

The Final Accounting

Revelation 20

Yes, your life has a purpose. The course of it has eternal meaning. Fame or fortune in this doomed world is of no consequence, but in eternity, what you have used your life and gifting for will count more than you could ever imagine. In studying the Revelation, we have covered the entire age of the seven churches and the 70th week of Daniel's extraordinary prophecy – the tribulation. All of that is behind us now, and before us are virtually indescribable events that will propel us into eternity.

Will you live your faith? Will you die for it? Does that matter?

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 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. It is not Jesus, nor is it even Michael the archangel who is sent to deal with Satan. It is a nameless angel. The point being

that Satan is not some super angel. He is roughly chained and cast into the bottomless pit by this nameless agent.

What does sin do to us? It destroys. It rots away the very fabric of our being. The wages of it is death. Do you suppose it is different for Satan? He has been rotting and decaying for who knows how long under its influence. At one point he was “the anointed cherub who covers”. He was “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Eze 28:14,12). But his end is pathetic and weak. He is known as the dragon, the serpent of old, the devil and Satan.

Consider this, the dragon is extinct. As a species, we see its creation in Genesis chapter one – the tanniyn, poorly translated as whale or sea creature but better understood as dragon or even dinosaur. The serpent of old is cursed. Old means original and this cursing is in Genesis 3:14. The devil is “the false accuser or slanderer” and Satan means to oppose or attack or accuse. This says it all doesn't it. Ultimately, Satan will be extinct; he is cursed; his slandering, accusations and opposition will be gone forever. Here, he is shut up for 1000 years until his brief release after the millennium.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Here we have some non-descript people – they and them – sitting on thrones with the responsibility of judgment being committed to them. Who are they?

Because of what follows in the next verse, they are not likely those who came to faith in Jesus during the tribulation and as a consequence were beheaded. Therefore, it seems that they are those who were saved before the Tribulation.

Paul may have been referring to this when he wrote 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?” (1 Cor 6:2,3) for although we've seen the devil, the whore, the antichrist and the false prophet dealt with, there are yet many demons and the hard-hearted who must be judged. Perhaps they among those whose names are not written in the Book of Life.

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 now, we see the tribulation saints. They too, are blessed to live and reign with Christ specifically during the millennium.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. This verse tells us that there is a first resurrection and a second that comes after the

thousand years and is for “the rest of the dead”.

The first resurrection, however, is not a single event. It has three parts. In 1 Cor 15 we read:

But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits 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. (v20-23) Bear in mind that this scripture is written specifically to the church, thus “His coming” is not His second coming to the Hebrews.

Part one of the first resurrection is Jesus Himself. Part two is the resurrection of the dead just preceding the rapture when Jesus comes to the clouds to take us home. 1 Cor 15 continues, *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (v 51,52)* And 1 Thes 4 adds, *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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. (v15-17)

It is the “dead in Christ” at the time of the rapture who are part two of the first resurrection. Part three would then apply to all those who come to saving faith in Jesus after the rapture during the tribulation.

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. Here we learn of a second death. It is called perdition and is forever.

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. Now, why will the Lord allow Satan to deceive the nations again?

The nations will have enjoyed 1000 years of peace, a near perfect environment, excellent health and a righteous government. These people are those who survived the tribulation and their descendants, so you already know their temperament. Under Satan’s rule, they refused to submit to God in spite of all the judgments which befell them.

They are not saved by faith, only submitted by force. Their hearts are still as dark as ever and at the

first opportunity, they yield to the persuasion of the devil.

There is no substitute for salvation. No amount of coddling in a perfect environment, no societal improvements, no absence of outside evil forces will ever cause a darkened heart to love the light. This is exactly what the millennium will prove to all the cosmos. Its lessons apply to men and demons.

Don’t confuse the gathering of the nations here with the pre-millennial war of Gog/Magog. Though Gog/Magog will be in the lead, that war has very specific allied forces which come against Israel, and the defense which God will provide is also very specific including causing the enemy forces to turn on each other and sending huge earthquakes. This gathering after the millennium is of all nations, and there is actually no war for God simply devours them all with fire out of heaven.

This verse says the numbers of the enemies of Christ are as the “sands of the sea” which we learned earlier not only speaks of enormous quantities but is typical of the faithful seed of Abraham. With all the death and destruction during the tribulation, this indicates that the children of evil propagate quite well, but notice there’s no mention whatsoever of anyone getting saved. The number of the evil hearted becomes as the sands of the sea, but the condition of their souls will not. It will remain yet dark.

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. In Ezekiel chapters 47 and 48, the boundaries of the camp of Israel during the millennium are given. The camp of the saints is possibly that of the remnant of Israel who “endured unto the end” of the tribulation, or it could be a camp given to the resurrected saints. This final rebellion though is centered around Jerusalem, the beloved city which will be called “The Lord is There”. The breadth of the earth means the wide part of Israel so it seems that they will attack from the east, crossing the Jordan as the host of Israel did under Joshua (but remember, they did it on dry land).

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. Notice that there really is no battle. The armies gather against the Lord and He just BOOM annihilates them. Then the devil is finally finished; he is forever cast into perdition.

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. White here is really bright or brilliant so this is God’s brilliant throne. Now, it time for a clean slate. The evil and hard-hearted entities have been dealt with but the creation, the heaven (the sky) and the earth are polluted in every way. Apparently, they

simply disappear in an atomic fireball and are no more. Peter wrote of this:

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. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet 3:10-13)

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. Yes, there has always been a great accounting of everyone’s deeds and words. Jesus, while speaking to the scribes and Pharisees said, A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by

your words you will be condemned. (Mat 12:35-37)

Words and deeds are all most of these people have to be judged by – they either rejected or were ignorant of grace. Notice I said most. It's quite interesting that the Book of Life is brought out as well as the books of men's words and deeds. It is evident from this and the following passage that some of these people are in the Book of Life. Though I can't be adamant, I think it is possible that this is what was spoken to Daniel who was learning of the conclusion of the tribulation and the promises of God to his people was told:

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt....But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” (Dan 12:2:13)

Those who had sincere faith in God before the coming of Christ may be the reason the Book of Life is brought out here. It may also apply to those who never had a chance to hear and respond to the gospel. Whatever the case may be, we know that God is just and merciful. Paul wrote, *Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,”* (2 Tim 2:29)

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. Here is another group of the dead – those in the sea and Death and Hades. The sea may again imply the dead of the gentile nations, or may indicate those who are unknown, or may be a literal reference to those lost at sea. Death is the word defined by the lexicon as follows, “since the nether world, the abode of the dead, was conceived as being very dark, it is equivalent to the region of thickest darkness i.e. figuratively, a region enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and sin.” Hades is another place. In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits. Usually Hades is just the abode of the wicked, Luk 16:23, Rev 20:13, 14; a very uncomfortable place.

Evidently, there is a separate judgment for these people. Perhaps because it is referring to the gentile nations whereas the first group of the dead who seemed to require the Book of Life to be opened may be the Hebrews. After this, Death and Hades themselves are cast into perdition which is called the second death. Recall, those who have had part in the first resurrection have nothing to fear from perdition, but those who are not found in the Book of Life do indeed. Thus, no one is left outside of perdition who is not found in this ultra important Book.