
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Revelation

Revelation 20:7-15: “The Defeat of Satan!”

General idea: After this period of a thousand years is finished, Satan is allowed to go on “furlough,” so he is out on “bail” (so to speak) for a short time. Then, he goes on the prowl to seek wickedness and to destroy. But, he is also being used to test people to see if they will bow to his deception and once again be disloyal to God and His goodness. All those who oppose God—those who seek evil, lining up on Satan’s side, hunting God’s people and fighting against God Himself, as they try with all their might to fight God. They do all that is in their power to destroy and their numbers are vast. They make war and try to lay siege to God’s people. But, Christians can take comfort and hope because God fights on our behalf and the battle is extremely lopsided as He wipes them from the earth and they are consumed with fire and His judgment. Then, Satan and those who are evil receive the penalty phase of their sentence. They are thrown into hell for eternity to be tormented. Satan loses; God and His faithful people win! Game over!

Then, John sees more hope and reassurance of faith. The great white throne judgment commences as the earth is filled with the presence of Christ. Evil has no place to hide. God opens His books to see who is with Him and who opposes Him, who has received His grace and who is disloyal and has betrayed God, aligning them selves with Satan. Christ judges the dead according to what they have done—chosen evil or received Him. The sea and all other places give up their dead who stand before Christ and receive either eternal reward or judgment. Those who lived to themselves, loved evil and sought betrayal to God, are given what they want; they are put away from God for eternity. They are put in hell, the second death—the final death—for all eternity.

Vs. 7-11, Contexts: This passage is in the *seventh cycle of visions* that John received, culminating with the final judgment. The Jewish cultural mindset at the time was that the Messiah would bring peace, prosperity, and after a period of time, evil nations would rise up and seek to fight Israel at the Dead Sea—the *battle of Armageddon*. Many dispensational writers picked up on these themes for their theories; however, this is not what the text is saying. This passage does refer to a grand climatic and final judgment. Conversely, the main issue is God’s holiness, character, and sovereignty, and thus His authority and right to place judgment on all His creation, including us. Judgment is declared clearly throughout Scripture, so we know we are held accountable and are responsible for our actions. There is a God in charge; He cares, and we must be under His Lordship and authority. God passionately hates injustice and will hold those who are evil to account. It does no good to fight God; such a decision only makes you frustrated and discontented in this life, and judged and sentenced in the life to come. If we still refuse to repent, that sentence is “convicted” and “committed” and if we repent the sentence is “commuted”(Psalm 7:6-8; 47:8-9; Dan. 7:9-10; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 4-5). There is a terror aspect to this passage, perhaps designed to remind us of our

accountably to God as well as to give hope to those who are treated unjustly by malevolent oppressors.

Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Satan will be released.* It is interesting to note that Satan is unchanged, unrepentant, and uncaring; he picks up where he left off, with deception and evil. Apparently, hell is not for reform; it is for protection, as the faithful being protected from the evil, and a place for evil to be held where they want. This too is an aspect of grace.
- *Gog and Magog.* This comes from Ezekiel 38-39, and refers to the enemies of Israel from the land of Magog where Gog was a prince or ruler. According to Josephus, these were perhaps the Scythians from the north. These names occur many times in *apocalyptic* language, and basically mean those who have hostility and are enemies of God and His people. Here, it can mean those who rise up to fight God in any way and/or the last enemies of God who rise up collectively in a grand climatic battle, which never takes place because God puts a stop to it. A lot of speculation is read into these names, but it is not really intended to be cryptic or esoteric (Ezek. 37-39; Rev. 16:14).
- *Surrounded the camp of God's people.* This was a common happening and fear of the Israelites. If they were faithful, God protected them; if they were disloyal to Him, God would allow evil people to be His instruments to bring judgment to them (Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Rev. 16:13-16).
- *Fire came down.* This is a theme of judgment for those who are evil, and protection to those who are faithful (Gen. 1:24; Ex. 13:21; Lev. 10:2; 2 Kings 1:10; Ezek. 39:6; Zech. 2:5).
- *The devil... was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur ...for ever and ever.* Ancient Jewish literature spoke of Satan being judged and condemned. God is "immutable" meaning He is unchangeable and unchallengeable; it is a great comfort to know nothing can thwart God's plan, purpose, and reign (Psalm 102:27; Col 1:15-18; 2:9; Hebrews 6:17-18)!
- *Will be tormented.* This is a reference that those who are evil judge themselves by knowingly refusing God and His offer of grace. This also shows that the wicked will not be annihilated (Rev. 14:10-11; 19:20; 20:10).
- *White throne.* Signifies a heavenly, eminent throne that gives a contrast to man's pride. God dethrones the earthly, pompous kings and the pride of men, and rather points to His dignity and prestige. God is showing His eminence and importance. He is solely Pre-eminent and Supreme. This is also an image of the Old Testament Tabernacle where the "copy" of God's Throne Room, made for His presence, was made known. Now, John sees the *real* heavenly version in a corporal state to condescend to his and our understanding (Ex. 24:9-11; 25: 40; 1 Kings 5-7; 22:19; 2

Chron. 2:4; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; 10:1; Dan. 7:9-10; Heb. 8:5-6; 9:1-14; Rev. 3:12; 4:2; 7:15; 11:19; 14:15-17; 15:5-16:1, 16:17; 21:22).

- *Earth and sky fled* shows the cosmic and universal scope of God's judgment and His sovereign rule. Perhaps, it refers to Isaiah 34:4 and how a reader would open a scroll with the right hand and then roll it up with the left. This is an image that the End of Days is at hand, and also a sign for the coming of Christ. Some see this as *Armageddon* (Isa. 24:21; 34:4; Jer. 4:24; Nahum 1:5; Dan. 8:10; 10:13; Mark 13:25-26; Rev. 6:14; 16:16, 20; 20:11).
- *Books were opened*, meaning all is disclosed and made known publicly. We can never mistakenly think that our innermost thoughts and deeds can be hidden from God. He is *omniscient*—all knowing; thus, evil will never get away with its actions (Psalms 147:5; Job 22:12-14; Is. 40:28; 37:16; Rom. 11:33-34; 1 John 3:19-20, and 4 Ezra).
- *The Book of Life*. This is basically the heavenly roster of the saints who have been found to be faithful by Christ, who received their election, and who persevered. All ancient cities had rosters of those who lived there, and those that were added and expelled, as taking a census. Like a city roster, *the Book of Life* contains the names of all the people who are currently living. When a person dies, if he or she has claimed Jesus as Lord, has received his or her election, has let it become rooted in him or her, and has been faithful and obedient, their name remains in this book. All others are blotted out. This also refers to predestination. Once our names are in His book and we are saved by His grace, we are secure in our faith and have eternal security (Ex. 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Mal. 3:16; Rom. 9:19-21; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:1-6; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:19, 27).
- *Judged according to what they had done*. God keeps account and we are accountable. This does not mean we earn our salvation; rather, what we have done with it gives us rewards, and damnation to those who reject it. Evil is the evidence of one's rejection of Christ, runaway pride, and agnosticism toward God. When one repents, the sins and offences before God are cancelled. For us, Jesus pays the debt and our good works are the gratitude and evidence of what He has done in and for us. This is a good place to assess one's conduct before God and man (Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 18:21-30; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 10:43, Rom. 2:6; 3:23; Col. 2:13-15; 1 Pet. 1:17; 1 John 1:9).
- *Sea* refers that all the souls ever created are accounted for.
- *Hades* refers to Hell, the "abode of the dead," the general place for those who have died, between death and resurrection of the dead for Jews and Greeks. Hell is normally used for eternal punishment. It comes from the Greek god of the underworld. To Jews, prior to the first century, it was represented as "Sheol," or "the grave." The term *Gates of Hades* refers to the realm and power of death and not necessarily the actual place of Hell. This phrase expresses that death itself shall not

stop we who are in Christ. Death cannot silence His message or His church—great words of hope and comfort for the persecuted Church! It is now represented as “hell” and those who are under judgment (Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; Luke 16:19-31 and 1 Enoch).

- *Lake of fire/Lake of burning sulfur* means the final place of residence for Satan and evil; it is his judgment and the defeat of evil! Those who rebel against God have no hope; if there is no repentance, all that remains for them is eternal damnation. (See Revelation 19:20 study.)
- *Death and Hades/hell*. Because of the word usage and context, this indicates Hell, the place of everlasting torment. It is the very worse thing that can ever happen to anyone, and the ultimate fear and dread. It is also a place the wicked send themselves because they do not want to be with God. It is a place of extreme suffering and anguish, and yet a place of grace, because a loving God does not force anyone to be with Him that would not want to be (2 King 16:3; 23:10; Is. 30:33; 66:15; Jer 7:31; Joel 2:3; Dan. 7:11; Matt. 5:22; 16:18; Mark 9:43; Rev. 14:9-10; 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8; also 1 Enoch 54:1).
- *Second death*. The first death means when we physically die, we leave our earthly existence and then go into eternity for rewards and to wait for the resurrection of our body in some form we do not yet understand and a wondrous everlasting life in Christ. For the reason that Jesus has defeated death. This second death means that those who fail to accept Christ will also be resurrected, only to “die again” as in sentenced into the “lake of fire.” Some Jews, like the Sadducees, believed this was *annihilation*, but the Bible does not teach *annihilation* that the sole is destroyed and we do not exist anymore, as both evil and good souls will continue to subsist (John 5:28-29; Rev. 19:20; 20:10-15).
- *Was not found*. This is not good; once this happens it is too late to say “I am sorry,” and repent! To the Jews, if one followed the law and was faithful to God, he or she was saved. If they were evil and worshipped false gods, they would be held to account and be judged and condemned. God is exclusive and supreme; nothing comes before Him (Deut. 6:4-9; 1 John 2:23).

Thoughts and Applications:

This passage is, besides being about death, judgment, and hell, also about the evils of determined pride. Pride is sin; it is the terror and oppressor of good people, the cause of the Fall, the fall of those who then become evil, and the main fuel of Satan himself. Pride is evil! Pride is the chief universal struggle of humanity and what holds us back and condemns us more than anything else.

Satan is a betrayer who seeks evil and fights against God, righteousness, goodness, and all those who follow Christ. Yes, he is no match to God. Satan has been judged; his sentence is eternal damnation by his choice and deeds, where he will be

tormented by his own evil that activates with all those who joined in his evil against God and His people. We can take great comfort that God protects and fights on our behalf. We can trust Him and not worry or fret over the things we can't control or change. Our place is with Christ—now and forever more.

Evil people think they can get away with it; they think they can frustrate those who are good—even God Himself. But, they cannot; there is no escape from God, His love, or His wrath. In the end, evil loses big! God will hold evil, injustice, and sufferings, and severely punish all those who produce them!

The Three Prevailing Millennium Views, *Amillennial*, *Premillennial*, and *Postmillennial*:

1. *Amillennialism*: They believe that Satan was bound at the cross of Christ and His work. Some take a futurist view that he is temporally held back and then will be bound in the future. Satan is let loose for a short time where he goes on the prowl, seeking to destroy the Church at the end of days, but he will be unsuccessful. Because Satan sought to persecute the Church, he is persecuted, judged, and sentenced to eternal damnation. This passage also represents Christ and His victory over death on the cross. For us, it further means we have no fear of death or judgment when we are in Christ. The fire and judgment of God represents those who are evil being consumed by God's just wrath in one universal judgment where the wicked go to hell and Christians receive their reward. All this coincides with the Second Coming of Christ and then the rebuilding or creating of a new heaven and earth.
2. *Premillennialism*: This view sees a chronological sequence as Satan is bound in the future when Christ returns and before Christians receive their reward, and then the millennium commences, hence the name, "pre". This makes two distinct judgments—one for Christians and one for non-Christians after the millennium. Then, Christ reigns on earth as the full extent of God's kingdom lasts for 1,000 literal years. Most see this happening in Jerusalem, Israel. Jesus will judge the wicked; then, a new earth is created after Christ returns and after His 1,000 year reign (of course there are many divergent views in this camp, but this is the prominent view).
3. *Postmillennialism*: This view sees this passage as the successes of the spread of the gospel, which we, the Church, are responsible for and the resulting conversion of all or most of humanity to Christianity. The binding of Satan will greatly help the spread of Christianity; then will come a great future age of peace and prosperity for the Church. Then, Satan is let loose for a final period of persecution; after that, those who are in Christ are resurrected as Christ returns (of course there are many divergent views in this camp too, but this is the prominent view).

Ironically, this is considered the most controversial passage in the Bible, the one over which most fights and divisions for Christians occur. Scripture is very clear in most places, but there are passages like this one that are hard to understand; if we are really

willing to examine and look to the Spirit, we will have a better idea of its real, intended meaning. The sad fact is, most do not read the passage in its context and meaning; rather, many people seek an agenda and fight with all they can to prove it regardless of facts, ignoring effectual procedures to know and read God's Word effectively. In addition, sincere Christians hold different views on non-essential theology like this, over which there is no reason to have disunity and strife! What is essential is that Christ will return, and as of this writing, He has not yet arrived in His second coming form (Col. 3:4). A final judgment will take place where all peoples will be judged; the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be held to account (Matt .25:31-46; John 5:28-29).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you judge if something, such as a book or a person, or...is good or not? What is the criterion? What do you see as the main points of this passage? Why are there all kinds of divergent viewpoints?
2. How does this passage give us comfort and hope? What about the fact that God passionately hates injustice and will hold those who are evil to account?
3. How do you feel that God keeps account and we are accountable? How can this help you live better and be better? How can this be a problem for some people? What can we do to make our account before God our reassurance and motivation?
4. Why can we never think we can hide our innermost thoughts and deeds from God? How can this be a comfort for us? How does the fact that God is omniscient—all knowing—help you make better decisions for your life? How is your faith strengthened, knowing that evil will never get away with its actions?
5. How would others you know estimate your conduct before God and man? How would your church be assessed by its community?

6. What if God judged you according to what you had done? What would He find? How can this passage help you see the character and wonders of God?
7. Why do you think God released Satan? Why does Satan go on the prowl to seek wickedness and to destroy? Why does God let him?
8. How would you explain God's omniscience? What does this passage say about God's power and ability? How do you feel that all things are under His control and plan?
9. Why do you suppose Satan remains unchanged, unrepentant, and uncaring? How is hell also an aspect of grace?
10. Why does it do no one any good to fight God? Why do people do so anyway? After all this peace and prosperity, why will people oppose God, seeking evil and lining up to Satan's side? What are the causes and motivations for people to hunt those who are good and fight against God and His people?
11. How do you think wicked people will feel, after trying with all their might to fight God, when they fail and then are condemned?
12. What can you do to better realize and apply that God is in charge and He cares? How would you assess your surrender to His Lordship and authority? What can you do to show Him more commitment in your spiritual and daily life?