

The End of the World ~ Part 1

Revelation 20:11-15

The End Times

In my last post, we explored **Revelation 20:7-10 ~ HaSatan Again "At Large."** In this post, we begin to conclude our exploration of Chapter 20 to learn about **The End of the World**. No, this is not a "gloom and doom" post for us Believers; but, it sure could be if you have not accepted **Yeshua** as your personal **Lord** and **Savior**. God is still on the throne, and He is in control.

"¹¹ Next I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead in it; and Death and Sh'ol gave up the dead in them; and they were judged, each according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Sh'ol were hurled into the lake of fire. This is the second death — the lake of fire. ¹⁵ Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was hurled into the lake of fire. ~ Revelation 20:11-15 (CJB)

Introduction to the Passage

This passage contains one of the Bible's most personal messages. We ought to read it often. It will help us to be ready to answer the roll call. There is so much packed into these five verses that to adequately do them justice, I have decided to split this post into two parts. We will concentrate on verses 11 and 12 in this post and take up the remainder in my next post.

The judgment is complete. Every person from every era and every region will be there. Every deed and motive will have been recorded. Although God is a God of mercy, he is also a God of judgment. This is taught equally by the **Tanakh**, the **Brit Hadashah**, and **Jewish tradition**. **Sha'ul** speaks of the judgment day in Romans: ***on a day when God passes judgment on people's inmost secrets. (According to the Good News as I proclaim it, he does this through the Messiah Yeshua.)*** ~ Romans 2:16 (CJB) The more we know ourselves, the more it will make us serious and thoughtful to think of this.

There will be only two classes: the saved and the lost. The **books** contain the records of people's works. The **Book of Life** is a separate book that includes the names of all the redeemed. This includes people saved during the 1000 years, and all those people who were part of the first resurrection: ***"Blessed and holy is anyone who has a part in the first resurrection; over Him, the second death has no power. On the contrary, they will be cohanim of God and of the Messiah, and they will rule with him for the thousand years."*** ~ Revelation 20:6 (CJB) The **Great White Throne Judgment** only applies to those people whose names are not written in the **Book of Life**.

The Prophets speak of this judgment as the **Day of Adonai-Tzva'ot**. See Isaiah 2:12, 13:6-13 (a verse of which is alluded to in Matthew 24:29); Ezekiel 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 3:4(2:31) (quoted at Acts 2:20), 4:14(3:14); Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:17-18; Zechariah 14:1-9 and Malachi 4:5(3:23) (alluded to at Matthew 17:10-11).

In the **Brit Hadasah**, we can find the terms **Day of God** (2 Kefa 3:12), **Great Day of Adonai-Tzva'ot** (Revelation 16:14), **Day of the Messiah Yeshua** (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16), and the ambiguous phrase, **Day of the Lord**, which can mean either **Day of Adonai-Tzva'ot** or **Day of the Messiah Yeshua** (1 Corinthians 1:8, 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; 2 Kefa 3:10).

Moreover, God judges not only outward deeds but the inner man. In the **Brit Hadashah**, we see this when **Yeshua** confronts the **P'rushim** (Luke 12:1-5, Matthew 23:23-28) and in the whole tenor of his **Sermon on the Mount** (Mattityahu 5-7); also compare Yochanan 2:23-25; Romans 2:16; Messianic Jews 4:13, 10:30.

The **Tanakh** too speaks of secret deeds and motives when it says: ***"God will bring every work into judgment, concerning every hidden thing, whether it be good or evil"*** (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Compare also Psalm 139. The **Oral Torah** affirms this: ¹

"Rabbi [Y'hudah HaNasi, 135-219 C.E.] said, '... Pay attention to three things, and you will not come under the power of transgression: know what is above you—an all-seeing eye, an all-hearing ear, and all your deeds recorded in a book'" (Avot 2:1)

So, there is no room either for the common misunderstanding on the part of either Messianics, Jews, or non-believers that the **Tanakh** portrays God as stern, judgmental and lacking mercy, with the **Brit Hadashah** picturing Him as so merciful that He overlooks judgment and even justice; or for the opposite mistake of thinking that the **Brit Hadashah**, with its talk of hellfire, focuses on judgment more than the **Tanakh**.

Verses 11 and 12

Next I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. First, it is necessary to identify the one seated upon the throne. ***The One sitting on the throne is Yeshua.*** Although He shares the throne with God the Father (Revelation 3:21), it is through **Yeshua** alone that God renders the final judgment. According to **Yochanan**:

"The Father does not judge anyone, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.... [The Father] has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Don't be surprised at this; because the time is coming when all who are in the grave will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to a resurrection of life and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment." (Yochanan 5:22, 27-29)

Earth and heaven fled from his presence and no place was found for them because they are corrupted by sin, unholy and impure (Romans 8:19-22). Although in the present age the impure defiles the pure, when God Himself appears in glory His purity banishes the unclean, for His holiness cannot abide that which is corrupted by sin (see Matthew 9:20). The only remedy is ***"a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away"*** (Revelation 21:1). [See what we have to look forward to as we continue in Chapter 21 and 22?]

And I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Books were opened; and another book was opened, the Book of Life; and the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to what they had done. This judgment is for all who have rejected God's grace, the forgiveness God offered humanity through His Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. This judgment is not set to determine one's eternal destiny; that is determined when the individual rejects God's offer of salvation. The judgment is to set the degree of punishment which each lost person will receive.

I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of the throne. Rabbi Sha'ul writes:

"All of us will stand before God's judgment seat..." (Romans 14:10). ***"For we must all appear before the Messiah's court of judgment, where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did while he was in the body..."*** (2 Corinthians 5:10) ***"on a day when God passes judgment on people's inmost secrets. (According to the Good News as I proclaim it, he does this through the Messiah Yeshua.)"*** (Romans 2:16)

Books were opened; and another book, the Book of Life. There seem to be two elements in the **Final Judgment**. First, there is judgment for eternal salvation (v. 5) or damnation (vv. 14-15) by being written in the Book of Life. Second, there is a judgment according to works ***from what was written in the books*** (plural); this concept appears in the **Tanakh** at Daniel 7:9-10. From these books, God judges all our deeds,

¹ Jewish New Testament Commentary by David Stern.

both public and secret, and even our innermost thoughts. For the saved this judgment determines rewards (1Corinthians 3:8-15), while for the lost it determines degrees of punishment (Luke 12:47-48).

Special Comparative Notes on Chapter 20:11-12 ²

Among **Premillennialists**, there is a debate on whether the one seated on the **Great White Throne** is **God the Father** or **God the Son**. If it is the same throne in Revelation 4:2 than it was the **Father**. Those who favor **God the Son** cite Revelation 3:21 and Revelation 21:5-8. The glory of **Yeshua** or the **Father** is so intense that *earth and heaven fled from His presence*. They concur with the description of *the dead* and *the books* as presented above.

Amillennialists believe the **Great White Throne** is not a different judgment to be distinguished from other judgments at the close of the age, but merely a description of the only ultimate judgment at the coming of Yeshua. The fact that the *earth and heaven fled from His presence* did not come before the **Millennial Rule, His Second Coming** is not until the end of the **Millennium**. They also cite when **Yochanan saw the dead** come *before God* to be judged prove this is the point in history when **Yeshua** returns.

Postmillennialists believe the final judgment is to take place at the actual *postmillennial* coming of **Yeshua**.

In my next post, we'll examine **Revelation 20:11-15 ~ The End of the World ~ Part 2**.

² Material in this post is taken from "Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated" by Steve Gregg. Notations in brackets, if any, are my comments.