

The Soon Coming End – Part 16

2 Peter 3:9-13

Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

(Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB))

As we begin today, may we let our minds ponder all the things that are taking place in this passage of scripture. Recall, first, that in the verses just preceding these, Christ, in all His glory, had been reigning on His Throne in the Millennial Kingdom for a thousand years. Then satan and his armies, arrayed for war, surrounded the Millennial Kingdom and were poised to attack, when suddenly, the Lord Jesus rained down fire from heaven, consuming all of satan's armies, and satan was captured and thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone to suffer for all eternity.

And then, immediately following satan's defeat, we have verse 11,

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

(Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB))

Folks, from one verse of scripture to another, we find that everything has changed. Everything! God has suddenly and completely wiped away everything from the face of existence. The Millennial Kingdom and even earth itself, and all the heavens are gone. Everything is gone! Completely! And all that remains is a Great White Throne with the Lord Jesus seated on it, prepared to "judge" all the people of the earth. Verse 11,

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and

Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (Revelation 20:12-13 (NASB))

Again, try to imagine this. Everything in all of existence is gone. All those things that were so important to man during his earthly life are gone and man is left standing there alone before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus.

And yes, there will be multitudes of other people all around. The dead, great and small, from every corner of the earth and from all generations past will be standing there. But there is a real sense in which everyone who is standing in judgment is very, very “alone”, “alone” and completely naked, everything that he or she has ever thought, said or done is laid bare before the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge. Hebrews 4,

13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:13 (ESV))

And so, there we will be, every one of us, untold billions of us, crowded together before his throne of judgment, together, but yet alone, all alone, and completely naked and exposed, before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. Nothing can hide all those many, many things that you did, that I did, our behaviors, our conduct, over all the many years of our lives. All that will remain is you, by yourself, and me, by myself, and all the many people, all by their self, standing there before the all-knowing Judge, the Lord Jesus, as He opens the “Books” in front of Him, those special records of all the things that we have done throughout all the many moments of our lives.

And we are told here that there will be two sets of books. In one set of “Books” are all the many deeds that men and women have done while in the flesh, whether those deeds be good or they be evil. And all men and women will give an account for every deed recorded there.

The other “Book” is the “Book of Life” spoken about in verse 15. And this is the most important Book of all, because as this verse tells us,

15 . . . if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15 (NASB))

So, there we will stand, naked and alone, with everything that we have ever done lying exposed before the One to whom we must give an account.

This is “judgment” the one single event in most all people’s existence that they dread most! And it’s not as if we did not know that “judgment day” would come to us, because

we have been clearly forewarned, both in the Old Testament and in the New. Listen to these words, first in Ecclesiastes 12

14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14 (ESV))

And then also in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 5

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB))

And then, as we have been reading here in these words in Revelations 20, we are told one final time, that every soul that will have ever existed on the face of the earth will stand before the Lord Jesus in this “Great White Throne Judgement”, and each person will give an account for everything they have ever done whether those things be good or evil.

And may we understand clearly that this “court” setting of God will not be like the ones we are accustomed to seeing in our man-made judicial system. At this “Judgment Seat” of God, there will be no prosecutors or defense attorneys. Our guilt or innocence will really have already been established, both before the foundations of the earth were laid, and also by the conduct of our lives while living in the flesh. And our eternal guilt or acquittal will have already been determined, solely upon the basis of one criterion alone, and that is, “has our sin been washed away by the blood of the Lamb, and by that cleansing, our name written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life”.

So then, as we are called to step forward and kneel before the Judgment Throne of God, everything will have already been said and done that can be said and done. Will there be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Yes! Will there be protests of innocence from many of the guilty? Yes! Recall the words of Jesus in Matthew 7 where He said,

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV))

And there will be at least two major events of judgement that will take place. First is this one, the “Great White Throne Judgement”. At this judgment, there will be an initial determination as to where each person will go to spend their eternity, “heaven” or “hell”.

We can read about that judgment in two passages of scripture, in Matthew 25 and also here in these words of Revelations 20.

Turn with me for a moment to Matthew 25 and I will read for us, beginning in verse 31, 31 ". . . when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:31-34 (NASB)

41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; (Matthew 25:41 (NASB)

And then here in Revelations 20!

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)

Note carefully that these accounts of judgment speak about our “deeds”, our “behavior”, things we will have done during the circumstances of our daily life. But to some of these people’s surprise, especially the people who mistakenly believe that just “doing the best they can, and being a good person”, that doing those kinds of “good deeds” will get them into heaven, unfortunately for them, “deeds” will not be the sole determining criterion of whether a person is judged to be “sheep” or a “goat”.

No, as I mentioned a moment ago, that first determination of our salvation is made based solely upon whether our sins have been washed away by the “Blood of the Lamb”, and our name is written in His “Book of Life”.

But with that being said, our “deeds” done while in this life are still very, very important. They will help determine the extent of the rewards or the punishment that each person will receive, either in heaven or in hell.

We don’t know much about the extent of the punishments in hell. The scriptures don’t tell us much about that, other than to say that for those whose names are not written in the “Book of Life”, they will suffer eternal punishment in the burning pit of hell, along with satan and his demons.

But for those of us whose names are written in the “Lamb’s Book Of Life”, we are told much more. We are told that we will receive rewards, some of which are described as crowns. Five of those heavenly crowns are described for us here in the New Testament. 1) In 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, we read about an “Imperishable Crown”, 2) And in 1 Thessalonians 2:19, we read about a “Crown of Rejoicing”, 3) And in 2 Timothy 4:8, we read about a “Crown of Righteousness” 4) And in 1 Peter 5:4, we read about a “Crown of Glory”, 5) And in Revelation 2:10, we read where we will receive “The Crown of Life”, all very, very special and blessed rewards.

We also know from the “Parable of the Minas” that some people will be given the privilege of “taking charge of five cities, others ten cities”.

Before we close for today, may I again repeat this warning, that there will surely come this moment of judgment; and the verdict rendered will be absolute and eternal, no appeals and no delays. And for an unfortunate many, the verdict rendered will be really, really surprising. Matthew 7, again, and note the word many.

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

What do these words mean? Simply put, they mean that there are many, many people who sit in the pews of churches, there every time the doors are opened. And they have “professed” faith in Christ on many occasions, witnessed for Him, even joined with others who would “lay hands on” and “pray over” people for healing and for the casting out of demons. All good and godly things. But in their hearts, they never quite surrendered their lives over to Christ.

Yes, they prayed the “sinner’s prayer”, perhaps even more than once. But folks, simply wanting to be saved does not make us saved. Absolute surrender to Christ is the only step we can take to be truly saved.

The question is . . . What can we do now so, that we are not surprised then? We really must be willing to humble ourselves and “check” to see if we are “truly saved”. Over and over again, God exhorts us to “examine ourselves”, and “test ourselves” to see if we truly are in the faith. He says those exact words in 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5,

5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5 (NASB))

Each of us really can know for sure folks! We can know absolutely for sure! And I plead with you to do that, to be absolutely sure. 1 John 5,

13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13 (NASB))

Judgment really is coming! Are you ready for that day?