

Revelation

Lesson 22

Revelation Chapter 20

Arlington Church of Christ

In the last two chapters, John has seen a vision of the fall of the persecuting city of Rome, the end of persecution by the Roman emperors and the triumph of the Christians over those who were causing them so much tribulation.

The vision now turns to the fate of Satan – represented symbolically as a dragon, who had given his power to the Roman emperor and his high priest to persecute the Christians ---

Revelation 20

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ² He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³ He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

The 'abyss' is the place of punishment and confinement of those angels who had sinned (demons) . It was considered by the Jews to be in the deepest part of the sea or in the center of the earth. (2 Peter 2:4 – also called 'tartarus')

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The angel binds Satan with a great chain, throws him into the Abyss and seals it.

Luke 8:30-31 Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to Tartarus, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment;

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The 'binding' of Satan means that His power is limited (Remember the limits placed on Satan in Job) This is symbolic – a literal chain cannot hold a spirit being, in the same way the 1000 years are symbolic of a long span of time by human standards.

Jesus said that he had bound the 'strong man' –

***Matthew 12:28-29* But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.²⁹ “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.**

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As Jesus was preparing to go to the cross, He said :

John 12:31

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be (is about to be) driven out.

And we are told in :

Colossians 2:15

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross

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The purpose of the binding was to keep Satan from deceiving the nations any longer – until the time appointed by God was over. So Satan's power is limited for a time – Jesus and his apostles were given the power to cast out demons. The apostles were able lay their hands on others to pass on that ability to others through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 3:14-15

He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.

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So Satan's power is limited for a time – Jesus and his apostles were given the power to cast out demons. The apostles were able to pass on that ability to others through the laying on of hands.

Mark 16:16-17* Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ *And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons;

In the gifts of the Spirit in 1Cor 12 – the 'gift of healing' would be referring to this ability (It could only be given by the laying on of an apostle's hands).

***Acts 8:18* When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands....**

By the time the Roman empire has fallen, the ability to 'cast out demons' (that came from the apostles laying on their hands) would have passed – so Satan is 'bound' – **no longer able to take over a person without their consent.** He can no longer do false 'miracles' to deceive people for a long time – symbolically 1000 years- until just before the time of the end.

So the '1000' years represents symbolically – the undetermined long period of time from the fall of the persecuting Roman empire until the time of the end. (10 => human completeness , 3 => God so $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$, the completed time of human history)

Matthew 24:48

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,

Matthew 25:5

The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep

Matthew 25:19

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

Luke 12:45

But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk.

Luke 20:9

The Parable of the Tenants

He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.

⁴ I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ⁵ (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

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Those who are allowed to 'reign with Christ' during this long period of time are those who were martyred for remaining faithful to God and not giving in to worshipping the beast. (Literally – 'those killed with an ax') These are the souls mentioned in Rev 6:9-11 who asked how long they would have to wait.

Christ is at the right hand of God in heaven reigning (Acts 2:33, Rom 8:34) and these are said to be with Him. Remember, this is symbolic and is not a 'literal resurrection' – because they are only 'souls' – they have not yet received their new spiritual bodies. They are receiving special honor for their faithfulness during this time period.

Remember – the souls of the martyrs were under the ‘altar’ in heaven, so this ‘reign’ will be in heaven, not on the earth (Rev 6:9)

The scripture does NOT say this “1000 year” reign will be on earth or in Jerusalem, as some have tried to say. The Bible does not say Jesus will reign on this physical earth.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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The 'rest of the dead' are the souls waiting in Hades – in 'Abraham's bosom or torment' (Luke 16) – they will be resurrected and given a new spiritual body when Jesus returns at the end of time.

John 5:28-29

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.

What will the new spiritual body be like?

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶ How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.....

⁴² So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves.

When Satan is released, he goes right back to opposing God. He deceives nations into opposing God, thinking they can defeat God and His people. He gathers them together for a final battle. This is not a literal battle – it is a symbolic battle between truth and deception, right and wrong, good and evil. The terms ‘Gog and Magog’ to the Jewish mind represented all that is opposed to God – and there are many (like the sand of the seashore) - but Jesus had said that this would be the case:

Matthew 7:13-14 “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

When Satan is released, God is allowing a final test for those still living – will they stand firm for God or be deceived by the devil’s lies. Note that Satan’s power is still limited by God to deception – but that is enough to convince most of the world to reject the truth of God and His Word. There appears to be a concerted effort to oppose and destroy God’s people. Keep in mind that this is a symbolic battle situation – we should not look for physical armies to literally surround a literal city of Jerusalem in an attempt to destroy Christianity. The church is now called spiritually, the ‘camp of God, the city He loves’.

Just before the end when the '1000' year binding of Satan is completed and he is set free to deceive, it will seem as though everyone is against God and His people – **symbolically surrounding the church in an attempt to destroy it.** It will be a time very much like it was at the time of Noah:

Matthew 24:37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ ***And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.***

Fire comes down from heaven and devours those who are opposing God and His people. This is reminiscent of Elijah and Sodom:

2 Kings 1:9-12 Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down!’” Elijah answered the captain, “If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!” Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men.

Luke 17:29-30 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. “It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed.”

⁷ When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. ⁹ They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

This is the end of the physical earth -

2 Peter 3:11-12

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

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The devil is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (hell) to be tormented forever.

Matthew 25:41

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’

11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

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The earth and the heavens ‘fled from God’s presence’ – they are destroyed, burned up.

*¹¹ 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. ¹² **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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.*

All people – great or small - will stand before the throne of God's final judgment. This will include all who have ever lived from Adam until the end.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

‘The books were opened’ – some of the books have a record of all we have ever said or done. This will be used to determine the AMOUNT of reward or punishment we will receive. The other book – the book of life – is a record of who obeyed the gospel, had their sins washed away and remained faithful. This is what determines where one spend eternity, not their ‘deeds’.

John 12:48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.

11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

For those whose names are in the ‘book of life’ – the other books will contain nothing that would take away our reward – all those things were forgiven and removed by the blood of the Lamb. There will be only rewards , the treasures in heaven.

Galatians 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Note: vs. 13- 'the dead in the sea' - the Jewish belief of the time was that if a person was not given a proper burial (like being drown in the sea) that their spirit would wander. This symbolically says that no matter where a spirit may be - all will be before God in Judgment.

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Death is no more, Hades – the waiting place- is no longer needed – both are cast into the lake of fire. Calling it the ‘second death’ is a symbolic way of saying that it is the second ‘separation’ – **death means separation**. The ‘first death’ is the separation of the spirit from the body. The ‘second death’ is the permanent separation of the spiritual body and soul from God in hell.

15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

What determines where we will spend eternity is whether our name is in the Book of life – whether or not we obeyed the gospel. God is the one who writes our name there .

Acts 2: ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

What determines where we will spend eternity is whether our name is in the Book of life – whether or not we obeyed the gospel. God is the one who writes our name there. But He can also blot our name out if we do not remain faithful to Him.

Revelation 3:4-6 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

Let's look at two sections of scripture that have caused much confusion for people about the judgment:

Found in Matt 25,
and in Matt 7

Matthew 25:31-33

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

From these verses in Matt 7 and 25, some have gotten the idea that no one will not know whether they will be in heaven or not until they stand before God and He separates them into 'sheep or goats'.

But the Bible makes it clear that when a person dies, their spirit goes to Hades (the waiting place of the dead) and into either paradise (comfort) - if they obeyed the gospel and lived faithfully, or to torment (punishment) - if they rejected Jesus' way of salvation. There is no doubt (no surprises) where those who have died will spend eternity- and for them "judgment day" will simply be the determination of the amount of eternal punishment or eternal reward they will receive. For these, eternity will only be a continuation of where they were in Hades.

So what group is Matthew 7 and 25 speaking about?

These verses are referring to those who are alive on the earth at the time the Lord returns.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Those who are alive at that time, good and evil, will be changed – given an immortal eternal spiritual body – and taken to stand before the judgment throne of God. These are the only ones who may find themselves ‘surprised’ at judgment – when they find out that they were following men’s ideas and not the will (Word) of God and that they will be lost eternally.

John's vision now turns to a description of heaven – what those to whom he is writing are promised, if they remain faithful and overcome through the persecution and even death threats that they were facing.