

## **Revelation: Judgment**

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Today we continue studying the book of Revelation, and we're going to be looking at judgment. The judgment comes in two main ways. One is what we sometimes call the end of the world or the end of the age. The other other is judgment day, when each person is called to account in the presence of God. So we'll look at those two things in Revelation 20:7-15.

Revelation 20:7 begins with the judgment that comes upon the devil himself as he marshals all of his forces and his last might against the power of God: "When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 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. 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. 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" (Revelation 20:7-10).

### **Gog and Magog**

In reading about the great final judgment on the devil, we read about Gog and Magog. What in the world is that? If you haven't read the whole Bible or don't remember certain things, Gog and Magog may not make any sense at all to you. But Revelation 20 is echoing a prophecy from Ezekiel 38 and 39 where it speaks of Gog, an evil ruler, and of the land that he rules, Magog. We're going to look at just a little bit of what it says there about Gog and Magog, these mysterious powers:

"Set your face against Gog of the land of Magog... I am against you, Gog. I will bring you out with your whole army." So it's not just the devil who's bringing out Gog and Magog. God is also bringing them out or luring them out: "I will bring you out with your whole army... the many nations with you... In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. In my blazing wrath I declare, on that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. All the people who are on the face of the earth shall quake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down. I will rain upon Gog and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him hailstones, fire, and sulfur. So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. I will give you to the birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured" (Ezekiel 38–39).

That prophecy in Ezekiel speaks of these forces of Gog and Magog and all of the nations and of the terrible judgments that come upon them. When you read through the book of Revelation you find similar judgments being described in a variety of visions throughout the book, and then all coming together in this final vision in which the devil himself is the target.

## Same end, 7 visions

- Sixth seal (6:12-17)
- Seventh trumpet (11:15-19)
- Harvest of the earth (14:14-20)
- Sixth and seventh bowls (16:14-21)
- Babylon burned (17:1-18:24)
- Rider versus beast (19:11-21)
- Satan and Gog (20:7-10)

When we read these judgments in the book of Revelation, they are speaking largely of the same end of the world. There are different visions of the same end, and they give different angles on that end. At first you'll just see a great judgment of the earth. Then when you hear of the dragon and the beast and the false prophet and of Babylon, you get some visions dealing with each of them. They're mentioned as first dragon, then beast, then false prophet, then Babylon. When the judgment is described more specifically in the visions, the order is reversed: first we see judgment on Babylon, then the judgment on beast and false prophet, and the judgment on the devil himself.

Don't think of these different visions as all separated by vast periods of time. The judgment visions are of things that are happening at roughly the same time, at the end of the world. It is like a movie that shows the same battle but focuses first on one part of the battle, then another, with different camera angles on what is happening. In seven different visions in Revelation, it's the same basic end being pictured.

Let's highlight the seven visions: the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet, the harvest of the earth picturing Christ and angels with a sickle, the sixth and seventh bowls of God's wrath describe the end of the world, the burning of Babylon, the rider on the white horse who comes and punishes the beast, and then this final vision of judgment on Gog and Satan himself.

Satan, in a sense, disappears from Revelation for much of the second half of the book. The dragon appears in chapter 12, but then for a lot of the book it's the dragon's henchmen who you see—the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon the prostitute. As you get near the end of the book, you might wonder, "What about the dragon?" Revelation 20 focuses the camera on what will happen to the dragon in the last battle at the end of the world.

Let's look at snippets of each of those visions. One of the things I want to highlight is that the judgment that comes against Gog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is echoed in all of these visions of judgment in Revelation. There are some who think that these refer to very different events, sometimes separated by a thousand years. For instance, in this view the rider judging the beast and the false prophet would happen a thousand years before the devil is judged. I think it's more accurate to understand it as the same event with different angles on that same event. Because when you read about the judgment of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel, the judgments are going to sound an awful lot like what's described in these various visions in Revelation. But we know that Gog and Magog will be judged when the devil is judged. So I think that all these judgments are describing the same battle, the same end of the world.

The **sixth seal** is opened: "There was a great earthquake." Does that sound familiar? "The sun turned black and the stars in the sky fell to earth. The sky receded like a scroll. They called to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb'" (Revelation 6:12-16).

When the **seventh trumpet** is sounded, it says, "The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants" (Revelation 11:18). So the judgment of the dead actually comes at the great white throne at the end of Revelation 20, but it also comes here in Revelation 11. It's the same end, different vision: "The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants and for destroying those who destroy the earth." "And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm" (Revelation 11:18-19).

**The harvest of the earth** comes: "The hour of his judgment has come. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great" (Revelation 14:7-8). Actually, almost nothing has been said about Babylon the Great up to this point in Revelation. You hear the fall of Babylon declared before you even get the visions of the prostitute Babylon and of the fall of Babylon. "If anyone worships the beast, they will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever" (Revelation 14:9-11).

Then when **the sixth bowl** of God's wrath is poured out, Revelation speaks of things looking like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon and the beast and the false prophet: "These are demonic spirits performing signs who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon" (Revelation 16:13-16). And when they gather at Armageddon, what happens? **The seventh bowl** gets poured out. "A loud voice from the throne said, 'It is done.' And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been... and no mountains were to be found. And great hailstones... fell from heaven on people" (Revelation 16:17-21).

These tremendous visions of the end of the world as we know it all seem to echo each other and go back to that vision from Ezekiel and similar Old Testament predictions.

Then when **Babylon falls**, the wicked begin to devour themselves. "The beast hates the prostitute." The evil ruler, Gog, or the beast, hates Babylon, the civilization. "They will burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose" (Revelation 17:16-17). "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. She has become a dwelling place for demons. She will be burned up with fire, for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her" (Revelation 18:2, 8).

Then the camera shifts from the destruction of Babylon to what happens to **the beast and the false prophet**. We've already had some hints, but now the camera zooms in on them in Revelation 19: "I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war" (Revelation 19:11). "I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were

killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh" (Revelation 19:19-21). Revelation goes on in some detail about the feasting on the dead bodies, just as Ezekiel does. There's this terrible judgment, and that's what becomes of the beast and the false prophet.

You remember earlier when I was speaking about the enemies of God—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—I asked the question: what is the most important fact to know about the beast, or the antichrist, or the man of sin, or Gog, or whatever you want to call him? The most important fact is this: **he loses!**

Revelation 19 describes the coming of the rider on the white horse, Jesus Christ. When that happens, the beast and the false prophet are finished. In this vision of Christ returning as that dazzling rider on the white horse, we sometimes speak of "the battle of Armageddon." I'm not sure we ought to call it a battle. The beast and his armies show up at Armageddon, then the rider shows up at Armageddon, and there isn't much of a battle. The "battle" is an instant wipeout.

Did you ever read John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*? Milton describes a battle earlier in time where the forces of Satan and the rebel angels are battling against the angels of God. He's trying to portray what happened at the original fall into wickedness of the demons. The battle between good angels and bad angels goes on for a day, then for another day. But on the third day of the battle, God, instead of sending forth Michael and his angels, sends forth his Son. The enemy forces are put totally to flight in an instant. The poet adds, "He put forth not half his strength." That's the battle of Armageddon too. He put forth not half his strength. Jesus shows up, and his enemies are gone.

That's what happens when you get into direct battle against the unveiled power and majesty and might of the Lord. Jesus first came to us in his weakness and in his humility and in the season of grace. His church too lives under the banner of the cross and under the banner of suffering. But if God unleashes his full power and Christ displays his full glory, there is no "battle" at Armageddon. There is only total conquest.

Then the final vision or camera angle focuses in on **the dragon**: "When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 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. They surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them. 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" (Revelation 20:7-10).

So you have all of these different visions portraying the same end. You have the scene of what happens to Babylon, then what happens to the beast and the false prophet, and finally what happens to Satan. That's how the last three visions are arranged. As we saw, these terrible judgments described in Ezekiel and in Revelation are all the same. They're all the same judgments falling at roughly the same time. When you read in the book of Ezekiel, you'll find that all of these judgments are coming at the time Gog and Magog attack and the Lord comes in power.

Perhaps you hold a different view about the order and timing of these events. It's not mandatory to agree with my view or heresy to have different views on these things. Even so, I don't think it's accurate to say that the judgment on Gog and Magog comes a thousand years apart from the judgment on the beast and the false prophet. I believe it's the same end of the world portrayed with different visions.

When the dragon himself is leading those forces, the Bible does not speak of it as much of a battle. You have all of the events leading up to it and all the marshalling of forces and all of the strength of Satan gathered, but when actually the Lord shows up, it is obliteration of his enemies. There is no tussle or long struggle. When God puts forth his strength, all else flees.

Our God is a consuming fire. When the Bible says fire fell from heaven, it doesn't just mean that there's physical fire. It means that the one who is a consuming fire has showed up, and no wicked person can see him and live. No wicked person can stand in his presence. No demon, no evil power can resist when God puts forth his full strength and his glory.

### Enemies

- Prostitute = Babylon = Magog
- Beast = Gog = antichrist = lawless
- Earth beast = false prophet
- Dragon = Satan
- Nations, rulers, allies of evil
- **Threats always; unbound at end**

So just to flash back again to a previous message and think about the enemies of God, I want to try to make sense of how the book of Revelation and the rest of the Bible describe them.

When it speaks of the prostitute, it means Babylon. And when it speaks of Babylon, it also means Magog, the realm that is ruled by the wicked power. This is world civilization gathered in resistance and rebellion against God.

When it speaks of a final evil ruler, different terms are used, but it's referring to what the apostle Paul called the man of sin, or the man of lawlessness, or the lawless one. He can be described as the beast out of the sea. He can be described as Gog. He can sometimes be referred to more popularly as antichrist. But it's all referring to a very powerful political ruler.

The earth beast that first appears in Revelation 13 is also called the false prophet, a deceptive miracle-working power, or person, at the end of time who is working in league with the beast.

The dragon is "that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.that ancient serpent, the devil, who leads the whole world astray" (Revelation 12:9).

Joining with those enemies are the nations and rulers of the earth who choose to be allies of evil.

When the Bible speaks of these things in the book of Revelation and in the rest of Scripture, it's not doing so just to satisfy our curiosity about the end of the world, although it is important always to keep in mind the end of the world. When you get too attached to what's going on in this world or too tempted by its powers, remember that it ends, and that it's judged. But Revelation doesn't tell us these things just so that we can have our curiosity satisfied about how things play out at the very end. These threats are already at work in the world. Many antichrists have already gone out into the world (1 John 2:18; 4:3). Many beasts and persecutors are opposing the people of God right now. Babel has been there since the tower of Babel, and Babylon will still be there at the end--but not beyond the end. From Babel through the end of the final Babylon, there will always be this enemy civilization or civilizations arrayed against God and his ways. We need to know that these threats exist right in our own time and in our own situations.

### **Global attack**

- Fooled by Satan and demons
- Led by Gog/beast/lawless one and false prophet
- Enlists all nations worldwide
- Against saints' camp/ beloved city

God's enemies will gather and have full strength when Satan is released at the end, when the demonic powers have greater power to deceive, greater power to marshal all the forces on earth that are wicked and in rebellion against God, and marshal them against God's people and against the Lord himself.

When we read in Revelation 16 the description of how they gather for Armageddon, it sounds very similar to the gathering of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20. "Demonic spirits"—those frog-like things coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the false prophet, and the beast—"are demonic spirits performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (Revelation 16:14). That's how it's described just before they assemble at Armageddon.

How is it described in chapter 20? "Satan will be released from his prison 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" (Revelation 20:7-8). So when you look at what's happening with those enemy powers and this global attack against the people of God, one thing that's going on is that Satan and his demons have been released. The chain has been taken off, so to speak. The lid of the pit has been lifted, so to speak. Satan is dangerous in this age but is severely curtailed by the restraint that God has placed on him, but at the end that restraint is lifted.

Remember what God says in Ezekiel: "I am bringing you out" (Ezekiel 38:4). God is not lifting the restraint on Satan and evil power just so that they can release havoc on everything. God is letting Satan out for a final showdown, and it's not going to go well for Satan.

In this global attack, Satan has power to deceive the nations which he doesn't have now. You might think that the nations already seem to be pretty messed up. But Satan does not have them



all fooled at the same time and all on the same wavelength to do his will. At the end, we will deceive and mobilize all nations worldwide under the leadership of Gog (beast, lawless one) and the false prophet.

Satan gathers all his forces around the world against the camp of the saints, against the beloved city. Some take that to be literally Jerusalem or Israel. It's possible that the focus of attack would be there, but throughout the book of Revelation, "Israel" includes all of God's people from every tribe and language and people and nation. Nearly everything that is said about Israel in the Old Testament is said about the people from every nation who belong to Jesus in the book of Revelation. "He has made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God" (Revelation 5:10). Israel was the kingdom of priests in the Old Testament.

Some say, "I don't like that theology at all. It just casts Israel to the side." But it does no such thing. Israel is still at the center. Israel is still the root. This view is not casting Israel aside; it's bringing in the believers from all nations. Israel is still included and precious to God, and God has great plans for saving many Jews, as portrayed in Revelation 11. But that doesn't mean that everything now has to be focused just on Old Testament prophecies made to Israel. Those promises are broadened. It's not that Israel is excluded, but the promises are broadened to include believers from all nations. We are the children of Abraham as well. Everybody who has faith in Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, is a child of Abraham. Everybody who belongs to Jesus Christ is a kingdom and priests to serve our God.

This understanding of "the camp of the saints" and "the beloved city" means that the final attack will not just be against Jewish believers. It will be against all who honor Christ as Messiah.

### **Total defeat**

- An earthquake like no other
- God appears in holy might and wrath
- Hailstones and fire from heaven
- Bloody banquet for birds and beasts
- Defeat of beast at Armageddon = final defeat of Gog and Satan

What's the outcome for these enemies in their global attack? Total defeat.

Some of the details appear again and again in various visions: an earthquake like no other, where the mountains themselves are disintegrating and everything is going to pieces; God appearing in holy might and in wrath; hailstones—sometimes it seems like the hailstones might themselves be made of fire; hailstones, fire from heaven; a bloody banquet for birds and beasts. And in all of this, the defeat of the beast at Armageddon is also the final defeat that same day of Gog and of Satan.

Again, when you're reading the book of Revelation, the most important thing to remember is simply this: Jesus wins; Satan loses. All the powers of evil are obliterated. And that's what happens at the end of the world.

## **Millennium is now**

- Millennium = “last days,” the period between Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings.
- Jesus’ kingdom reign has already begun.
- Satan is already bound and cast down.
- Millions have already refused the beast.
- “First resurrection” has already happened for souls who reign with Christ in heaven.

To understand the time we're living in and the end that's coming, it's helpful to have a clear understanding of the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Jesus described in Revelation 20. That millennium is the same as "the last days," the period from the first coming of Jesus Christ to the second coming. Jesus’ kingdom reign has already begun. As Jesus himself said, "The kingdom of God is among you. If by the finger of God I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come" (Luke 17:21; Luke 11:20).

So Jesus’ reign has begun. Satan is already bound and limited. He cannot deceive the elect, and he cannot marshal all the nations at this point in time. He's bound and cast down. Millions are already refusing his temptations and the beastly powers that are out there. Many have already experienced the first resurrection: every soul that is with Jesus Christ is reigning with him in heaven right now.

## **End of the age**

- Satan released; Beast/Gog unleashed
- Loud, visible coming of King Jesus
- Our bodies glorified; fly to meet him
- Earth and sky undone; enemies perish
- Final judgment of living and dead
- Satan and his allies cast into hell
- Heaven comes to remade earth

The millenniu, this period that lasts from Jesus’ first coming to Jesus’ second coming does eventually come to an end—what we often call the end of the age or the end of the world. That's when Satan is released to do his deceiving. He and his demons marshal the nations and gather them together in unity against God and his people. Then that all comes to an end with the loud, visible coming of King Jesus.

When Jesus appears in glory and splendor and power, one of two things will happen to every living person. They will either rush up to meet him in joy and celebration, or they will flee and be banished and destroyed. The Bible says in other passages that those who are still living will have their bodies instantly transformed and glorified into a resurrection body, even though they didn't actually die while they were on the earth. Instantly they'll be glorified. But even before that, the souls of believers who have been reigning with Christ in heaven will be reunited with their glorious resurrection bodies. So all of God's people will be gathered to Christ when he comes to judge the world.



That's what we sometimes refer to as the rapture. I don't believe in a secret rapture, though some of you may. I believe the rapture will be noisy and visible, not secret. "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There will be no doubt when Jesus comes. "Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and the nations of the world will mourn because of him" (Revelation 1:7). But those who have loved him are going to rush up to meet him and welcome him. At that point, Jesus is not going to make a U-turn and take believers back to heaven with him. He's going to bring about a new heaven and a new earth.

In the meantime, it's the end of the age. The earth is undone, the sky is undone. As the apostle Peter puts it: "The heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed" (2 Peter 3:7, 10).

There's this final undoing of the world, and that is when God's enemies perish. The beast, the false prophet, the devil—they're judged, and they perish. Satan and all his allies are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death, or hell. Heaven comes to a remade earth. We'll see more about that in a future message about the new heavens and the new earth.

You see, God doesn't intend to wipe out the world even when he brings this age to an end. A new age will emerge. Just as with us—we die, but in Christ we're resurrected—the world itself, the universe itself, will not perish forever. It will be resurrected as the new heavens and the new earth, the home of righteousness.

That's how the Bible describes the end of the age. We've seen how particularly the devil and the final assault are dealt with in those verses that we've been considering from Revelation 20. Now let's consider the last verses of Revelation 20 about appearing before the judgment seat of God.

## **Judgment Day**

- **Who will judge?** God in Christ
- **Who will be judged?** Everybody
- **What evidence will be judged?**
  - Books of deeds, words, attitudes
- **What will outcome be?**
  - Eternal horror or eternal happiness
  - Degrees of punishment or reward

"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown

into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

First question about Judgment Day: who's going to judge? God in Christ. Revelation 20 speaks of someone seated on a great white throne. Earlier in Revelation the Lamb is at the center of the throne. So God in the Lamb, in the person of Jesus, is on the throne, judging the world. Jesus himself said, "The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). The apostle Peter preached, "Jesus is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42). The apostle Paul said, "For God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Who's going to be judged? Some would see this great white throne judgment as a judgment only on unbelievers. That's one possible understanding. I think that this is the judgment day of all, both believers and unbelievers. But whether or not the great white throne judgment is only of unbelievers, it's very clear from the rest of Scripture that all people are judged.

You might say, "I don't want to be judged." But often in the Bible judgment is treated as great news for God's people. When you are the object of unjust oppression and cruelty, and a judge shows up and makes things right, that's good news. When the poor widow who's not getting justice finally gets justice from an unjust judge, does she say, oh no, I've been judged? She's happy, because finally he's rendered her the justice that she's been seeking. The Bible says that God will do justice in response to the prayers of his people (Luke 18:6-8). Judgment is good news for some, terrible news for others.

Who's going to be judged? Everybody. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

What evidence will be judged? When you're in a court, there's evidence. Revelation puts it this way: "The books were opened" (Revelation 20:12). What's in the books? The books are the record or the memory of God—God's complete knowledge. Those books include everything that we've done, everything we've said, everything we've thought or wanted, every motive and attitude.

The Bible says of deeds: "God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Jesus said, "Men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37). We don't treat language that carefully, do we? If you think about it—every word that comes out of this mouth is going into a book and it's going to be recorded and repeated on Judgment Day—then you might change how you talk.

If you realize that every action you take, whether an action of love or an action of cruelty, is not just an action of the moment but it's going into a book and you're going to be standing before the

presence of the mighty God to answer for that action, then you might choose your actions with greater care.

And not only actions and words, but even our motives and our thoughts will be presented as evidence. First Corinthians 4:5 says, "God will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts." Jesus is so concerned about the heart because it is possible sometimes to do a lot of the right things and say what you're supposed to say and yet have a heart totally out of tune with him. So God's books contain everything about what we do, what we say, even what we think or want, or motivations that are hidden deep in our hearts. All of this will be part of the evidence that is in the books.

What's the outcome going to be? Revelation portrays two outcomes: either eternal horror or eternal happiness. Those are the only two possibilities. There's nothing in between. Every person will either be banished and lost forever, or will be with Christ and rejoicing forever.

Daniel, whose visions and prophecies were precursors of Revelation, says, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). Both destinies are everlasting. Jesus says that "the wicked will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matthew 25:46). Eternal punishment, eternal life—those are the two possibilities that lie before each one of us.

Within each of those two destinations, there are degrees. There are degrees of punishment and there are degrees of reward and joy as well.

Those who have sinned more wickedly and horribly will be punished more severely. Hell is not just one undifferentiated place. There are degrees of suffering and of punishment.

It's not only punishment based on how bad you were, though that's a big part of it. Another factor that Jesus brings out is this: what opportunities did you have? Jesus grants that Sodom and Sidon and some of those ancient pagan cities were really wicked. But they're going to have it better on the day of judgment than Capernaum and the places where Jesus did his miracles, because those ancient pagans didn't have near the opportunity as those who saw Jesus in action and heard his voice and knew his gospel (Matthew 11:21-24).

I hate to say it, but I must: this also means that people right here in this building who have repeatedly heard the Word of God, or people who grew up in Christian homes and had every advantage, people who were loved by godly parents and taught his ways and knew the Scriptures—should they turn away, their degree of punishment is much more severe than somebody who never heard and had much less opportunity to know Jesus and to know the full counsel of God. God is just, so there will be degrees of punishment. Jesus says some will be punished with few blows, some with many blows (Luke 12:47-48).

Hell lasts forever, so how can we understand degrees of punishment in a place the involves unending punishment? I don't know how to map all of that out. All I know is that for some, hell will be a place of much less suffering than it is for others.

And heaven will be a place of greater reward for some than for others. The Bible says, "The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does" (Ephesians 6:8). That's the positive side of those rewards in heaven.

The less positive side is that heaven is going to be less of a joy for some than for others. Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20). He says, "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings" (Luke 16:9).

The apostle Paul says, "Be very careful how you build... If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Corinthians 3:10, 12-15). It's like having your house burned down, and you made it out by the skin of your teeth.

Now, that doesn't mean that for the rest of eternity you're going to be semi-miserable in heaven. But it does mean that this life, and how you live for the Lord, gives rise to greater rewards for those who serve the Lord more wholeheartedly and built upon the foundation of Christ and the apostles the way that they were meant to build.

It's not because we earn. All of the rewards that God gives are, first of all, based on the blood of Jesus Christ and his grace. Even so, some people are going to miss out on rewards they could have had because of their failure to build rightly in this life, and others are going to receive greater rewards.

It's not easy to understand or describe this. Jonathan Edwards said that in heaven every one of us will be as full of happiness as we can be, but some vessels will be bigger than others. Some may be more like a teacup, others like a 50-gallon drum. The Lord will fill each of us with happiness. But if your life was expanded in this life to include love for others in service to the Lord, there's going to be a lot more capacity, in a sense, for God and for his rewards than for those who lived a more constricted life.

The essence is that at the judgment there will be either eternal horror or eternal happiness, and there will be degrees of punishment and reward.

## **Book of life**

It's hard to read this part of the Bible without noticing the book of life. In Revelation the books are opened—God's records of everything that happens. That is enough to make all of us uneasy. But there is also this book of life.

What does the Bible say about the book of life? It says that if your name isn't in the book of life, you'll be lost forever. That's what it says in Revelation 20: "If their names were not written in the book of life, they were thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

What do we read elsewhere about the book of life? One thing about the book of life is that it means security. The book of life is permanent. It is not written in pencil that can be erased at any time. It is written in ink that is permanent. "I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father and his angels" (Revelation 3:5). If your name is in the book of life, it's there to stay—eternal security.

Revelation also speaks of "those whose names have not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 13:8). The book of life was written before the world even started. God took the initiative. In God's decision, his choice, his election, God wrote the book of life. In Revelation John is not analyzing the meaning of the word *election*; he is picturing it. The book of life is a picture of God's eternal decree of election.

The final, most important thing about the book of life is simply this: it is the Lamb's book of life. It's not an eenie-meenie-miney-moe book. It's not a guessing game of whose name might be in that book or not. It is the Lamb's book of life. It is the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. That means the book of life contains the name of every blood-bought believer in Jesus Christ.

If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, you do not need to wonder whether your name is or isn't in that book of life. It is the Lamb's book of life, so if you belong to the Lamb, you're in it. If you don't belong to the Lamb, it's possible that you might still trust him someday, even today. But if you reach the end of this life and have never put your faith in the Lamb, Jesus Christ, it means your name is not in that book of life, and you'll perish forever.

When we read about the end of the world, we find that all along God reigns. He reigns. When Gog and his forces gather, yes, it's Satan and the demons who are leading them—but it's also God who is luring them. God doesn't say, "Oh, no! I didn't know that Satan and the demons and the evil powers were going to do all that." God is the one who released Satan and his allies because he has a plan for them. "The Lord works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster" (Proverbs 16:4). So you're not going to fool God or thwart him. He's going to deal with his enemies, and he's going to save his people. He's going to do it in his own time, and he's going to do it with great power and glory. But in the meantime, he gives us the day of grace. He gives us this time when you can still come to the Lamb.

When I come to the Lamb, I find out that it wasn't just my decision. True, I did put my faith in him and receive him as my Savior and Lord. I'm glad I came to him. And now that I've come to him, I find out that my name was written in permanent ink in the Lamb's book of life all along. Salvation is of the Lord.

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord, we praise you that you are the God of grace and mercy, and that in your great love you have seen fit to call out a people by the power of your Holy Spirit. If you had simply left us to our own devices, we all would perish in our foolishness and wickedness without you.

So we thank you for the Lamb. We thank you for his precious blood. We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came into our world in weakness, in humility, in suffering, so that we could be

redeemed and rescued from the plight that befalls the wicked. We pray now, Lord, that as this message of the end of the world, of judgment day, of your coming again, of your ending one age to bring a new age in which righteousness dwells in the earth and the heavens, while all else is banished to the lake of fire—we pray that while we live in this day of grace and opportunity, we may trust and walk with you faithfully.

We pray that we may look forward to seeing your face, to enjoying your rewards. But right now, Lord, help us to keep bringing the gospel to the nations because you have a great plan, that many more are going to be saved. We love to hear those words from Revelation: "From every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9), people praising you, rejoicing in you. Your plans for salvation are so great, far greater than we dare to imagine. The number of the elect is far greater than we can know.

So we pray that you will accomplish your purposes, that you'll be pleased to make us part of that plan and purpose of spreading your gospel, that the fires of revival may come before the fires of judgment. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



**Revelation: Judgment**  
**By David Feddes**  
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<sup>7</sup> And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> 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.

**Gog and Magog**

Set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog... I am against you, Gog... I will bring you out with your whole army... the many nations with you... In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. (Ezekiel 38:1-16)

**Wrath, quake**

In my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel... all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down. (Ezekiel 38:19-20)

**Fire, hail, prey**

I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him... hailstones, fire and sulfur. So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations... I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. (Ezekiel 38:22-23; 39:4)

**Same end, 7 visions**

- Sixth seal (6:12-17)
- Seventh trumpet (11:15-19)
- Harvest of the earth (14:14-20)
- Sixth and seventh bowls (16:14-21)
- Babylon burned (17:1-18:24)
- Rider versus beast (19:11-21)
- Satan and Gog (20:7-10)

### **Sixth seal**

There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black ... and the stars in the sky fell to earth... The sky receded like a scroll... They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (6:12-17)

### **Seventh trumpet**

“The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants... and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm. (11:17-19)

### **Harvest**

The hour of his judgment has come... Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great... If anyone worships the beast... they will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. (14:7-11)

### **Sixth bowl**

They are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (16:14-16)

### **Seventh bowl**

A loud voice from the throne said, “It is done!” And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been... and no mountains were to be found. And great hailstones... fell from heaven on people. (16:18-21)

### **Babylon’s fall**

The beast will hate the prostitute. They will... burn her up with fire, for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose... Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons... she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.” (17:16-18:8)

## **Rider versus beast**

There before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war... I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet... The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh. (19:11, 19-21)

## **Satan and Gog**

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison 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... they surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. But fire came down from heaven and consumed them, 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. (20:7-10)

## **Same end, 7 visions**

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## **Enemies**

- Prostitute = Babylon = Magog
- Beast = Gog = antichrist = lawless
- Earth beast = false prophet
- Dragon = Satan
- Nations, rulers, allies of evil
- **Threats always; unbound at end**

## **Global deception**

Demonic spirits, performing signs ... go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (16:14)

Satan will be released from his prison 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. (20:7-8)

## **Global attack**

- Fooled by Satan and demons
- Led by Gog/beast/lawless one and false prophet
- Enlists all nations worldwide
- Against saints' camp/ beloved city

## **Total defeat**

- An earthquake like no other
- God appears in holy might and wrath
- Hailstones and fire from heaven
- Bloody banquet for birds and beasts
- Defeat of beast at Armageddon = final defeat of Gog and Satan

## **Millennium is now**

- Millennium = "last days," the period between Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings.
- Jesus' kingdom reign has already begun.
- Satan is already bound and cast down.
- Millions have already refused the beast.
- "First resurrection" has already happened for souls who reign with Christ in heaven.

## **End of the age**

- Satan released; Beast/Gog unleashed
- Loud, visible coming of King Jesus
- Our bodies glorified; fly to meet him
- Earth and sky undone; enemies perish
- Final judgment of living and dead
- Satan and his allies cast into hell
- Heaven comes to remade earth

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> Anyone whose

name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

### **Judgment Day**

- **Who will judge?** God in Christ
- **Who will be judged?** Everybody
- **What evidence will be judged?**
  - Books of deeds, words, attitudes
- **What will outcome be?**
  - Eternal horror or eternal happiness
  - Degrees of punishment or reward

### **Book of life**

I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. (3:5)

...whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. (13:8)

...only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (21:27)