

Revelation 20: 7 - 15

Verse 7: *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,*

Verse 8: *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

Verse 9: *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

This portion of Scripture has caused many people great concern. They ask, "Why should Satan be loosed for a short season? What purpose could God have in unchaining this monster after one thousand years of blessed peace?" The answer is, "The free will of man."

All persons who enter the Millennium are redeemed people (Isaiah 60:2 1 and Joel 2:28). However, one must remember that procreation still takes place during this era of time because those who survived the Tribulation hour enter the Millennium with human bodies. The believers upon the thrones possess resurrected bodies and do not bear children, but the others do. Consequently, the children born during this one-thousand-year period are born with the old Adamic, or sin, nature which has been an inherent part of man ever since the fall of Adam and Eve. Many of them, of course, accept Christ as their personal Saviour, but many do not! In addition, since Satan is bound, there is little to tempt them. They simply do not face the problems and trials which have confronted mankind in past ages. Satan's release, then, is to determine whether or not Christ is real to these children of the Millennium, or whether they have been submissive simply because He ruled *with a rod of iron* (chapter 19, verse 15).

The truth is revealed as millions follow the devil. Yes, even after living with the Lord Jesus Christ for ten centuries, much of mankind rebels. Verses 8 and 9 inform us that Satan deceives the nations internationally (pictured by the four corners of the earth), and gathers them together for one last battle. The army is gigantic in number...*as the sand of the sea.*

Once again the camp of God's people-the beloved city of Jerusalem-is surrounded, just as the armies of the Tribulation hour gathered against Jerusalem to battle (see Zechariah 14:1). Then, in an instant, God destroys them all with a devouring fire from heaven.

To whom do the names Gog and Magog refer? In Ezekiel 38 and 39, they identify Russia. Not so in verse 8. Instead, they most likely indicate the memory of past brutality-much like the names *Pearl Harbor*, *Hiroshima*, and *Iraq* do today. As Gog and Magog (Russia) invades Israel and comes against Jerusalem during the Tribulation hour, such an indelible impression is left upon all the world that now- one thousand years later-the details are still vivid. Thus, this past war, fought in the same area, is brought to mind as Satan once again attempts to destroy Israel.

Verse 10: *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

This is the end for the deceiver of the ages. He is cast into the place *prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matthew 25:41). Many centuries were required for this slanderous culprit to reach his final destination. Now that he has arrived, he will experience nothing but continual torment-day and night-for ever and ever. Amen!

We need to digress for a moment at this point, because many persons-Christians included-harbor a misconception about hell. Whenever they see or hear the term, they picture a place where a little red-suited gremlin stokes the fires and torments his victims with a pitchfork. Satan is neither the stoker nor does he torment his followers-and, as we have observed, he does not enter hell until after the Millennium. As we have already learned, Satan is the *god of this world* [system] (2 Corinthians 4:4), *the prince of the power of the air* (Ephesians 2:2), and the ruler of heavens one and two-the aerial and stellar heavens. He retains this position until he is cast out of heaven (see chapter 12, verses 7-9). He then reigns on earth for the final forty-two months of the Tribulation period. Upon Christ's return to earth, Satan is bound in the *bottomless pit*, and then, following the Millennium, is released for a short season. Finally, he is cast into hell, or

the lake of fire and brimstone, where he is tormented for all eternity. An understanding of these truths is essential to both victorious living and correct interpretation of the Book of Revelation.

We now come to the most awesome portion of Scripture in the entire Bible-the judgment of the wicked.

Verse 11: *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Verse 12: *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

Verse 13: *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

Verse 14: *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

Verse 15: *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Again John says, *I saw*. The term is found thirty-seven times in this book. What a privilege was his! This time he views the gloomiest hour of history- the judgment of the wicked-as well as Christ sitting upon a *white throne*. White is the symbol of purity, justice, and holiness in Scripture. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow* (Isaiah 1:18). *His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white* (chapter 19, verses 7 and 8).

Since "white" stands for all that is honorable and right, what does it symbolize? Integrity-for Christ, Who is *the truth* (John 14:6), is himself the Judge. Notice that the term is *Great White Throne*. This pictures a great judgment that is about to fall on those who have rejected the "so great salvation" question (see Hebrews 2:3).

How does one know that the tender, loving Jesus is the One who sits upon the throne as Judge? The answer is found in John 5:22: *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.* Again, the Father *hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man* (John 5:27). The One raised from the dead-the Lord Jesus Christ-is the Judge, according to Acts 17:31: [For] *he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* That moment is now before us!

What a solemn scene as unregenerate mankind comes face to face with God for the investigation of all their evil deeds. Every transgressor is present: presidents and paupers, high society snobs and skid row derelicts. Yes, this group includes every Christ-rejecter of the ages, small and great, rich and poor, free and bond. *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life [the first resurrection]; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [the resurrection for judgment]* (John 5:28,29). Make no mistake about it, *there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust* (Acts 24:15).

As the unsaved stand before a holy God, the books are opened. Yes, He has record of every wicked deed sinners have ever committed. Nothing remains hidden. Adultery, abortion, drunkenness, drug addiction, harlotry, hatred, lawlessness, murder, rebellion, sexual promiscuity, wife-swapping, and every other abominable practice is then exposed in detail.

How is all this possible? God is both omniscient (all knowing) and omnipotent (all-powerful). The psalmist said in chapter 139, verses 1 and 2, *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.* God knows everything about every member of the human race. God adds, *I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them* (Ezekiel 11:5). I know when you have eyes *full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin* (2 Peter 2:14). I know when your tongue is about to curse, *For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether* (Psalm 139:4). *I the Lord*

search the heart (Jeremiah 17:10). This statement is extremely important, *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies* (Matthew 15:19).

God's books will be totally accurate because He sees every move humans make: *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth* (2 Chronicles 16:9). *All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do* (Hebrews 4:13). That aborted fetus flushed into oblivion, that sex act in a parked car or motel room, that crooked deal for illegal gain-everything is indelibly inscribed in the journal of the Almighty bookkeeper. One cannot hide from God, whoever He may be! Furthermore, no mistakes will be made, for the dead will be judged *out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*. We also see that every unbeliever will be present, for the bodies come forth from land and sea and the souls come from Hades (or hell). Then, body, soul, and spirit are reunited to stand before God.

Many have never realized that there is a time when the wicked are released from hell. This is not a new doctrine or man-made theory. However, for the moment, let's examine a few facts regarding this teaching.

The New Testament contains two Greek words-*Hades* and *Gehenna*-both of which are translated *hell* in our English Bible. The Lord Jesus Christ used both words repeatedly. Why two words? Are there two places? Yes! A simple illustration will help us understand.

Everyone knows **the difference between a local jail and a penitentiary.**

When an individual is arrested for a crime, he is not placed in the penitentiary until he has had a trial. Instead, he is locked up in the local jail (city or county), where he awaits his trial.

Then, upon being found guilty, he is transferred to the penitentiary, where he serves his sentence. The next statement is of extreme importance. Get it! **When Jesus used the word *Hades*, He referred to the local jail-the place where the sinner is bound until the judgment morning. Then, on Judgment Day, the sinner comes out of the local jail (*Hades*), stands before the**

Judge (the Lord Jesus himself), is found guilty, and is subsequently transferred to the final penitentiary of souls (*Gehenna*). The lake of fire is usually synonymous with *Gehenna*.

The eleven instances where Christ mentioned *Hades* are as follows:

Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:22, 23; Acts 2:27; 2:31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13; and Revelation 20:14.

***Gehenna* is mentioned twelve times by the Saviour:** Matthew 5:22; 5:29; 5:30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15; 23:33; Mark 9:43; 9:45; 9:47; Luke 12:5; and James 3:6.

After studying the twenty-three texts, one observes that verses 13 and 14 of our present study now make perfect sense: *Death* [the grave] *and hell* [Hades] *delivered up the dead which were in them*. The plural pronoun "them" indicates two places: *the grave* and *Hades-one* for the body and the other for the soul. Next *they were judged every man according to his works* (that's the trial). Then *death and* [Hades-Greek] *were cast into the lake of fire* [*Gehenna*-the final penitentiary].

Why are they transferred? *Gehenna* differs from *Hades* in that *Gehenna* is a place where there are degrees of suffering. After one has been examined and judged as to how much light he had (how often he heard the message of salvation and rejected it), he is assigned to this place called *Gehenna*, where there are degrees of suffering according to one's light and works. Thus, the final hell will differ for all, depending on one's evil deeds and the number of times he rejected Christ's offer of love.

Now we understand Romans 2:5 a little better: *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up* [storest up, savest up] *unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath*. This is why *it shall be more tolerable* [more bearable, more endurable] *for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for* [Capernaum] (Matthew 11:24). What was Capernaum's sin? Capernaum had greater light since Christ visited the city and preached to her citizens. This is also why the Pharisees *receive the greater damnation* (Matthew 23:14).

Clearly, sinners are raised from *death* and *Hades*, judged by Christ at the Great White Throne, and then transferred to *Gehenna*. The "good news," however, is that none of this happens to those who are trusting in the merits of the shed blood of Jesus. When one trusts Christ, his name is written in the *book of life*. The judgment just discussed is only for those whose names are not found inscribed in the book (see verse 15). If one is saved, he need never be concerned about hell as his eternal destiny, for *he that believeth on [Christ] is not condemned* (John 3:18). He is also *passed from death unto life* (John 5:24). Thus, *there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). Amen.

The great judgment is only for those who participate in the final resurrection which occurs after the 1,000-year or millennial reign of Christ upon earth. Those who were raised prior to the Millennium are eternally secure, for *blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power* (verse 6).