

# God's Master Plan In Prophecy

## Lesson 15 – The White Throne Judgment & New Heaven & Earth

*Key Scriptures: Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-8*

### Introduction

The quick defeat of Satan at the end of the Millennial Reign is referred to by some scholars as “the Second Battle of Gog and Magog.”<sup>1</sup> It isn't much of a fight and after Satan is defeated, God will judge the remainder of the people who have lived upon the earth. This judgment is most commonly called "The Great White Throne Judgment" by Bible scholars and marks the ending of time as we now know it. At this point, Satan and the Antichrist will have been completely defeated and life as we know it will cease upon this present earth.

In John's account in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> chapters of Revelation, he packs much detail in a very small space so throughout this lesson we will refer to many other verses to ensure that we grasp the full magnitude of what the Apostle was telling us.

### The White Throne Judgment

**Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.**

This description of heaven matches the one throne described in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation perfectly. Notice that the one who sat upon the throne is the one, "From whose presence earth and heaven fled away." This is a reference to the Wrath of God events in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation at the Battle of Armageddon where the armies of the earth fled away and the heavens rolled as a scroll during the Wrath of God upon the earth. The point here is that in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation, it is Jesus Christ from whom the men of the earth fled away so there can be little doubt as to the one who is sitting upon the throne. He is the same one that fought for Israel in the Battle of Armageddon and the same one who sat upon the throne in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation: Jesus Christ! This is the judgment of all mankind, and only someone who has been in man's shoes can judge them accordingly and fairly. This is why Jesus taught:

**John 5:22, 27-29 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, . . . 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.**

God as a Spirit being could not have fairly judged mankind unless He had walked in flesh, Himself! When Job was going through his great ordeal, he asked many questions of God all of which God answered in the end of Job except one:

**Job 10:4 'Have You eyes of flesh? Or do You see as a man sees?**

God did not answer Job at the time because He could not: Job lived in a time before a virgin had conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit! But today we can know that God certainly knows what it is like to walk in flesh in a sinful and cruel world, because Jesus Christ was the mighty Spirit of God robed in flesh!<sup>2</sup> The one upon the throne is none other than Jesus Christ, and, unfortunately, this fact will be quite a shock for many people in the end.

Keep in mind that the church will have already received its judgment at the Rapture of the Church and the Catching Away of the Saints. At this point in time, we will already have our glorified bodies and have ruled and reigned a thousand years with Jesus. We will be present at the White Throne Judgment because the scriptures say that we will "ever be with the

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The first battle of Gog and Magog was the Battle of Armageddon.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 2:9-10; John 10:30; John 14:6-9; John 1:1,10,14; Isaiah 9:6.

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**This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> revision of what was previously known as the "Dispensation Prophecy Bible Study."**

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Lord"<sup>3</sup> and since Jesus is there, we will be there also but only as spectators and not as participants! If you were ready to go in the Rapture of the Church, then you will not be judged at the White Throne Judgment.

There are then essentially five categories of people being judged at this judgment:

1. Those who died lost before the Millennial Reign;
2. Those who died lost during the Millennial Reign;
3. Those who died saved during the Millennial Reign;
4. Those who are alive at the end of the Millennial Reign and are saved;
5. Those who are alive at the end of the Millennial Reign and are lost.

**Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.**

Everyone who has ever lived that did not go in the first resurrection at the Rapture of the Church will have to stand in judgment at this time. They will be judged according to the "book of life" and the "books." Given the context of these books being mentioned, obviously they are very important! Let's look a bit closer at these "books" mentioned here: according to scripture:

### ***The Book of Life***

The first reference to God keeping a book of those who had obeyed His commandments is found when Moses was interceding for the people after they had made God angry enough to kill them all and start over with only Moses' family.<sup>4</sup> Moses told God that if He did that then to "blot me out of your book which you have written." Moses was the only one at the time that had even come close to completely obeying God's instructions. The primary lesson learned here, then, is that we get our name written in the Book of Life by obeying the commandments of God for the period of time in which we have lived. As we will see, those whose name is written in the book of Life enter into everlasting life,<sup>5</sup> and those whose name is not written in the book of Life enter into everlasting torment in the lake of fire.<sup>6</sup> The scriptures do not teach a concept such as purgatory and in the end we either make it or we do not.

You and I currently live in the wonderful Era of Grace. In order to be saved during the time of Grace, we must "obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Notice the following scriptures:

**2 Thess 1:7-9 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,**

We have studied enough prophecy by now to know that Jesus Christ's return is very close, and when He comes, it will be too late to miss the fiery judgment of hell for those who live in this time of Grace. The scriptures say that He will bring eternal destruction on those "who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." To miss the lake of fire, you must obey the gospel, therefore two questions become of utmost importance: first, "what is the gospel of Jesus Christ?", and secondly, "how can I obey it?" The answer to the first question, "What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?" is found in the first part of the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians:

**1 Cor 15:1-4 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,**

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<sup>3</sup> See 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

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See Exodus 32:32-33.

<sup>5</sup> See Revelation 21:27.

<sup>6</sup> See Revelation 20:15.

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So the gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of His death, burial, and the resurrection. The next question then must be "what must I do to obey the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?" That is, what is the proper response to the story of the gospel? The answer is found concisely in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts where the Holy Spirit had just been poured out and Peter had preached a sermon on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the Gospel.

**Acts 2:37-40** Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." 40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

Those who heard the sermon about the Gospel of Jesus Christ asked an important question, "what shall we do?" In other words, "what can we do in response to the gospel that we have heard?" or "how can we obey the gospel?" And Peter answered them with a three-step plan that corresponds perfectly to the three-part gospel of Jesus Christ. "Repent," or, in other words, turn from your sins and ask God forgiveness thereby "dying to your sinful ways." "Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" putting your old man into a watery grave with Jesus Christ. And then you can "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," and experience the resurrection power within your own life through the "new birth" experience.

Peter's answer is quite different than the answer of salvation given by many denominations and preachers today, so we must ask ourselves, "Was Peter off in His doctrine?" No, this was the original question of people under Grace asking what they must do in response to the Gospel message and it follows that the original answer is still the only answer! Furthermore, Peter was not alone in declaring this doctrine because Philip preached the same message in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, and Paul preached the same message in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts. The scriptures elsewhere likewise agree. Talking about repentance, Paul said "I die daily,"<sup>7</sup> and thus used the symbolism of repentance as representing spiritual death. Paul later taught that we are buried with Christ through water baptism in His name,<sup>8</sup> and that we are "regenerated" or brought back to life through the infilling of the Holy Ghost.<sup>9</sup> To miss eternal judgment, we must obey the three-part Gospel of Jesus Christ: that is, we must repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and receive the precious Holy Spirit. By doing so we are "being saved from this perverse generation," and obviously it takes more than mental belief to escape the lake of fire and you and I can still escape the fires of judgment today, but we must both believe and obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

The scriptures also mentions that those who stand in judgment are judged according to the "books." A careful survey of the scripture reveals the identity of some other "books" by which we will be judged:

### ***The Books of the Bible***

This one should be fairly obvious for the Bible is actually a compilation of sixty-six books which were authored by God and merely transcribed by men.<sup>10</sup> Jesus taught that we would be judged by the words of God:

**John 12:48** "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

There is another book that will be brought up on judgment day and that is:

### ***The Book of Your Life***

Everything that you say and do is being recorded and you will have to give an account of it to Jesus Christ. Of course, you can avoid this by repenting of your sins, having them washed away by being baptized in His name, and receiving the Holy Ghost so that you can go in the Rapture of the Church! Notice the following scriptures:

**2 Cor 3:2-3** You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

<sup>7</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:31.

<sup>8</sup> See Colossians 2:11-12.

<sup>9</sup> See Titus 3:5.

<sup>10</sup> See 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21.

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**Matt 12:36-37 "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."**

God sees everything that we do and say whether it be in public or alone. Our actions and every idle word are being recorded. Thankfully, we can still get forgiveness today, but at the Great White Throne Judgment, it will be too late.

**Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.**

Every person that ever lived who was not resurrected in the Rapture of the Church will be resurrected now. Everyone, both the saved and the lost, will eventually be given a glorified, immortal body because those who are lost will be able to burn forever without dying.

**Rev 20:14-15 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Being cast into the lake of fire is called the "second death." Hell is hot today but not as hot as it will be after being cast into the "lake of fire." The people of the Millennial Reign will be judged accordingly and then the rest of the dead will follow. Time ends as we know it at this point. The Millennial Reign will have been the seventh specific era of human history and the final one of time – now eternity begins!

You may be wondering why those who missed the Rapture of the Church have to stand at a judgment if they are already doomed to everlasting destruction. The scriptures teach that there are degrees of torment with hell being hotter for some. The White Throne Judgment then becomes a "sentencing hearing" for such people. Here are some of the things that I can find in scripture that bring a worst eternal fate. Of course, if a person goes to hell for anything then that is still excruciating torment, but there seems to be somehow a slightly worse judgment for the following cases:

1. Hypocrisy – claiming to live for God and secretly living for yourself, or pretending to be righteous in outward actions only while inwardly and secretly you still live in sin.

**Matt 23:14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.**

2. Child abuse – any kind: verbal, physical, sexual, or mental.

**Matt 18:5-6 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.**

3. People who tempt others to sin or who present a "stumbling block for those who are trying to live for God.

**Matt 18:7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!**

4. People who have been delivered from a life of sin and then turn and walk away from God to blatantly return to their old lifestyle.

**2 Peter 2:20-21 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.**

**John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."**

Of course, it is not too late to repent of these sins and get forgiveness of them – God is still a God of mercy today, but after the Rapture of the Church, He will become a God of Judgment to this world.

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## **The New Heaven and the New Earth**

**Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.**

During this time, the earth as we know it – what we have called “the old earth” – and the heaven as we studied in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> chapters of Revelation will have “passed away” and there will be a “new heaven” and a “new earth.” John also tells us that at this time “there is no longer any sea.” This phrase has puzzled many commentators and I will give a couple of possibilities here as to what could possibly be meant:

1. It refers to a spiritual meaning – The Israeli people were land-loving people who were not known for their ship building skills or sea prowess. The sea represented the great unknown and thus was a symbol of fear and uncertainty. This is probably why God allowed John and Daniel to see the beasts rise up “out of the sea” when they witnessed those particular visions. It could be that the phrase simply means that there will be “no more unknown and fearful uncertainty” on the new earth.
2. It could mean that there is no more individual seas with different continents upon the earth – During the Wrath of God, “every island and mountain was moved from its place.” In Zechariah, we read about people of the earth being able to walk to Jerusalem during the Millennial Reign from every country so it is likely that during the Wrath of God, He will join the continents again into one land mass. When the world was first created the land was probably all connected with only one large body of water around it. Looking at a globe today it is not hard to see how that South America and South Africa used to be joined together and have drifted apart. What caused the drift? The Flood of Noah’s time. Remember that after the Flood, the world was a vastly different place.
3. It could mean that on the new earth, there will be no water in oceans at all – We do know that there will be at least one river flowing through the New Jerusalem. Perhaps the new earth will be so radically different from the current one that oceans and large bodies of water will not be needed!

There are other scriptures that give us more detail about the coming New Heaven and New Earth scattered throughout the Bible. Let’s look at a few:

**Isa 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment And its inhabitants will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not wane.**

Even though the Heavens and the Earth will pass away, God's righteousness and salvation promised to those who love Him and obey Him will not fade away!

**Luke 21:33-35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. 34 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.**

Jesus tells us about the old earth and heaven passing away and then warns us to get ready so that we will be able to escape. In the Greek, the word for “dissipation” refers to headaches and the effects of heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages. The Greek word for “drunkenness” here simply means “intoxication” and when a person begins to drink alcoholic beverages, intoxication begins at the first sip. We only tend to notice it when the effect of the alcohol becomes obvious. The combination of the warning with these words and with the phrase “worries of life” reveal to us that many people live as if they have forever to get things right with God when actually they have less time than they can even imagine. We cannot put off getting our life right with God even a day because the day of the earth's destruction will come sooner than we think!

**Heb 1:10-12 And, "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; 11 THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, 12 AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END."**

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This scripture likens the passing away of the old heavens and earth to a person throwing away old clothes and buying new garments, just as we go shopping for a new outfit and throw away those that have worn down, so will God change out the heavens and the earth!

**2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.**

Here Peter joins the Lord's warning about the old earth's passing catching most people by surprise. He also gives us some additional information: the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the earth will be destroyed by intense heat and thus will be burned up. God destroyed the world the first time in Noah's day with water but the last time will be with fire! Peter used this text to preach to the church in his final letter:

**2 Peter 3:11-13 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**

The sureness of the coming burning up of this earth and the things of this life should cause us to carefully consider and choose our conduct and lifestyle. We must live our lives ready and not allow ourselves to get caught up in the cares of this world because this earth is only a temporary home and will soon pass away. We will spend eternity upon a new earth created by God especially for us – it will be much greater and more beautiful than this earth could ever be!

**Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.**

This is the New Jerusalem which comes out of the new heaven down to the new earth. It is this city that has the streets of gold and pearly gates, not "heaven." We will discuss this fabulous city in detail in the next lesson.

**Rev 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,**

On the new earth, it will be nothing like it is now under Grace. Currently in Grace, God's abode is in heaven and in Spirit-filled believers – in the coming new earth, God will dwell in visible form upon the new earth with His people. We will not be living "by faith" where we trust God for things that we cannot see. We will forever be with Him in an awesome environment that we can only somewhat imagine from the meager clues given in a few verses of promise.

**Rev 21:4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."**

There will be no death in the new earth and no reason to cry. There will not be pain and the "first things have passed away." It sounds almost too good to be true, but the great God who created this universe and this earth with all of its current wonders, will create something even greater than this world! I do not know exactly what it will look like or precisely what we will be doing at this time, but it will be so great that we will not even worry about the old earth or the events of the past! God will create a place with no heartache and no suffering!

**Rev 21:5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."**

Almost as if to say "I know it sounds too good to be true, but it is" God commands John to write "these words are faithful and true!" The old earth and old heaven will pass away just as God has said and those who obeyed His commandments will spend eternity with Him in a much better earth and heaven!

**Rev 21:6-7 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.**

The one who "sat upon the throne" says "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," and that is the same description of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1:11! There can be no doubt that the one God who sits upon the throne and who

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will create the new heaven and new earth is Jesus Christ! "Alpha and Omega" are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, so Jesus is basically saying "I am everything you need from A to Z."

**Rev 21:8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**

The scriptures are very clear as to the fate of those who were not ready to meet Jesus Christ at the judgment: "their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." This is the "second death" because it is not a judgment that lasts a little while and then they are freed, but rather this is an eternal punishment! Just as the Church will be spending forever with Jesus Christ in a fabulous new earth and heaven, the sinners who are lost when Jesus comes will spend forever burning in torment in the lake of fire.

I have often said that most people do not take the time to contemplate eternity and exactly what "forever" means, because if they would do so, then nothing in the scriptures would seem too demanding, extreme, or harsh. Jesus is a merciful and loving God who came to earth and died for us so that we could escape such a horrible punishment. The way to eternal life is clearly spelled out by obeying the Gospel example of His death, burial, and resurrection. When a person rejects that plan, they are rejecting the very love of God and in so doing are choosing their own fate. Technically, God did not send them to hell, they sent themselves to hell by rejecting the merciful and loving hands of God reaching out to them.

Hell and the lake of fire is a very real place but it was originally created for the devil and his angels.<sup>11</sup> Jesus taught on hell more than any other subject because He did not want you to go. You do not have to go: He has a better place prepared for you in a new heaven and new earth, and you do not have to wait until then to enjoy the benefits of serving God with all of your heart because you can be born again of the water and the Spirit today and even life on this earth will be much better with God involved! I heard a preacher once say "imagine your best day on earth and then realize it is nothing compared to the happiness of an eternal life with Jesus Christ. Then imagine your worst day on earth and then realize that it is nothing compared to the awful place called the lake of fire." In light of eternity, there is really no choice as to what I will do today: I will choose to serve the Lord and obey His Word! My payoff will be in eternity!

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<sup>11</sup> See Matthew 25:41.