

Paradise Lost, Paradise Restored  
The Story of Hope  
Lessons 39-40  
Revelation 20-22

Our horizon includes the *Rapture*, the *Kingdom*, the *Crushing of Satan* and, as we will study today, *Paradise Restored*.

The horizon for people separated from God is, however, horribly different.

Many people in our society believe there will be some type of judgment in the afterlife. Mistakenly, they believe this judgment will determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. The Bible reveals three judgments none of which determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. One's eternal destiny is determined in this life by one's response to Jesus Christ.

The first judgment is the **Judgment Seat of Christ** which will involve Church Age saints. At this judgment we will be purified and rewarded with authority to serve in Jesus' Kingdom (2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). This is the judgment you want to be part of.

The second judgment will be the **Sheep & Goats Judgment**. This judgment determines which gentile survivors of the Tribulation will enter Jesus' Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46).

The third and final judgment will be **The Great White Throne Judgment**. This judgment determines the degree of punishment each person will receive in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). You don't want to be at this judgment. Jesus came to deliver you from the Great White Throne Judgment.

In God's Story of Hope, *The Great White Throne Judgment* will take place after the Crushing of Satan.

## dreadful destiny for unbelievers

Revelation 20:11-15

At the end of earthly time as we now know it, unbelievers will stand before God to be sentenced to eternal punishment for their sins.

Revelation 20:11–15 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- Jesus will be the judge at *The Great White Throne Judgment* (20:11)

Jesus revealed that God the Father has authorized Him to judge (John 5:22-29). His resurrection guarantees He will be the judge at *The Great White Throne Judgment* (Acts 17:30-31).

- Each defendant will be judged according to his/her deeds (20:12-13)

Verses 12-13 reveal that every human being's name is written in one of two books; either your name is written in the *book of life* or it is written in the *book of deeds*.

Actually, all our names initially are written in the *book of deeds*. The *book of deeds* contains the names of every human because of our sin nature and the sins we commit.

But not every human being's name will be written in the *book of deeds* at the time of *The Great White Throne Judgment*. Many people's names will be written in the *book of life*. Those whose names are written in the *book of life* will not be judged at *The Great White Throne Judgment*. Our names are removed from the *book of deeds* and written in the *book of life* when we place our faith, our confidence, in the work of Christ upon the cross where He suffered the penalty of death on our behalf (Col. 2:13-14).

- The Lake of Fire is the final destiny of every defendant at *The Great White Throne Judgment* (20:14-15)

If the Lake of Fire is the ultimate destiny of every defendant, why judge their deeds?

The purpose of *The Great White Throne Judgment* is not to determine who goes to heaven and who goes to the Lake of Fire. The purpose of the *Great White Throne Judgment* is to determine the degree of each person's punishment in the Lake of Fire.

Jesus is a righteous Judge. He clearly taught there will be degrees of punishment (Matt. 11:20-24, 12:38-42; Luke 12:47-48; John 19:11). Each person will receive what he or she is due. Hitler will receive far greater punishment than those guilty of far less. Jesus is just.

Many people are offended by the Lake of Fire as being "unchristian," and yet Jesus clearly taught its reality (Matt. 18:8; 23:15, 33; 25:46; Mark 9:46). Jesus suffered the Cross to save us from the Lake of Fire.

The Lake of Fire is a witness to the righteous character of God. He must judge evil; He must judge sin.

The Lake of Fire is a witness to man's responsibility; we are not robots or helpless victims. We are accountable to God. God does not "send people to the Lake of Fire"; we send ourselves.

God loves you and sent Jesus to deliver you from *The Great White Throne Judgment*.

God wants you to be with Him in *Paradise*.

Following the *Great White Throne Judgment* the final chapter of God's Story of Hope will unfold. Actually, this final chapter will bring hope to an end; that for which we hope will be realized. Paradise will be restored.

We will be with God forever.

## Paradise restored for believers

Revelation 21:1 – 22:5

God's story ends with wonderful news – everyone who has trusted Jesus as his or her Savior will enter a beautiful, sin-free paradise and live there eternally with God.

Revelation 21:1–22:5 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

<sup>5</sup> And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."<sup>6</sup> And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.<sup>7</sup> The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.<sup>8</sup> But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

<sup>22</sup> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.<sup>24</sup> By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,<sup>25</sup> and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.<sup>26</sup> They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.<sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb<sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.<sup>4</sup> They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.<sup>5</sup> And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

- God will create a new heaven and a new earth (21:1).

This present earth and heaven<sup>[1]</sup> will be destroyed (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12; Rev. 20:11). God will create a new heaven and a new earth which will be our eternal dwelling place.

- The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven (21:2).

The heavenly Jerusalem is a city of immense proportions (Rev. 21:15-17). This Jerusalem is located in the 3rd heaven, the dwelling place of God. It exists right now, this moment. Just as there is a heavenly tabernacle and an earthly tabernacle (Heb. 8:1-5, 9:11-12), so also there is a heavenly Jerusalem and an earthly Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:2 reveals that the heavenly Jerusalem will come down and settle on the new earth. Our eternal residence will be on the new earth!

- God will dwell with us (21:3).

God deeply desires to be with us; we have seen this throughout His Story. His desire will be fully realized when Paradise is restored.

- God will wipe away every tear (21:4).

Each one of us will have family and friends in the Lake of Fire. Perhaps you've wondered how it will be that you will shed no tears for your loved ones nor mourn nor feel the pain of loss. Verse four is emphatic in the Greek text: God Himself will wipe away every tear from each and every one of our eyes. What that will be like and how it will resolve all causes of pain and sorrow we will not know until we experience His loving touch. Pain, sorrow and crying are so much a part of our existence even as Christians that it is hard to comprehend life without them. But when we are with God we will experience unending joy and unbroken peace for all eternity.

- God's promises (21:5-8).

In verses 5-8 God makes three promises.

First, He will make all things new – the new heaven, the new earth, the new Jerusalem (21:5).

Second, He will freely give spiritual life to all who thirst for it (Rev. 21:6; John 14:1-15).

Third, all who come and receive the water of life will inherit the new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem and, most importantly, a personal relationship with God. Those who do not come and receive the water life will inherit the Lake of Fire (Rev. 21:7-8).

There comes a point when each of us need to respond to God's overtures. He has proven His love for us over and over again throughout His Story of Hope. He warns us of our plight. He reveals His provision and He calls upon us to respond. The following two statements are given to make clear what a response of faith entails. Perhaps today is the day to put your faith in Jesus and join the Story of Hope.

## A Personal Faith Response

Personalize the words of John 3:16-18. Instead of "the world", "whoever," and "he who," put YOUR name in the following paraphrased version of these amazing promises.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_, that he gave his only Son, that if \_\_\_\_\_ believes in him, \_\_\_\_\_ should not perish but \_\_\_\_\_ shall have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son to \_\_\_\_\_ to condemn \_\_\_\_\_, but in order that \_\_\_\_\_ might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> For if \_\_\_\_\_ believes in him \_\_\_\_\_ is not condemned, but if \_\_\_\_\_ does not believe \_\_\_\_\_ is condemned already, because \_\_\_\_\_ has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

### Declaration of Faith:

I now understand that the God of the Bible is the one True God. He is perfect and holy.

Through the teaching of the Bible I now see myself much differently than I previously did. I now realize that I was born with a sinful nature, that I have disobeyed God continually, and that my sin has deeply grieved God who made me and loves me. I know that my sin has separated me from God and that the just punishment for my sin is eternal separation from Him in a literal place of torment that the Bible calls Hell.

I understand that the death and resurrection of God's Son Jesus Christ is the only hope for me to be forgiven, for me to escape the eternal punishment for my sins, and for me to receive God's gift of eternal life.

I am now trusting Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, and no one or nothing else, as the only sufficient remedy for my sin problem and its dreadful consequences.

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[1] 2 Peter 3:10 & 12 speak of the "heavens" plural being burned up and the awaiting of the promised new "heavens", again plural. This indicates that both the first (atmospheric) and the second (outer space) heavens will be destroyed and created anew.