

Revelation (2020) – 21

21-1

- The end of the Kingdom has come, and yet there are things left undone
 - We've studied the high points of the thousand years of Christ's rule on Earth
 - We learned about the amazing life in store for all of us in that place, which is soon to arrive on earth
 - And we learned that after this period ends, there will be a final war to bring Creation to an end
 - That war fulfills God's purpose for Christ's rule, and as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15, all Christ's enemies will finally be destroyed
 - Then we experience 7+ years of clean up before this Creation is eliminated
 - This additional time tacked on to the end of the Kingdom will be a testimony to God's faithfulness to Israel
 - And those seven years will be an interesting time all their own
 - It will be a unique time in which all humanity will be saved and believing and there will be no enemy of God at work on earth
 - Those seven years will be the closest anyone will have ever known to living in the Garden of Eden as Man and Woman did

21-3

- And now all that remains is a great judgment of all who opposed God throughout all the age of the Creation and Kingdom
 - That's where we start tonight...starting with Satan himself

21-4

[Rev. 20:10](#) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

- After the 1,000 years are over and the war has ended, Satan is judged
- But notice his judgment is not an end of his existence but rather the start of a new existence in torment

21-5

- Satan joins the false prophet and the Antichrist in the Lake of Fire
 - The false prophet and Antichrist entered the Lake of Fire at the start of the Kingdom
 - At that time, I said we would wait to examine that place until we reached the end of the Kingdom
- So today we learn what we can about the final place of judgment and how the enemy and ungodly humanity will enter it
 - Starting with the reality that this place actually exists and lasts forever
 - In fact, the place is already in existence now, but where is it? Back in Revelation 14 we learned this:

21-6

Rev. 14:9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

Rev. 14:10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

- It appears the lake exists in the heavenly places outside our sight and exists in “the presence of the angels”
 - It’s empty right now, and during the 1,000 year Kingdom it will hold only the false prophet and Antichrist
 - But immediately after the war of Gog and Magog, Satan will join them reuniting all three members of the False Trinity
- This place is the home of the ungodly and unbelieving for all of eternity
 - Notice in Revelation 20:10 that Satan is tormented there forever and ever
 - This is an unambiguous statement and it is confirmed by numerous other verses in the Old and New Testament
 - In Matthew 25:46, Jesus affirms that judgment for unbelief involves physical torment forever and ever without relief
- When we hear this, we instinctively wonder about the fairness of such an arrangement

- We might think that the punishment doesn't fit the crime, as if the Lake of Fire is a prison where the ungodly pay back their debt before God
 - Under that scenario, we would expect that eventually they would have completed that payment
 - But that's not the right way to understand eternal punishment
 - It's not a place of restitution or atoning...it's a dwelling place for those who are unable to enter into the presence of God

21-7

2Th. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,

2Th. 1:7 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,

2Th. 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2Th. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

- That's the definition of spiritual death: it's being eternally separated from the presence of God
 - Just as the believer's future is "eternal" life so is an unbeliever's future eternal too
 - The Bible also calls this the Second Death, which is defined as spending eternity away from God
- The Second Death is eternal because evil, the fallen nature of Satan, his demons, and all unbelieving humanity last forever
 - After death there is no second chance for redemption, therefore all remain in torment away from the presence of God forever
 - They aren't paying off their debt; they are living in an existence appropriate for their continually sinful nature
- So after the Kingdom and the War of Gog, there will be three creatures in the Lake of Fire, and certainly all deserve to be there
 - But the Lord cast them there without formality or conducting a public trial and obviously, the Lord's judgments are subject to inspection

- His judgments are always righteous and no one stands in judgment over God
- Nevertheless, the Lord will give the rest of humanity a public trial of sorts before they face their judgment
- And in preparation for that moment, the unbelieving dead will be resurrected into new bodies just as we did at an earlier point

21-8

Rev. 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

21-9

- Remember that the First Resurrection was for all believers, while the Second Resurrection is for all unbelievers
 - The rest of the dead in v.5 refers to all those who were not resurrected in the First Resurrection prior to the Kingdom
 - This is the second resurrection, and it is not a blessed event
- That's where we are now...at the moment when the Kingdom has ended, all unbelievers have died and it's time to wrap things up
 - Just as the Kingdom could not start until all believers from this age were ready to enter together...
 - Neither could the final judgment take place until all unbelievers were ready to be judged
 - And now at the end of the Kingdom, all unbelievers are ready to face judgment

21-10

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.

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.

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.

[Rev. 20:14](#) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

[Rev. 20:15](#) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- John sees a great, white throne appear and an unnamed individual seated on it, but we know this is Jesus
 - John and Peter tells us that Jesus has been appointed by the Father to judge all

21-11

[John 5:21](#) "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

[John 5:22](#) "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

[Acts 10:42](#) "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

- Earlier Jesus judged the living, meaning the believing, when He assigned us our eternal rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ
- And now Jesus is seated at the Great White Throne Judgment ready to judge the dead, meaning the unbelieving
- And as this judgment commences, John says Earth and Heaven will have fled away
 - The term "heavens" in this context refers to the first and second heavens, the physical creation
 - So as this judgment starts, all the universe is gone in an instant

[Luke 21:33](#) "Heaven and earth will **pass away**, but My words will not **pass away**.

- The Greek word for fled is *pheugo*, which means to run away
 - It's the same word that the Apostle Mark uses to describe himself running naked after being seized in the garden
 - Imagine how fast a naked Mark must have run to hide, and that's a sense of how quickly the physical Creation will disappear

- And then all humanity from all history will be present before the throne in this moment
 - Imagine how many souls that will be? All who have ever lived on the planet for seven thousand years
 - How many billions and billions of people will be there? Hard to even imagine, but you will be there too
 - And yet we will occupy some “space” without a creation to hold us, and that too is impossible to imagine
 - The only light will be Jesus Himself, since the sun will be gone, and there will be no earth under our feet or so we
- So all unbelievers are resurrected and stand before Christ in this moment, the great and the small (it’s an equal opportunity judgment)
 - They are judged from books present in that moment, but first where do all the dead come from? Where have they been all this time?
 - First, let’s review what happens when someone dies, since the result varies depending on who you are and when you die
 - Human beings consist of a spirit (or soul) and a body, and our spirit is eternal while our body is temporary
 - Our body always disintegrates when our spirit departs, but our spirit lives on in one of two conditions
 - For saints, the destination of our soul is comfort, and the exact location varies according to when in history we die, according to Scripture
 - Before Christ, believers went to Abraham’s Bosom to await the Messiah’s arrival
 - After Christ died and set these captives free, an unbeliever’s soul went directly to Heaven to be with Jesus
 - In the First Resurrection, believers from all time receive new bodies and are forever with Jesus from that point
 - But for unbelievers, the destination for the soul has always been the same place: torment in Hades (or Hell) followed later by the Lake of Fire
 - And in v.13 we are given the locations from which these dead will be raised

21-12

21-13

21-14

21-15

21-16

- First, Hades or Hell gives up its dead which is a reference to the clearing out of all unbelieving humanity
- Every unbeliever since Cain will be found living in Hades at this moment except for two human beings
 - The Antichrist and false prophet will be gone from Hades since they will already be in the Lake of Fire
 - The rest are now being cleared out of that place after having spent hundreds and thousands of years there waiting
- Secondly, the sea gives up its dead, and the reference to the sea is confusing because it's actually being used euphemistically here
 - This is a reference to the abyss, the holding place for the demons next to Hades in the center of the earth
 - In the Bible the sea is a picture or euphemism for the abyss, a place of confinement for the ungodly angels
 - In Hebrew the word *tehom* can be translated either as a pit (as in the abyss) or as sea
 - And that reflects how Jews understood the sea to be a metaphor for the abyss and that's how John is using it here
 - This judgment is for both the ungodly humans and the disobedient angels also, so they are brought up from their prison too
 - Demons anticipate this moment and know it is coming

21-17

21-18

[Matt. 8:28](#) When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way.

[Matt. 8:29](#) And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

- Finally, John says "death" gives up its dead, referring to the first death which has been in effect until this moment
 - Notice that "death and Hades" are joined together in v.13 and are distinguished from the "sea" or the abyss
 - The abyss is reserved for demons, but death and Hades are reserved for humans since we have a body that dies

- So the First Death is giving up its dead in the sense that it's coming to an end
- So death isn't a location, it's a state of being...so in that sense, "death" is giving up those who were in its grasp
 - And in its place will come the Second Death
 - And since death and the earth itself are passing away, then Hades itself will no longer exist
- So all unbelieving humanity will now stand together, rebels opposed to God and we can safely assume this must be a profoundly somber moment
 - All the unrepentant sin in the world will be on display in a single moment
 - We were born like them and but for the grace of God, we would stand in this place
 - Always remember you were spared from experiencing this moment for no reason except for the mercy of God
 - But at this moment, every knee will bow and tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord

21-19

Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

Phil. 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So if all their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, why are they still subject to His judgment?

- All their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, but it does not save them at this point because they confess the obvious
 - Their expression is not done as a matter of faith in God's word
 - Their confession is just self-evident truth, and since there is no faith required, then no salvation is possible
- Then in v.12 these souls are judged according to books that are opened before them and presumably the contents of the books are read aloud

- Notice there are two different books described: a book of life and the books of deeds
- The book of life is mentioned in various places in Scripture

21-20

Phil. 4:3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rev. 3:5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Rev. 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

- From these passages, we learn that the Book of Life is where the Lord has recorded the names of all those who receive His mercy
 - It's the family record of the sons and daughters of God, and these names are recorded in this book before the Creation was made
 - So the Lord had a certain family in mind even before Adam and Woman existed
 - And all of human history has played out according to God's plan leading to every name recorded in that book being born
 - And having been born, they were saved by faith and later resurrected at the first resurrection
 - So if the Great White Throne judgment is for unbelievers only, why is the book of life present?
 - Simply put, it proves that none of those souls standing for this judgment are worthy of acquittal or of eternal life
 - None of them have confessed Christ, none have received forgiveness, none are in the family of God
 - This is the closest moment you can find in the Bible to the old fable of Peter at the Pearly Gates checking a list

- Since none will be found in the book of life, then it remains for them to be judged according to the other books present at this judgment
 - John says that the dead are judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds
 - So what are these books exactly? Two answers have been proposed
- One answer is that these books are a recorded history of every person's sinful deeds which make them deserving of judgment
 - Every person's life is a long tale of sin, and our deeds condemn us apart from God's grace in the provision of Jesus
 - At this point, we begin to wonder how long will this moment last?
 - How long will it take to judge billions of people involving a recitation of all the evil deeds done in every person's life?
 - A second possibility is that the books that are opened are the five books of Moses, the Law in other words
 - If so, then the reading of these books would be to enumerate the standards for righteousness
 - And then each person standing would be judged according to whether they meet the requirements of the Law
 - In that case, the judgment would be much shorter, because we need only recite a single sin in each person's case
 - Breaking one law makes a person a law breaker and therefore worthy of judgment
- Notice John says in v.15 "if" anyone is not found in the book of life, then they suffer judgment, which seems to suggest some might be found
 - But none will be found, because the search isn't intended to vindicate but to confirm conviction
 - If anyone had been recorded in the book of life, they wouldn't be standing here in this moment
 - They would have been included in the first resurrection

- So since all will fail this test, all will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire, John says
 - They are thrown “alive” in the sense that they are conscious and aware of their situation
 - This is further confirmation that the Second Death is not annihilation but a new eternal existence
- So the present Universe and humanity’s home for the past 7,000 years is now gone as are all those who opposed God
 - All that remains are saints in eternal bodies, the angels and the Trinity of the Godhead
 - And that brings us to the next age of eternity, a time of great mystery in Scripture
 - All that we know about what follows the Kingdom is given in just two chapters of the Bible, the final two chapters
 - Revelation 21 & 22 tell us about the New Heavens and New Earth that will replace the one we have now
 - It raises more questions than it answers though, and in that regard it follows in the biblical pattern of progressive revelation
 - The Lord has always revealed Himself to mankind progressively over a series of revelations
 - We see that as we read through the Old and New Testaments, as prophets increasingly received more and more understanding

21-22

21-23

[Heb. 1:1](#) God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

[Heb. 1:2](#) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- This pattern seems to continue with the New Heavens and New Earth, since the Lord only gives us a little to know now
 - Perhaps when we are in the Kingdom, the Lord will grant us more understanding of what is coming after
 - So we can say that with respect to the New Heavens and New Earth, we are like the Old Testament saints knowing only a little

21-24

[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.

[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.

[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,

[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.”

21-25

[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.”

[Rev. 21:6](#) 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.

[Rev. 21:7](#) “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

[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.”

- As we study the final two chapters of the Bible, we will also be referring back to the first two chapters of the Bible because one is patterned on the other
 - Notice right away how Chapter 21 opens saying a new heavens and earth have been created
 - Compare that to Genesis 1:1

21-26

[Gen. 1:1](#) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

- This parallelism will continue through Chapter 22, and as we encounter it, we will make note of it and explain its purpose
- Unlike Genesis 1, we don’t get a clear description of what the new earth looks like, apart from a few tantalizing details
 - The first detail we receive is in v.1, that this new world will lack seas altogether

- This is in stark contrast to the current earth which is more sea than land
- Why did God include a sea in the first Creation but not in the new Creation?
 - Scripture says God makes no mistakes and never changes His mind so we can't say He just improved on the design
 - There must be some reason why seas were good the first time but not necessary the second time
 - Because this issue will come up again in these chapters, we will wait until we have all the details before solving the riddle
- Next, the Lord places a city on this new earth, called the New Jerusalem but the city isn't built by human beings on the new earth
 - Instead, the Lord delivers the city to earth, remade from heaven
 - Scripture teaches us that this city already exists right now in the heavenly realm waiting for this future day to appear

Heb. 11:15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

- The arrival of the New Jerusalem will be witnessed from the earth, and its appearance will be like that of a bride made ready for a husband
 - Imagine the moment you turn to look down an aisle to watch a bride appear and walk toward her groom
 - It's dramatic, anticipated and celebrated, and so it will be for the New Jerusalem at this moment
 - We can safely assume that we will never have seen it before this moment, even while we were present with Jesus in heaven
 - It will be a special moment, giving us something to look forward to even while we live in the 1,000-year Kingdom

- In the original creation, the Lord also prepared a special city for mankind and then placed man in it

21-27

Gen. 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Gen. 2:8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

- Notice that the city was created on earth and man was placed in it, meaning Adam descended into it
- But in the New Heavens and Earth we are on the earth and the city descends to us
- In vs.3-8 John hears a declaration that the arrival of New Jerusalem means that all things have been restored to a perfect state
 - All the negative impacts of Adam's sin and the resulting curses have now been rectified and restored
 - And that's why we're seeing this repeat connection between Genesis 1-2 and these chapters
- First, in v.3 John says the Triune God may once again dwell among men
 - For the first time since the garden of Eden, the Father will dwell on Earth
 - We will dwell with God the way Adam once did
- Secondly, the creation has been cleansed of sin and all its consequences – there will be none of the markers of sin
 - No tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain...all things that exist because of sin, they were not part of God's perfect creation
 - It was sin that corrupted mankind and led to the curses on earth and all creation
 - All sources of rebellion and sin find their source in Adam and before him, Satan
 - But all that is past, and the Lord has corrected it all
 - Reinforcing this imagery of a full circle conclusion, Jesus reminds us in vs.5-6 that He is making all things new as He promised to do

21-28

- And He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end
- Remember in the beginning was the Word, Jesus, and the Word created the heavens and earth
- And now at the end, Jesus is again creating all things new again, so truly He is the Beginning of creation and the End of creation
- And Jesus adds He is also the source of all life and righteousness which brings life
 - The key to being present to experience these amazing things is to have believed in the Alpha and Omega
 - If you thirst for the water of life, which is an illusion to the Spirit of Life, then Jesus is your supply
 - And those who overcome sin and death and the enemy and this corrupt life are those who place their faith in Jesus
- As we reach the end of this book and the end of the Bible, we will increasingly find calls to believe and receive salvation in Jesus
 - And that's what we would expect, because this story exists in our Bible not just to encourage the believer of their future
 - It's here to persuade the unbeliever to seek for Jesus while they still can, and so that point will be made repeatedly in 21 & 22
- Nevertheless, there will be many who insist on living apart from God now and so they will spend an eternity apart from Him later
 - And in v.8 John provides a list of the sins representative of an unbeliever's lifestyle
 - This list of sins are not unique to unbelievers, and in fact we may share one or more of these from our past or even our present
 - The point is that these are the natural fruit of unbelief, while they are the unnatural fruit of believers
 - It's possible for a believer to live this way, but it's contrary to our new nature, yet is consistent with an unbeliever's nature
 - More importantly, in that day unbelievers will be the only ones who practice these things...all our sin will be gone

- So it will be true to say in that moment that those who conduct themselves in these ways are going into eternal punishment
- For these behaviors will be unique to this group, and as we saw already, they will experience the second death
- The ultimate criteria for exclusion is they were unbelieving and so they enter the Lake of Fire
- So after the city has descended, we who have received the grace of God in Christ will enter the city as Hebrews promises

21-29

[Heb. 12:22](#) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

[Heb. 12:23](#) to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

[Heb. 12:24](#) and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

- According to Hebrews, the city will be home to several categories of Creation
 - First and foremost, the Godhead will dwell in the city
 - Secondly, the entire host of angels will live there
 - Next, the church of the firstborn which is a reference to the church saints, the New Testament Bride of Christ
 - Finally, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, which is a reference to all other believers
- That will be quite a neighborhood and it sure beats any exclusive zip code you might have today
 - And next John gives a bit of a tour of the city, and since there is no cross referencing available we will just take it for what it is