

Soldier Up!

Saints & Spiritual Warfare

"Hell? Yes!"

All of the big blockbuster movies do it. They make you think that the villain has been killed. But he (or she) is not quite dead enough, and the hero is once again in jeopardy until he finishes the task.

Something similar happens at the end of human history. At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ with His church to the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation, you read this:

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Rev 20:2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more...

Satan is defeated and incarcerated. The End. They all lived happily ever after.

No; not quite. I didn't finish reading verse three:

Rev 20:3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

What??!! Released? Why? Let's see.

Revelation 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired,
Satan will be released from his prison

In this chapter, the Holy Spirit goes to great lengths to let us know that there will be a real kingdom of Heaven on the earth, and that it will last one thousand years.

It isn't a metaphor for eternity; or for a long time. It's real; it's literal.

John Walvoord said,

The expositor is not free to spiritualize the interpretation... but must accept the interpretation in its ordinary and literal meaning. If this is done, there is no other alternative than... at the Second Coming of Christ, Satan will be bound for a thousand years. This will constitute one of the major features of Christ's righteous rule upon the earth and will make possible the peace and tranquility and absence of spiritual warfare predicted for the Millennial Kingdom.

“Satan” is incarcerated in the bottomless pit. In his absence there will be justice for all, the wicked will be properly and immediately punished, and even the natural ferocity of the animals will be abated. Righteousness and peace will flourish. There will be economic justice and physical healing.

Will the heart of man change in response to a utopian earth?

Revelation 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Satan is not reformed or rehabilitated after his sentence is served. He's released on his own recognisance. He goes right back to his old ways.

Who are these people he deceives? When Jesus returns to establish the kingdom on earth there are people who have survived the Great Tribulation. The surviving believers are those who repopulate the earth. With perfect conditions, with a utopia on earth, the population explodes. But those children born to believers, and their children after them and so on, will still have a sin nature. They will still need a Savior. They will still need to receive Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

The shocking truth you learn is that, even with Jesus ruling the perfect earth as King of kings and Lord of lords, multitudes will reject Him! You can be forced to obey, but you cannot be forced to be saved; it is a matter of free will.

One writer stated it this way:

It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God (Hoste).

Who are "Gog" and "Magog"? We see these terms in Ezekiel 38 & 39 describing a coalition of nations who invade Israel in the latter times but are miraculously destroyed by God. The battle in Ezekiel occurs *before* the Second Coming of Jesus. The reference to "Gog" and "Magog" here is **not** that battle.

- For one thing, in Ezekiel Gog refers to a great northern power. Here it refers to people from the four corners of the earth.
- For another thing, the numbers here in the Revelation are much greater than those in the coalition of Ezekiel 38 & 39.

- For another thing, the rebels in Ezekiel fall on the mountains and their bodies are buried. Here they are devoured by fire and face immediate and final judgment.

“Gog” and “Magog” are probably a reference to Satan’s chief leaders on the earth. Gog seems to be a demon king and Magog are a people, probably related in history to the ancient Scythians.

Revelation 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

“Camp” can describe those in a battle or the citadel they inhabit. Here it probably is a description of the “beloved city,” Jerusalem. It will be both city and citadel in its beauty and strength.

We can’t be sure if the “saints” referred to are those who have become believers during the millennial kingdom or to us as we rule and reign with Jesus. It might be all of us - called in from our deployments to witness the last stand of God’s enemies against Him.

Once gathered together “fire [comes] down from God out of Heaven and [devours] them.”

None of these conflicts in the Revelation are very interesting. They’re like most of the Pay-Per-View MMA fights you might watch. Blink and you miss it.

We spin stories of God versus Satan but in the end it’s very one-sided.

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Satan is then cast into “the Lake of Fire,” his final place of torment for all eternity. The “beast and the false prophet” were thrown in there at the very beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ.

That is an important point. These two guys are still there, still alive. There is no such thing as annihilation after death; you must go either to Heaven or to the Lake of Fire.

It is popular among Christians to wonder if there really is a Hell; if people really must suffer for eternity for having rejected Jesus Christ.

One thing that really stunned me, as a young believer, was a phrase I heard several times from solid Bible teachers: "Jesus spoke more about Hell and eternal punishment than anyone else in the Bible."

If our loving, compassionate Savior, Who died to redeem the human race, spoke about a literal Hell, a place of eternal punishment... Then no matter what difficulties I may have wrapping my head around it, I cannot discount it.

At the end of the thousand years comes the second resurrection. It is the resurrection of all nonbelievers from all of human history. Unlike the first resurrection, which occurs over a period of time, the second resurrection does occur all at once.

Let me explain that a little more, because the words "first" and "second" can confuse folks.

The first resurrection is a term that describes the resurrection of saved people; but it doesn't happen all at once.

For example Jesus rose from the dead; but all the saints of the church age are still awaiting their resurrection. When Jesus returns, in the clouds, "the dead in Christ will rise first." THEN living believers are transformed, given new, glorious resurrection bodies.

There will be other believers who need to be resurrected - OT saints and Tribulation saints and those who come to faith during the Millennium.

All these constitute "the first resurrection."

All nonbelievers, from all time, **will** be raised all at once. It happens at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, after the final rebellion.

While it is indeed a resurrection in which people receive bodies it is called "the second death."

- The first death is the separation of the soul from the body.
- The second death is the separation of the soul from God for all eternity.

These next are perhaps the most terrifying verses in all of Scripture:

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Revelation 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was

opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Revelation 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Revelation 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Is it Jesus on the throne? He did indicate in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John it would be Him.

Books are opened. One is the Bible; Jesus once said, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."¹

Another book is the Lambs "Book of Life." It has written in it the names of all those who receive Jesus as their Savior.

I believe it is, as an alternate translation renders it, the Book of the Living. Everyone ever conceived has their name listed in it. Those who die having rejected Jesus and His offer of eternal life, who have thus blasphemed the Holy Spirit, have their name removed from the Book. Their names are blotted out.

A third book is a book containing the works of men. I take this to mean the good works they thought they could perform to work their way into Heaven on their own merit.

¹ John 12:48

God keeps a careful record of your works if you are not a believer. In the end He will review them. They will prove woefully insufficient to get you into Heaven.

You can avoid the judgment of your works. The only “work” that can get you into heaven is what Jesus described in John 6:29,

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

This is not a trial. It is a sentencing. This is the Great White Throne judgment. The “sea,” “death,” and “Hades” all “give up” their dead.

- The “sea” and “death” probably refer to the location of the physical bodies of these dead. The “sea” is mentioned so you will understand that no matter the physical location or disintegration of a body God can raise it up again in the end.
- “Hades” is the location of their souls.

We talk about Hell but Hades is a more accurate term. There is a place, Hades, where the spirit goes after death. It has two compartments separated by a great gulf. One side is a place of torment; the other a place of rest, called by Jesus Abraham’s Bosom. Before the death and resurrection of Jesus, everyone who died went to Hades, to one side or the other. After Jesus rose from the dead He emptied Abraham’s Bosom taking those believer’s souls with Him to Heaven. Today if you are a believer and you die you go immediately to Heaven. Nonbelievers still go to Hades, to the place of torment, to await the future resurrection of their bodies - their second death.

When you read “then Death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire” you understand that the bodies and souls of nonbelievers are now in their final, eternal residence.

“Death” is the result of sin, and it is gone. “Hades” is the result of death, and it is gone.

The Lake of Fire is the final place of eternal torment for nonbelievers. God sends no one to the Lake of Fire. It is their choice to go there. God is love; but He is also holy and must judge sin. His love and His holiness are both satisfied by the death of Jesus on the cross. But you must believe God for your salvation. He is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe.²

Those who refuse His offer of salvation by rejecting His Son will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Let me close by reading a passage from the book, *Erasing Hell*, by Francis Chan. Don't let the title fool you; Chan believes in a literal Hell and is addressing the contemporary effort to erase it.

He says,

The question “what is Hell?” has spawned many answers over the years. For Origen, Hell was a place where the souls of the wicked were purified so they could find their way back to God. Dante depicted Hell as a place under the earth’s surface with nine levels of suffering, where sinners were bitten by snakes, tormented by beasts, showered with icy rain, and trapped in rivers of blood or flaming tombs; some were even steeped in huge pools of human excrement. C. S. Lewis’s portrayal of Hell was

² 1Timothy 4:10

significantly less creepy. For Lewis, it was kind of like a dark, gloomy city, or a place where “being fades away into nonentity.” A happier portrait of Hell was painted by the band AC/DC, who said that “Hell ain’t a bad place to be” - it’s where all our friends are. Most recently, Rob Bell said that Hell is not “about someday, somewhere else,” but about the various “Hells on earth” that people experience in this life - genocide, rape, and unjust socioeconomic structures. Through the years, many ideas of Hell have been proposed - some attractive, some not. But if truth is what we are after, we need to stick to what Jesus actually said.