

#35 - Judgment and heaven - Revelation 20:11-22:7

Engage:

CONGRATULATIONS! You have arrived at the end of our God's Redemptive Story series.

"Just as the first book of the Bible—Genesis—provides the opening chapter of God's redemptive program, so the last book—Revelation—supplies the conclusion as it describes the return of Jesus Christ and the creation of a new heaven and earth. Revelation portrays Jesus Christ as the victorious King and coming Judge. Using colorful and symbolic language, John captures the awesome holiness of the Lamb of God coming to judge the world in perfect righteousness" (*DW*, December, 2002).

Thoughts about the story:

- Revelation 20:11-15 – The white throne judgment to come

There is coming a time when all will stand before God. The redeemed will give thanks to God. See 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Those who are not followers of Jesus face judgment before God. Their fate will be the same as that of Satan or the devil, the beast, the false prophet, the demons (Revelation 19:20; 20:10), along with all whose names are not recorded in the book of life. They will be "thrown" (See Matthew 5:29; 7:19; 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; Mark 9:45, 47) into the "second death" or the "lake of fire."

Jesus will be the Judge on the throne (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22-23). He is both the Righteous Judge and the Savior.

The basis for the judgment will be the word of God (John 12:48).

There is the Book of Life (See Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8) which includes the name of those who are followers of Jesus and excludes those who aren't.

- Revelation 21:1-27-22:6 – The new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem

The word translated "new" indicates that the new heaven and new earth may well be new in the sense of being renovated or restored, in contrast with being new or never in existence before. The time is coming when God will dwell with His people wherever or whatever this place is. There will be no more tears, death, mourning, crying and pain will no longer exist in God's new creation. The point is that everything will be purged of sin and its effects and be made new. See Isaiah 65:17-66:24; Romans 8:18-25; 2 Peter 3:7-14. This means that all of the agonizing memories and effects of sin will be gone forever!

"He who overcomes" - This is a present active participle verb of the Greek word "nike" (*nikh*). What a powerful truth. Those who continue to be overcomers will be victorious! See Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21 for the blessings God for those who overcome. "All these blessings belong to the inhabitants of the holy city. But until then, there is a battle to fight, an enemy to defeat, a world system of evil to overcome. Believers must exercise their faith in undaunted

obedience to the Word of God. The blessed are those who keep His commandments, 'that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter the gates into the city' - Revelation 22:14" (Robert Coleman)

Those who will not inherit the "water of life" are described as the "cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars." Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur – the second death. This can be described as total and final separation from God for eternity.

The following will highlight the description of the Holy City, Jerusalem which will some day come down out of heaven. The description of this symbolic vision can not be adequately pictured in words. You will have to wait to see with your own eyes the majesty and grandeur of heaven – and you will not be disappointed!

- ✓ It will shine with the "glory of God" (Revelation 21:11).
- ✓ It will have 12 gates, 3 on each of the 4 sides of the city (Revelation 21:12-13). With gates on all four sides of the city we see that God welcomes all peoples and nations (Acts 1:8). Each gate is made of one pearl! Note: "The pearl is made from a secretion in the oyster, to protect an injury. Without a wound, there would be no pearl. A pearl thus furnishes a fitting emblem of the Savior by whose wounds we have obtained redemption - see Matthew 13:46" (Robert Coleman).
- ✓ The wall will be made of 12 foundation stones with "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:14).
- ✓ The city will be between 1,400-1,500 miles in length, width and height (Revelation 21:15-16). Note: The shape is of a cube. This is the shape of the Holy of Holies of the temple (See 1 Kings 6:20). Note: When you compute the volume of this cube you quickly see that this place is described as having plenty of room for all God's people.
- ✓ The walls will be about 200' thick (Revelation 21:17). Walls are a symbol of security.
- ✓ The walls and foundations are made or are decorated with precious stones or gold (Revelation 21:18-21). Note: "The construction materials, of gold, pearls, and precious jewels, among the most valuable substances known, convey a feeling of indescribable affluence and costliness. The treasures of this world heaped together pale into nothing, by comparison" (Robert Coleman).
- ✓ The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (Revelation 21:22). There no longer need to be a temple for God to dwell in! See John 4:21. God and the Lamb will be present! Thought: If a person does not want to be present with God in this life, it is easy to see why the things of God and heaven are a priority!
- ✓ The glory of God provides the light and the Lamb is its lamp for those who will dwell there (Revelation 21:23-24).
- ✓ The gates of pearl will never be shut (Revelation 21:25). The city will be safe.
- ✓ Yet nothing impure will ever enter the new Jerusalem, **but only those** whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27). Satan and his followers will be never be seen again!
- ✓ There will be a crystal clear river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God (Revelation 22:1-2). Jesus used a similar symbol, "water of life," in the same way with the Samaritan woman to illustrate eternal life or life with the Son, living in His presence (John 4:7-14). Only God can provide such a gift (John 11:25-26). And we are able to receive a taste of this life in this life (1 John 5:10-11).
- ✓ There will be the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, one each month (Revelation 22:2). The tree of life is like the one found in Genesis 2:9.

- ✓ There the servants or people of God (Greek “doulos”/ doulos - bond servant or owned slave – and in the case of the follower of Jesus, a willing slave) will serve (the action of worship) forever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5). We will be busy in worship and praise throughout eternity, and never bored, in heaven!
- ✓ For the second time we are told that these words “trustworthy and true” (Revelation 21:5; 22:6).
- Revelation 22:7 – The next coming of Jesus

Here we have one of the overarching reasons for God’s Redemption Story – Jesus is coming again! See Matthew 16:24-28; 24:29-31; 24:50-51; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:4; 1 John 2:28; 3:2-3; Revelation 1:7; 22:18-20. After reading the passages listed it becomes obvious that Jesus will come at a time when we least expect or like a thief in the night. Therefore, you must always be ready!

Extra:

“St. John’s final vision is heaven. It is not an ending, as we might expect, but a fresh beginning: ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev . 21:1). The biblical story began, quite logically with a beginning. Now it draws to and end, not quite so logically, also with a beginning. The sin-ruined creation of Genesis is restored in the sacrifice-renewed creation of Revelation. The product of these beginning and ending acts of creation is the same: ‘the heavens and the earth’ in Genesis, and a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ in Revelation. The story that has creation for its first word, has creation for its last word: ‘The end is where we start from’” (Eugene Peterson).

Discussion starters:

- What can you do to remind yourself of the coming judgment?
- What do you need to do to ensure that your name is in the Lamb’s book of life, if it isn’t? What about the name of a family member or friend, or the name of someone you have never met?
- What thoughts come to mind after hearing the description of heaven?
- What act of service (or act of worship) can you do each day to remind yourself of the hope you have through Jesus?