

Revelation
Lesson XII
Revelation 20:11-22:21

The Eternal Destiny of the Redeemed

Introduction:

1. The bulk of the Apocalypse has to do with the judgments of God within history.
 - a. Beginning with chapter 6, these judgments have been portrayed in apocalyptic symbols.
 - b. At Rev. 20:11 we move beyond the time of divine judgments in history to the final Judgment of the world.
2. The scene of Judgment here is fully consistent with every other given in the New Testament.
 - a. All humanity stands before the throne.
 - b. Judgment is according to the works of men.
 - c. The decision rendered to each person is final and irrevocable.
3. In this lesson, we see the complete drama of human redemption brought to its completion.

Body of Lesson:

I. The Final Judgment: Rev. 20:11-15

A. The scene at the “great white throne”.

1. In Revelation, God the Father is usually on the throne; yet Christ is presented as the judge in Acts 17:31, etc.
2. There is no conflict here, for the Father executes all his judgments through the Son. Cf. John 5:22
3. Earth and heaven fled away. Cf. 2 Pet. 3

B. The “book of life” is the citizenship roll of the New Jerusalem. Cf. Ex. 32:32; Mal. 3:16; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:15

C. The fate of death and Hades.

1. Death is the common fate of mankind, and Hades is the common destination of humanity.
2. Both deliver up all in them, and then they are destroyed; they are destroyed, for they have no further purpose to serve.

D. Anyone not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

II. The New Jerusalem: Rev. 21:1-22:5

A. “Now that all evil has been destroyed for ever, and all evil agents have been cast into the lake of fire, that the former heaven and earth have vanished, the final judgment brought to a close, and death and Hades destroyed, God creates a new heaven and earth, and summons into being the New Jerusalem” (Charles).

B. New Jerusalem is heaven as it has been prepared for the redeemed church. Cf. Heb. 12:22

1. This city is “as a bride adorned for her husband”. Rev. 21:2

2. This is further identification of the city as the heavenly state of the church. Cf. Eph. 5

C. All distance between God and his people is removed in this setting. Rev. 21:3

1. Life on earth is probationary.
2. Heaven admits one to the full presence of God.

D. Life in heaven has no inadequacies or unsatisfied needs. Rev. 21:4-7

1. These things are done away: death, mourning, crying, pain, and first things (i.e. things as they were previously known on earth).
2. Persecuted saints of the first century were being told that their present state was not to be their final state!

E. The second death awaits those who are not part of that redeemed body.

F. The holy city described. Rev. 21:9-22:5

1. God's own glory fills the place. Rev. 21:11
2. It is a place of absolute security. Rev. 21:12
3. The city is a perfect cube (21:16) and is thus the ultimate of holy places. Cf. 1 Kings 6:20
4. There is no "temple" external to God's own presence in the holy city.
 - a. Premillennial systems anticipate an earthly paradise with a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem as the goal of the drama of Revelation.
 - b. This passage seems to destroy that theory altogether.
5. All other glories fade into the glory which is heaven's itself. Rev. 21:24-26
6. A negative look at the nature of heaven: no unclean, abominable, or lying persons there. Rev. 21:27; cf. Rev. 22:3a
7. The tree and water of life. Rev. 22:2
8. The very face of the Father will be seen by those in heaven. Rev. 22:4; cf. Ex. 33:20; John 1:18
9. The redeemed share in the eternal reign of the God whose love saved them. Rev. 22:5

III. The Conclusion of the Apocalypse: Rev. 22:6-21

A. A validation of the book. Rev. 22:6-9

1. "These words are faithful and true: is likely to guarantee referring to the entire book of Revelation.
2. Verse 6 emphasizes again that this book points to a series of events "which must shortly come to pass".
 - a. Revelation is abused by those who try to find in it a blueprint for our time.
 - b. It is a document to a persecuted saints of the first century about the outcome of their trials.
3. The "I come quickly" statement of verse 7 has to do with the unfolding of events (i.e. judgment in history) against Rome rather than his personal coming in final Judgment.
4. John adds his own attestation that this book was written by his own hands and contained visions and revelations given by the Lord.

B. A warning to heed the message of the Apocalypse. Rev. 22:10-20

1. This apocalypse is not to be sealed for future generations, for it will come to pass quickly. Rev. 22:10-12
2. Mankind must be prepared in view of the Lord's searching judgments. Rev. 22:14
3. The final attestation to the truthfulness of this book comes from the Lord Jesus himself. Rev. 22:16
4. The final call to repentance and salvation by means of which one can escape the awful fate of the wicked pictured in Revelation is given at 22:17.
5. The contents of the Apocalypse are not to be tampered with by mortals. Rev. 22:18-20

C. The closing benediction. Rev. 22:21

Conclusion:

1. It is hoped that our study of Revelation has taken away the mystery and fear which so often attach to thoughts of this final book of the Bible.
2. It is hoped that our study has strengthened faith and given encouragement to faithfulness in our generation.