

1,000 Years of Peace



The Final Judgment

16 in a series

Introduction

The Steven Spielberg movie “Schindler’s List” is very uncomfortable viewing. It’s a film about the survival of a community of Jewish people in Nazi Germany during World War II and how their benefactor, Oscar Schindler, was a most unlikely hero. A Jewish community was saved from a concentration camp or death itself because their names were written on Schindler’s list.

The famous director, Steven Spielberg, shot the film in black and white to symbolize the Holocaust as being “life without light”. The only character in the movie who had any colour was a little girl in a red coat. In the movie, this young girl is allowed to walk amongst the chaos of the war and witness the horrors of the destruction. She goes unhindered because the Nazis felt that they would not be held to account for their horrible crimes to innocent people. The soldiers in this film were guilty of incredible sin toward these helpless people but believed they would never have to face any future judgment.

The book of Revelation tells quite a different but true story. It says that at the return of Christ everyone will have to give an account of their actions throughout their life. Only those who have accepted Christ and experienced His forgiveness for their sins will be excluded from the condemnation of the judgment. In the closing chapters of Revelation, a spiritual judgment is explained and what it means to those who have chosen to reject the generous offer of God’s free grace. On the positive side, it also reveals the abundant reward of the truly faithful.

The real hero of Revelation is none other than Jesus Christ. He came willingly to rescue a lost world. We who believe have a powerful and real hope. The reason for this is because our names are written on the list. This list is the “Book of Life”.

Overview for Session #16

- 1. The Return of Christ (Revelation 19:19-21)**
- 2. The Resurrection of the Righteous (Revelation 20:1-6)**
- 3. The 1,000 Years and Satan’s Last Stand (Revelation 20:7-10)**
- 4. The Death of Death (Revelation 20:11-15)**

1. The Return of Christ

In our previous lesson we observed the wonderful promise of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to planet Earth. Here are some important characteristics of this promise:

- It is a promise from the lips of Jesus Himself (see Revelation 1:8 John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)
- It is a literal event.
- It is a truly visible event for the whole world (see Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:27)

In Revelation 19: 11-16 we saw the return of Christ depicted as a mighty King riding on a white horse. This imagery is symbolic of Jesus's ultimate victory over Satan through His triumphant return to this world.

Question 1: What does the Second Coming of Jesus mean to you personally?

As we read the concluding verses of Revelation 19 (verses 19-21) we see the destruction of a number of key adversaries of Jesus which occurs at His second coming: **Revelation 19:19-21** *19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*



At the return of Christ, we see the destruction of two of the three figures that formed the satanic coalition the Revelation called “Babylon”. We have studied these entities closely in previous lessons: The two entities judged and destroyed at Christ’s second coming are: i. the Sea Beast of Rev. 13:1-10, and ii. the Land Beast of Rev. 13:11-18 (also known known as the “False Prophet”).

It’s important to highlight that *“the lake of fire burning with brimstone”* (Rev. 19:20) is a metaphorical expression describing complete destruction and shouldn’t be seen as the Bible supporting the concept of an everlasting hell where people are tormented forever.

Also, note it’s only the beast and the false prophet who are thrown into the lake of fire but the followers of Babylon die in another manner (Rev. 19:21). The reason for this different manner of death is that those who’ve rejected God will be raised from the dead in the “second resurrection” for their final judgment (Rev. 20:5 and also 20:7-9)

2. The Resurrection of the Righteous

The Second Coming of Jesus begins a number of key aspects around God’s judgment revealed in Revelation Chapter 20.

The first event is “The Resurrection of the Righteous.

Revelation 20:1-6 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the *bottomless pit* and a great chain in his hand. *2* He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; *3* and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. *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. *5* But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. *6* Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

As we read this section of Revelation we notice a “Bottomless Pit” where Satan is chained or imprisoned for a thousand years (see verse 1 – some translations

refer to it as “The Abyss”). During this prolonged period of time Satan is judged by the righteous for the suffering and evil he has brought upon humanity (Rev. 20:4)

The Two Resurrections of Revelation

It surprises some to learn Revelation teaches there’s two resurrections:

The first resurrection: “...And they (the righteous) lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4)

It is obvious that the saved of God are especially privileged during this thousand-year period in that they not only live with Him, but also “reign” with Him.

The second resurrection: “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” (Revelation 20:5)

The millennium is bounded by two resurrections. The resurrection of the righteous is at the beginning of the millennium (Rev. 20:4), and the resurrection of the wicked is at the end (Rev. 20:5). Those in “The first resurrection” in this text refers to those who live and reign with Christ, mentioned in verses 4 and 6. Obviously, the righteous are with Christ during the millennium having been raised. Therefore, the “rest of the dead” refers to those who will be raised at the end of the 1,000 years – this is the second resurrection and is the resurrection of those who’ve rejected Christ.

Only those who take part in the first resurrection receive the reward of everlasting life. The “second death” (Revelation 20:6) that is permanent and eternal also points to a resurrection of the wicked at some point after Christ’s return.



Wicked destroyed at
Second Coming.

“...and to give you who are troubled rest with us WHEN THE LORD JESUS IS REVEALED from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire TAKING VENGEANCE ON THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thess. 1:7-8)

At Jesus’ Second Coming, the wicked are slain and remain dead until the end of the one thousand years.

Question 2: According to Revelation when do each of the two resurrections occur?

So we don't need to fear death. Jesus said death is a sleep, and is a timeless and dreamless sleep from which we will be awakened on the resurrection day when Christ returns (John 11:21-27)



Jesus raises Lazarus from the sleep of death.

These things He said, and after that He said to them, "OUR FRIEND LAZARUS SLEEPS, but I go that I may wake him up." Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. THEN JESUS SAID TO THEM PLAINLY, "LAZARUS IS DEAD". (John 11:11-14)

Here we find Jesus referring to the death of Lazarus as a sleep, This is not uncommon, for there are over 50 references in the Bible that call death a sleep.

Psalm 13:3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep THE SLEEP OF DEATH;

Question 3: According to Revelation when do the righteous of Christ wake up from the sleep of death?_____

3. Satan's Last Stand

The term "bottomless pit" or "abyss" comes from the Greek word 'Abussos', which means: a dark, waste, desolate region, a state of chaos. The same word from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament described the Earth before God created life - "without form and void". According to Revelation (Rev. 20:1-3, v7) this place of emptiness on earth is Satan's prison during the thousand years. The Earth is this empty and desolate place because the righteous have been taken to heaven and those who've rejected Christ have all died at Jesus' return.

Literal chains cannot bind a spirit being such as Satan; Satan is bound by a chain of circumstances. The saints are in Heaven, the wicked are dead, and therefore the devil has no person to tempt. He is bound to this Earth with nothing to do but reflect upon the results of his corrupt work.

Notice, however, that his deception is not yet over for when the thousand years are expired, he is set free for a short time (Rev. 20:7-9). This indicates the loosing of his chains as having people to tempt once again. He cannot deceive during the millennium because there is no person to tempt, but now, at the end of the thousand years and at the “second resurrection” of the wicked Satan continues to carry out his deceptions.

So, what is happening during the thousand years? The answer is Satan and his angels are bound on Earth while God’s saved are given authority to judge in Heaven.

The Apostle Paul writes about this dynamic in his first letter to the Corinthians:
“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

During the the thousand-year period described in Revelation 20, God allows His people to examine His decisions and actions. After this careful review by His creation the universe is satisfied that God’s judgments are just and worthy of praise.

Let us now look at the conclusion of the millennium period:

Revelation 20:7-10 *7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 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. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

Question 4: Who/what drives the wicked to wage a final war against God?

In this section of Revelation we see the release of Satan, the resurrection of the wicked, and the return of the righteous in the Holy City (see Revelation 21:1-5 – *an important dynamic to keep in mind is that Revelation has been written “topically” and not “chronologically”, so in Revelation 20:7-15 it deals with the judgment of the wicked before moving onto the reward of the righteous in chapter 21*).

The “second resurrection” (that is, the resurrection of the lost) has now taken place and Satan attempts to once again deceive the nations (Rev. 20:8). He encourages them to ‘make war’ against the saved of God and take the holy city by force and secure the reward of eternal life despite having rejected Christ’s offer. What an incredible scene this is – **everyone who has ever lived on Earth is alive at this moment in time.**

These actions demonstrates to the universe that even if God had given the wicked another opportunity they still would reject His grace. As they prepare for a takeover, God steps into the picture and destroys them with fire (Rev. 20:9).



*“The DEVIL, WHO DECEIVED THEM, WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE.”
(Revelation 20:10)*

Not only are the wicked consumed but the devil himself and his associates are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

Sin and selfishness are destroyed forever along with those who’ve chosen to reject Christ - and they are great in number; like the sand on the seashore (Rev. 20:8). Jesus foretold that most of humanity would choose the “broad road which leads to destruction” rather than “the straight and narrow way” which leads to eternal life (see Matthew 7:13-14)

Question 5: How do you feel about personally being at this “battle” after Christ’s return? _____

As Revelation describes God stepping into the picture and destroying the rebellious with fire – we see a very difficult action for a loving Creator. The Lord would have saved every person if it were possible. Jesus died for all. Yet it would seem God is actually being merciful by destroying the wicked since they would not have been happy in the “New Jerusalem” of Heaven under God’s governance. This final ‘showdown’ (Rev. 20:9) shows the actions of the wicked at their resurrection; they are still not repentant and it reveals that even if God gave them another chance they would still oppose Him and the principles of His kingdom.



The Biblical Definition of Hell

What does it mean to be “tormented forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Does this mean an everlasting life of torture and hell-fire? The short answer is: No. Jesus said plainly that the righteous would not perish which means that the wicked would: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

Here are some other Bible texts to consider on the subject of “Hell”:

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched.

At first glance, it appears that this fire will burn forever but the text does not say this. It says *the fire shall not be quenched*. To quench simply means to ‘put out’. So Jesus is saying that the fire will not be put out. When God starts the fire, it will not be put out by anyone but when the fire has consumed the material fed to it, then it will go out by itself.

Jeremiah 17:27 But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

Jerusalem was eventually destroyed by fire (2 Chronicles 36:19) and it is described as unquenchable fire. The truth is that it could not be quenched while it had its work of destruction to do. However, it did go out when there was nothing more to burn because quite obviously it is not burning today.

Matthew 25:41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

In Malachi 4, it states that the wicked will be reduced to ashes. What does Jesus mean then by the term ‘everlasting fire’? It can mean either a fire that will never go out, or it can describe the RESULTS of such a fire. The meaning of Christ’s words becomes clear as we look at the following biblical text.

Jude 7 As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire many thousands of years ago (Genesis 18 – 19), yet this text calls the fires of destruction ‘eternal fire’. Are these fires burning today? Of course not. Everlasting fire simply means that the fire is eternal in its **results**. The everlasting fire at the end of time will destroy the wicked for all time just as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

Question 6: Can you see the importance of comparing Scriptures to arrive at truth?

Matthew 25:46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Notice Jesus did not say everlasting ‘PUNISHING’, but everlasting ‘PUNISHMENT’. “Punishing” is continuous, but “punishment” can end and still be effective forever.

So, what form of punishment is Jesus referring to here? The Apostle Paul has an answer when he says in Romans 6:23 says that the wages (or punishment) for sin is death. Paul also says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 that the punishment of the wicked is ‘everlasting destruction’. Therefore, it seems the results of rejecting Christ is a death that will never be awoken from. **This is the “second death” that Revelation 20:6 is referring to.**

4. The Death of Death

Let's turn our attention to the final section of our lesson:

Revelation 20:11-15 *11 Then 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. 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. 13 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. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

From this moment on death becomes non-existent and will never be experienced again (compare with Revelation 21:4). For everyone who has experienced the pain of losing someone they love to death this promise is incredibly comforting. Eternity with Christ is a time of unending joy and happiness.

The death of death is a funeral everyone should look forward to attending with excitement and anticipation. That's why Revelation's conclusion includes the words "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

Question 7: Is it your choice to be safe on the inside of the Holy City at the final judgment because of your faith in Christ?
