

The End of the Age part 1

7/31/2022

Intro. The question of what happens immediately after we die is complex.

A. The Bible uses several words to describe this stage of existence.

1. Words like Gehenna, Hades, Hell, and Sheol all depict judgment and a holding place for those who died apart from God.
2. We also learn of terms such as paradise and Abraham's bosom to describe existence after death for those who lived for God in this life.

B. However, any understanding of these terms still do not describe what happens AFTER this age.

1. This AGE ends when Jesus returns and commences the final judgment.
2. At this time, Heaven and Hell pass away.
 - a. Heaven gives way to New Heavens and New Earth, with the New Jerusalem in the middle of the New Earth.
 - b. Hell is cast into a Lake of Fire.
3. Heaven and Hell are not the Final Destinations of the righteous or the wicked.
4. These final destinations are described in Revelation.

1. A quick primer on Revelation.

A. The Book of Revelation is pretty complex.

1. It's written like a letter.

- a. It addresses itself to the Seven Churches of Asia.
 - b. This makes it a letter.
 2. But it contains many elements that are apocalyptic.
 - a. Apocalyptic is not a modern word, but very ancient.
 - b. The word “apocalypse” means an “unveiling”.
 - c. It is also prophetic, revealing what will happen in a manner that only Jesus could reveal.
 3. John’s vision is tied very closely to visions given earlier to prophets like Isaiah and Ezekiel.
- B. We believe that ALL of Scripture is inspired according to 2 Tim 3.
1. That means not only the words but also the form and genre.
 2. Revelation has its own, unique, and inspired form.
 3. It uses various images that must be interpreted biblically and intelligently.
- C. With that understanding, this week and next we are looking at two passages that depict what awaits all of humanity and creation at the end of this Age.
1. With Jesus’ return, certain events will take place that have been ordained long before.
 2. Resurrection, Judgment, reward, and restoration are the key words for these passages.

This week, we focus upon resurrection and judgment.

Revelation 20:1–15 (CSB)

SATAN BOUND

20 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time.

THE SAINTS REIGN WITH CHRIST

⁴Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.

This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

SATANIC REBELLION CRUSHED

⁷When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹They came up across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹²I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.

¹³Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave

up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. ¹⁴Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

2. The End of the Age involves epic battles between Good and Evil.

A. It looks like there are two "Final" Battles.

1. There is one at the end of Revelation 19 that results in the false-prophet and the beast of Revelation being thrown into the lake of fire.

a. In this battle, Jesus triumphs and Satan is bound for a thousand years.

b. This thousand year period is called the Millennial reign of Christ.

c. A time where Satan is powerless for 1,000 years (which I believe is literal and not figurative).

d. During this time, the saints reign with Jesus on Earth without the effects or influence of sin.

2. At the end of this 1,000 year reign, Satan is released and leads one last rebellion.

a. The first rebellion Satan led was of the angels in heaven.

b. Satan's second rebellion was in the Garden of Eden, leading Adam into rebellion with God.

c. This is the FINAL rebellion of Satan's existence.

B. This is the battle of Revelation 20.

1. Satan deceives the nations, especially called "Gog and Magog".

a. These names have been on Facebook recently.

b. Specifically, people are talking about the alliances between China, Russia, and Iran.

c. Could this be Gog and Magog?

2. Maybe.

a. True, Satan will deceive real nations and real people to rebel against God.

b. But each generation has tried to predict who Gog and Magog were, who the AntiChrist might be and all sorts of details that God has hidden behind a mystery.

c. When reading Scripture, and especially Revelation, we must be clear where Scripture is clear and vague where Scripture is vague.

d. What is absolutely certain is that God does not need you to figure this out before He can do it.

1. He is not waiting for you to unlock the puzzle.

2. He is asking for your to be faithful to the mission, and to trust God with the process.

3. When the time comes, it will be clear to all of God's people what is happening and taking place.

4. In the meantime, be faithful.

What happens when it is all over?

3. Two Resurrections are mentioned in Revelation.

Revelation 20:4-6 (CSB)

⁴Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.

This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

A. Resurrection is a major theme in the New Testament.

1. Not only do we live here on Earth,
2. But we also live in eternity.
3. Those who follow Christ are raised to eternal life and those who do not are raised to eternal death.

B. At Jesus' return, the first resurrection belongs to those who have died in Christ.

1. Even though it specifically references those who were martyred, it seems that this does include all the saints.
2. That was the picture Daniel saw in Daniel 7: (CSB)

Daniel 7:21–22 (CSB)

²¹As I was watching, this horn waged war against the holy ones and was prevailing over them ²²until the Ancient of Days arrived and a judgment was given in favor of the holy ones of the Most High, for the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom.

²⁷The kingdom, dominion, and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven will be given to the people, the holy ones of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey him.'

C. The "second" resurrection is not even called a resurrection here.

1. Those who rise with Christ are called blessed and holy.
2. Those who do not rise with Christ, however, are considered cursed because a second death awaits them.

3. "believers experience the first resurrection while unbelievers experience only the "second death"¹

4. The language of Revelation makes it clear that there is no purgatory or second chance in the afterlife.

4. The resurrection of the believer leads to amazing opportunities.

A. After believers are united with Christ, either through resurrection or rapture, they get to reign with Jesus on Earth for a thousand years.

1. It is a time when Satan is bound.

a. At the very least, this means that Satan can no longer deceive people.

b. The deceptive power of sin is removed for a thousand years.

2. Honestly, you and I cannot grasp or imagine what this reign will be like.

a. Scripture provides a brief sketch.

b. But it will be an age like none other, with Jesus and His saints ruling the nations.

Isaiah 65:17–25 (CSB)

A NEW CREATION

¹⁷ "For I will create new heavens and a new earth;
the past events will not be remembered or come to mind.

¹⁸ Then be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I will create Jerusalem to be a joy
and its people to be a delight.

¹ Osborne, Grant R. 2016. [*Revelation: Verse by Verse*](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem

and be glad in my people.

The sound of weeping and crying

will no longer be heard in her.

²⁰ In her, a nursing infant will no longer live

only a few days,

or an old man not live out his days.

Indeed, the one who dies at a hundred years old will be mourned as a
young man,

and the one who misses a hundred years will be considered cursed.

²¹ People will build houses and live in them;

they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² They will not build and others live in them;

they will not plant and others eat.

For my people's lives will be

like the lifetime of a tree.

My chosen ones will fully enjoy

the work of their hands.

²³ They will not labor without success

or bear children destined for disaster,

for they will be a people blessed by the LORD

along with their descendants.

²⁴ Even before they call, I will answer;

while they are still speaking, I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together,

and the lion will eat straw like cattle,
but the serpent's food will be dust!
They will not do what is evil or destroy
on my entire holy mountain,"
says the LORD.

B. Notice a few things:

1. There is incredible peace.
2. There is work and labor, but with success and fulfillment.
3. There will be births, but it will be as God meant in the Garden of Eden.
4. There will be death, but no tragedy.
5. This 1,000 year reign can be compared to the restoration of the Garden of Eden.

C. But then, Satan is released once again.

1. What does this prove?
2. One writer says that it fulfills all the prophecies that God had made to Israel such as the promises of land, and relationship, and such.
3. Certainly, the release of Satan after the Millennium proves the guilt of sinners.
 - a. For a thousand years, Jesus reigns perfectly.
 - b. The people who live are those who were resurrected with Christ and those who survived the epic battle and were born during Jesus' perfect reign.
4. But as soon as humanity is given an opportunity to rebel against God, many take the chance.

- a. In a way, Satan's release proves God's justice in the judgment to come.
- b. No one can say "I didn't have a chance".
- c. No one can accuse God of being unfair.
- d. No one can accuse God of stacking the deck against people.
- e. The Millennium reign and Satan's release proves that people, if given the chance, will rebel against God.
- f. This is the last rebellion, which leads to the last judgment.

5. The Final Judgment of the Wicked.

Revelation 20:11-15 (CSB)

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and one seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. ¹²I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books.

¹³Then the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; each one was judged according to their works. ¹⁴Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

A. Notice that nothing prevents resurrection.

1. I have heard of people who were generally concerned by cremation, organ donation, or those who were buried at sea.
2. Please know that nothing can prevent the future resurrection.
 - a. It is important for you, as a family, to discuss what your wishes are for after you die.

b. But these decisions are for the sake of your family, not to determine if your body is resurrected or not.

B. If you are not judged through Christ, you will be judged by your works.

1. For the believer, our sins are judged through Jesus.
2. According to Revelation, it appears that by this point, the believer has already been resurrected.
3. But this is called the second death, where the unbeliever is judged by God through their works.
 - a. And no one passes on their own merit.
 - b. God never says "oh, you lived such a good life and so, even without Jesus, you are good enough."
 - c. If your name is not in the Lamb's Book of Life, you go to eternal death.
 - d. The Lamb is ALWAYS Jesus.

C. The Lake of Fire is the final destination.

1. Death, Hell, Hades: this is where all of these elements are cast into.
2. It is the same destination for Satan, and his false prophet and his beast.
3. Unfortunately, it is not a picture of punishment until their sin is paid.
4. Scripture says this:

¹⁰The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
5. The unbeliever experiences the same final destination as the devil.

6. What do we do in light of this Scripture?

A. We do whatever it takes to overcome and stay connected with Jesus.

1. Next week, we will look at the next passages that specifically exclude certain people from heaven.

2. Those are people who neither confess Jesus or live for Him.

a. There are people who believe they are assured heaven but live only for the devil.

b. Ask yourself, "are you living for Jesus?"

c. Does your life reflect His values, His fruit, and His forgiveness?

B. Second, we make sure we take someone with us.

1. Please, do not go to heaven alone.

2. We must take others with us.

3. Have those hard conversations, walk across that street, do what needs to be done to make sure that your friends, family, neighbors, and children know Jesus.

C. Lastly, remember that Jesus wins.

1. The book of Revelation would have been very encouraging to its original audience.

2. If you were in one of the Churches this letter was written to, under the iron fist of Rome and experiencing persecution, you would have needed hope.

a. And the hope was this:

b. Jesus wins.

3. For the modern-American, Revelation may be scary or discouraging.

- a. It predicts persecution, trials, and difficulties before Jesus wins.
 - b. But if you are in the middle of a trial, knowing that Jesus wins is good news.
4. We must be mindful to live in the knowledge that Jesus' wins.
- a. Jesus is the focus of eternity.
 - b. Jesus is the focus of End-Times events.
 - c. Jesus is the victor, the Groom, and the Architect of the New Jerusalem.
 - d. And if you are with Jesus, you win too!

PRAYER