead; stature, power, influence, wealth means absolutely nothing! You have rejected Jesus and thus, you will face the judgment!

Now John speaks of two books, the book of life and then another book, which seems to contain multiple volumes, and I believe it is a book of man's sins.

The book of life speaks of all those who have come to Jesus Christ, their names are written in the book of life.

Thus, those whose names have not been found in the book of life have already been judged.

Notice what Jesus says as He speaks of judgment because "**of sin, because they do not believe in Me.**" John 16:9.

Their sin is their rejection of Jesus and thus, they have been judged already.

Jesus again spoke of this in John 3:18, which says "**He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"

This book of life may correspond to the registry of citizens that was kept by ancient cities, that is the picture I believe.

You see, whenever a child was born, their names were written in the official registry of that city. They were recognized as an official citizen of that town.

When they died, their names were blotted out showing that they were no longer a resident of that town!

Let me show you what this means here in Revelation. When a person is born their name is written in the Book of Life and you are on the list to be a citizen of heaven forever!

If you go through life rejecting Jesus and you die, your name is blotted out of the Book of Life, and you will enter into the Lake of Fire for eternity instead of with the Lord for eternity!

If you receive Jesus, then your name is written on the official registry of heaven where you will live forever as its official citizens.

You have the choice to make. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In the archives of the United States Supreme Court is the Record of George Wilson, a man sentenced to die by hanging for a crime he had committed. His case came before President Andrew Jackson, who granted Wilson a pardon.

To everyone's amazement, Wilson tore the pardon to shreds and threw it on the floor of his prison cell. The ensuing legal argument concerned the validity of a pardon that was refused, and the question arose as to whether or not Wilson should be freed or hanged.

After great deliberation, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled as follows: ***“A pardon is a writing, the value of which is dependent upon the acceptance by the individual for whom it is intended.”***

It was therefore decreed by the court that George Wilson be hanged until dead – not because a pardon was not offered, but because it was not accepted.

This is a perfect picture of the sinner who hears the gospel of Jesus Christ, knows that God has written a pardon for him, yet rejects Him and thus forfeits his right to the pardon. If you are without the Savior today, it is because you choose to be. Your choice to reject Jesus Christ automatically invalidates your pardon and sentences you to the lake of fire.

Each of us is confronted with a choice. We can admit we are sinners in need of a Savior and invite Christ into our lives, or we can choose to reject Him.

In either case we will live in eternity by our choice.

Those who have chosen to put their faith in Christ will rule and reign with Him during the millennial kingdom and then go into the eternal ages surrounding His throne. Those who reject Him will be cast into the lake of fire and separated from Him forever. As the apostle Paul put it: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

- Tim LaHaye, Bible Prophecy, What You Need to Know

That is exactly what choice man has and by rejecting the pardon that God has given man, he will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire for eternity!

Now, if that is true, then what is the Great White Throne Judgment all about? If they are already condemned, already judged because of their rejection of Jesus, why have this other judgment?

This judgment is more of a sentencing of the wicked for what they have done. John says **“... And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”** Revelation 20:12.

There is another book, and it will be opened, and all your sins will be seen, and judgment issued forth. Imagine having your life replayed for you - all the things you have done in your life.

Not an encouraging thought. It is as Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, **“For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”**

Every word, every thought, every intent will come before the wicked once again, and thus, there does seem to be degrees of punishment in Gehenna which is based on what the wicked have done and what they did with what God has given to them, what they know about Him. (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48)

You see, as we have seen, you are sent to Hell because of your rejection of Jesus Christ but at the Great White Throne Judgment, we see that the degree of punishment in Hell, in the Lake of Fire. It is based upon what you have done in this life.

The more sinful you were the more punishment you will endure.

But please understand this, even if you were the best person around, an outstanding citizen, apart from Christ you will face eternal judgment and there is no end to that for the payment will never be met!

It is called outer darkness because apart from Christ, the Light of the world, there is only darkness!

Of this, John Phillips provocatively wrote,

There is a terrible fellowship there. . . . The dead, small and great, stand before God.

Dead souls are united to dead bodies in a fellowship of horror and despair. Little men and paltry [wretched] women whose lives were filled with pettiness, selfishness, and nasty little sins were drab and dowdy, mean, spiteful, peevish, groveling, vulgar, common, and cheap.

The great will be there, men who sinned with a high hand, with dash, and courage and flair.

Men like Alexander and Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin will be present, men who went for wickedness on a grand scale with the world for their stage and who died unrepentant at last.

Now one and all are arraigned and on their way to be damned: a horrible fellowship congregated together for the first and last time.

- John Phillips, Exploring Revelation, pp. 242-243

And finally, death and Hades were done away with, cast into the Lake of Fire.

What does that mean?

It means that there will be no more death, all the saved will enter into eternity with the Lord.

Hades, the holding tank for the wicked until the Great White Throne Judgment, will be emptied and the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire, so there will be no need for this place any longer, a place that was created for Satan and his demons, according to Matthew 25:41, and it is also used, because of man's rebellion, as a place of incarceration for those who have rejected Christ.

Thus, this second death is complete, final, there is no second chance.

Anyone whose name is not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire, eternally separated from God.

And in reality, it all comes down to this. Do you want a fair trial then or a complete pardon now!

The fair trial will send you to Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, for you are guilty before God.

But if you come to Jesus, you can be assured of your salvation, and you will be cleansed of your sins.

You doubt that you can be assured of your salvation?

Listen carefully to what Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”** (Also, I John 5:13)

Like I have said. When you think of this second death or this second resurrection, think of it like this.

If you are born once, you will die twice.

If you are born twice, you will only die once!

Again, what that means is if you are not born again or born twice, physical and spiritual birth, you will die twice. You will not only die physically but spiritually as you spend eternity in judgment.

But, if you are born twice, you will only die once, physical death because you will enter into eternity with the Lord!

It is as Alford said, *“As there is a second and higher life, there is also a second and deeper death. And as after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life.”*

And Trapp makes these points as he tells us, *“The Devil and the damned have punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor [help], crying without comfort, mischief without measure, torments without end and past imagination.”*

As I close tonight let me leave you with this to think about.

God gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked. His desire is that all would come to know Him and enter into eternal life with Him, but He will not force anyone to come.

Thus, His call is that of an invitation, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** Matthew 11:28-30.

If you don't know Him, won't you come and enter into life with Him enjoying the fruits of that first resurrection and not experience that second death?

Remember, if you are born once you will die twice, but if you are born twice, you will only die once!