

Rev 26-07-08b

Let's pick up our investigation of Revelation chapter 20. We are at the point now where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are being tormented day and night, forever and ever. Something unique and special to angelic punishment.

I don't know what that means. We will understand it better by and by. It is different than the fate of humans.

In the same way that you can put gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble in the same fire. Some are consumed and some are not. Angel stuff appears to be more impervious to whatever the lake of fire represents than human beings are.

But here we are in verse 11. I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. That is the end of this universe.

Carl Sagan, the cosmos is all that ever was, is, or ever will be. Well, sorry Carl, but the cosmos is coming to an end, and lamentably, probably Carl with it. And it's such a shame when you see talented and gifted and accomplished individuals who have failed in the only thing that counts, which is to recognize and appreciate the Lord Jesus and accept Him as Savior, live a life that is ultimately without point and purpose and lasting meaning.

It's just an inestimable tragedy. But it is from the face of God that the earth and heavens flee away. It doesn't just say he detailed an angel with a machete.

He doesn't tell the angels to go set it on fire. They flee from his face. As the presence of God the Father becomes imminent, becomes immediate, draws near, this cosmos, this earth and heavens, as wonderful as they are, are incapable of existing in his presence.

The galaxies, the seemingly infinite space with its untold billions of stars will flee away and won't exist anywhere anymore. No place is found for it. But we will still exist because we are no longer trapped or limited to this time-space continuum, this space-time fabric, as they like to call it.

There's found no place for them. Verse 12, And I saw the dead small and great. What does it mean by small and great? This wouldn't be physical stature.

Small and great. Your notoriety does not distinguish one in any way at this resurrection of the dead. This is now the fourth resurrection.

Lord Jesus number one, church number two, beginning of the millennium, passing under the rod for Israel, number three. Only those are raised who were of faith, some to a resurrection of shame and contempt, Daniel 12, to others, to a resurrection of life, beginning of the millennial kingdom. At the end of the millennial kingdom, heaven and earth flee away.

This is now the fourth resurrection. And these are the dead small and great. And you could say in the margin or put it in parentheses here, the still dead, those who have not qualified for any of the first three resurrections.

You're not the Lord Jesus, so you're not in number one. You weren't a church age believer. You must have been an unbeliever.

If you lived in this age, you were an unbeliever in the millennial kingdom and died. And if you didn't die, if you were an unbeliever and didn't get slain when fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours everyone at the Gog Magog rebellion, when the heavens and earth flee away, you're dead anyway. You've got no place for your body to live.

And so you are now the dead, right? This is the unbelieving dead of every age and the believing dead of the millennial kingdom. There are those who will be born who will come to maturity, the ability to make an informed decision. They will choose Jesus Christ visibly.

They don't place their faith in him. They accept him. They acknowledge him.

They welcome him. They want to be united to God the Father through him. They see his work depicted in the millennial sacrificial system at the millennial temple and they're for it.

Perhaps they die. There will still be problems in the time of the millennial kingdom and it could be that believers who are of the 2.0 greatly improved humanity will still die. If they do, they will come back at this because they are dead and now they're not.

So small and great. You could also see small and great. Maybe the small are all the unbelieving dead and the great are those who accepted the Lord Jesus and came to the Father through him in the millennial kingdom.

Depends on how you want to view that. In any case, they are all there standing before the throne. Scratch out God.

By far the best texts refer back to the throne that is mentioned in the previous verse. The great white throne. The dead small and great stand before that great white throne.

And the books were opened. And another book was opened which is of life. There are books and there is the book.

The books contain works. The book, the one of life, is what was your decision about Christ? What think ye of Christ? Did you accept him or did you reject him? Unbelievers of previous ages to and through this one and into the millennium. If you place your faith in him or if you accept him, your name is in the book.

If you have some excuse, you've got a better idea and you live and die and never accept the Lord

Jesus Christ. Desire relationship with the Father through him. He that comes to God must understand that God is and he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

If you're not seeking him and you don't want to find him, you're going to be in this group. So, the dead were judged according to their works by the things which are written in the books plural. This is how we know the plural books record what people did.

Why are they judged according to their works if the lake of fire is annihilation as I believe that it is? What does it matter if you were mildly evil or horrendously evil? This is not to determine levels of torment. This is to let someone present their case for the defense. We have current criminals that are in the justice system right now for murdering prominent public figures or other crimes that were caught on video.

There's no doubt in anybody's mind that these people are guilty as sin. Yet, there is a trial. They have a defense lawyer and they can put on their case.

Give me your best shot. Show me why you should not be found guilty when everything in the world indicates that you are guilty, guilty, guilty. The books will be opened.

God will invite the defendant to demonstrate why his works qualify him to go into the eternal future with God. The very heavens and earth can't exist in the presence of God. When God the Father comes, this material stuff is groaning.

The whole creation groans, waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. Because it knows that this is imperfect. It is temporary.

It is not an eternal universe. When the eternal God appears, the heavens and the earth flee away from his face, from his observation, from his presence, from his character, from his perfect righteousness and justice. These individuals are going to have to stand before the throne of God the Father.

Their works, every one of them, is going to be brought into evidence and God is going to fold his arms and say, Show me how this qualifies you to dwell in my presence for the eternal future. Every single one of those is going to fail. There is no viable defense.

Because if there were, your name would be in the book of life. And it isn't. That is the only means by which anyone can go into the kingdom of the Father.

Your name has to be in the book of life. Now, there is another purpose, a second purpose for the books that record works. The aforementioned millennial believers who lived, placed their confidence in Jesus Christ.

You can't rightfully call it faith because it's not evidence of things not seen. But they see Jesus and they accept him. They want relationship with God the Father through him.

They want to be cleansed. They want to be sanctified. They want to go into the eternal future and live in a heavens and earth superintended by the great almighty God that is perfectly communicated and reflected in the Lord Jesus.

They want that. They choose that. And yet, for some reason, result of crime, accident, whatever it might be, even in their greatly improved mortal state, they die.

They will be raised. They will have a judgment of works. That is a parallel to our judgment seat of Christ.

This will determine because they lived their life in the millennial kingdom. In my view, my speculation is that babies and toddlers who die in these previous ages, including our own, will come back with human body 2.0 in the millennium. And they will get the chance to operate according to divine standards and to embrace the righteousness of God and to seek to have it characterize their own lives.

And there will be works. This, again, is the sheep and goats judgment. When I was naked, you clothed me.

When I was hungry, you fed me. When I was thirsty, you gave me to drink. When I was sick and in prison, you visited me.

This is the still present imperfection in various places in the millennial kingdom. And there will be believers who are living their life, getting their chance to not only make a decision about Jesus Christ, but to live a life that reflects obedience and an embrace of the righteousness of God. And those books contain their works and their place in the kingdom of the Father will likewise not be determined by, well, this is what you would have done had you lived.

Or this is what, you know, I'll tell you what would have happened. There is actual demonstration. There are actual decisions, visible actions that are recorded in the books and form the basis of this judgment.

So that's why there are multiple books of works. Some are the works of unbelievers judged insufficient for eternal life. Others are the works of believers who died during the millennial kingdom because they are human body 2.0. And their works will determine their opportunities.

Are they going to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem? Will they have a dwelling place there? How close will they be to the throne? What will be their privileges and their opportunities? What will be their roles and functions? Just like us. Everyone gets a chance to make a decision about Christ. Everyone gets a chance to make a decision about God the Father.

Usually even before that. If you want the Father, you then get the information about Christ. And then post-salvation, what is our level of commitment, of interest, of desire to be obedient and in

this age faithful? Faithfulness.

That will be judged for all of those that have not already been judged at the great white throne. All of Israel that was resuscitated for the millennium has now had a chance to operate as we do. With the fullness of scripture and the presence of the Holy Spirit that has been poured out on all of them.

All their flesh. So church had an opportunity to be assisted, to be led into all truth, to be enabled, empowered, gifted and so on. The believers of Israel who live in the millennial kingdom in wonderfully improved mortality now have the Holy Spirit and show what they can do with the Spirit.

That will be judged at the great white throne. All the dead, small and great. So, now verse 13.

This is so interesting. The sea gives up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. The sea is given first and is distinct from death and Hades.

I don't know if you really care about this one way or the other. I find it very fascinating. But when you ask yourself the question, why doesn't God just say the dead, small and great came up, they were judged.

Those that weren't found in the book of life thrown into the lake of fire. Why does it bother? Why does God give us this? The Lord Jesus Christ as a part of this revelation includes these details. Now, are they important or not? Do we care? Well, I'm a believer in the lake of fire.

Believers go into the eternal future in some mode. Why didn't He just simplify it? But He gives us these details. In verse 13.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. So, one of the first things that fascinates me is, this of course is yet future. But John is recording it as a past event.

These are past tenses. Because He's telling us what He saw in the vision. I had the vision a few minutes, a few hours ago.

And this is what I saw happen in the vision. But the vision for us records future things. So, it's future events recorded in past tense.

Which is fascinating to someone who enjoys language. So, we have three repositories for the dead. The dead are given up, first by the sea.

Then by death and Hades, which are paired. So, you have the sea giving up the dead that are in it, singular. Death and Hades, who are partners, give up the dead that are in them, plural.

Now, where do you remember seeing this before? Remember the fourth horseman. If you go

back to, just keep your finger here and go back to Revelation chapter 6. When the Lord Jesus begins opening the seals. The fourth seal is opened.

I heard the voice of the fourth creature, living creature, saying, come and see. So, I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. Where you see death, you see Hades, in this book.

Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill, with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. There are a lot of ideas about why it is expressed in this way. Why these two are given together and yet are separate.

Here are some observations to help us sort out the sea, death, and Hades. Number one, kept an obvious. These entities contain dead people.

Because they give up the dead that are in them, right? Number two, the sea is distinguished from Death and Hades, which are sort of twins. They are partners in some way. We saw that in Revelation 6 and we see it here.

Number three, Death and Hades are personified and cast into the lake of fire. Take a look at verse 14. Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.

This is the second death. Death suffers death. But Death and Hades are together in what happens in earthly life-ending situations.

When death happens, Death and Hades are involved. And they are together thrown into the lake of fire, not the sea. What happens to the sea? Look at the first verse of the next chapter.

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. We saw that back in verse 11 of chapter 20. Also there was no more sea.

There is a judgment on Death and Hades because being cast into the lake of fire is a judgment. The sea is not judged. The sea, like the heavens and the earth, which are not judged, just goes away when the heavens and the earth go away.

So Death and Hades are unique in that regard. They suffer a judgment by being thrown into the lake of fire that the sea does not. The sea simply disappears.

That's your fourth point. The sea simply disappears with the old creation. It is not judged.

So the sea is somehow functioning differently here. Is there something for us to understand here that we can turn the corner into application from? This is one of the more challenging passages to so do. It's kind of like when you get to the genealogies.

So-and-so begat so-and-so, he lived this many years, and he died. And the guy he begat begat

somebody else, he lived so many years, and he died, and so on. Where is the application? All scripture is God-breathed and profitable.

So we want to try to understand this because God gave it to us to apply. So the first thing we can do is look elsewhere in scripture. Scripture interprets scripture.

Be a Berean, search the scripture, figure out what these things mean. So what do we know about death? Genesis chapter 2 and Genesis chapter 3, death entered the world by sin. So the death passed upon all men for all have sinned.

Death is a consequence of sin. It is inevitably associated with sin. Satan, who is the sponsor and the advertiser for sin, has the power of death.

Sin and death are closely associated. So it is an enemy. Death is an enemy.

1 Corinthians 15-26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. Evidently, the sea is not an enemy in the way that death and his companion Hades are. So death isn't simply the state, the event in which we are no longer physically alive.

Death has a power. The power of sin is death. You can read Romans 6, 7, and 8, Paul's entire discussion about, I was alive once apart from the law, but when the law came, sin revived, sin came alive, and I died.

Sin lives and we die. So death is associated with sin. So it's not just the event of dying, but it is the reign and it is the power of mortality.

It puts pressure on us. You get past a certain age and you stop buying green bananas. You realize that your time is limited.

You've got to do what you do. You've got to do your last things. Death is approaching and we begin to think about what about after death and so on.

But it has a power. It limits us. It motivates us in some ways.

It can instill fear in some ways. Romans chapter 5 and chapter 6 talk about the reign of death. And so this is associated with the reign of Satan.

Satan uses the power of death to empower regimes in the fallen world. Nations that have been satanically orchestrated and inspired down through history kill a lot of people and put the fear of death into others to get them to comply. God motivates us by the opportunities of future life.

Life in the present and life in the future. God motivates us through hope. Hope of the resurrection.

If in this life only we hope, we are of all men most miserable. We hope for life in the future. Eternal life.

God has given us eternal life and this life is in his son. Jesus Christ is associated with life. Satan is associated with death.

So we begin to understand why death is going to be judged. And it's going to go the same place that Satan goes for many of the same reasons. So death becomes associated with a dominion.

A kingdom if you will. The kingdom of darkness is a kingdom of death. The kingdom of light is a kingdom of life.

And you have light and life associated in John chapter one and elsewhere. So Hades is the abode of the dead. Pictured in scripture, Luke 16, 23.

When Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in Hades. He has not yet been judged. He hasn't been given a final assignment in the kingdom or outside of it either in the millennium or in the eternal future.

He is in Hades. And Acts chapter two verse 27. Christ in the sermon that Peter gives in Acts chapter two at Pentecost is thinking of Old Testament scripture that says, you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or to Hades.

Sheol, Old Testament, Hades, New Testament vocabulary for what was thought to be the abode of the dead. Where are they? God didn't try to explain some of the things that we can understand now being a little further down the historical road. If you're not here, where are you? Well, it never says you're in the presence of God yet.

David says, I know at the end of Psalm 23, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. But though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. You're with me.

Your rod and staff comfort me. You sustain me and provide for me even in the presence of my enemies. My capacity as a cup is full and overflowing.

And goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord after that. So this is Hades, which is the abode of the dead.

Pictured from a human perspective. There are things that were just given by way of accommodation. I don't think there is a literal shadowy realm, but that's what it looks like from an earthly perspective.

You're not here. You're not in the eternal future. Where are you? So Luke 16, 23, the rich man.

Acts 2, 27, the Lord Jesus, God did not abandon his soul to Hades, to not being in this life and not being in the next. Revelation 1, 18, the Lord Jesus says, and once again, you see these two linked. He says, I have the keys of death and Hades.

Death and Hades. Death is what removes us from this life. Hades is what, in a sense, would keep you from entering the next life.

It would be a holding place. You can't come back to this life, nor can you move forward to the next life. It is more of a status than a place.

If you leave this life in death and you have not yet entered the eternal life of the future, that's Hades. The physical nature of it, the instantaneous transfer that I believe and have communicated to you all is not obviated by this view that it is a status. If you're not here and you're not there, where are you? That gap is Hades in the New Testament, Sheol in the Old.

Revelation 6, verse 8, we looked at it a minute ago. Death rides a pale horse. Hades follows after him.

Death takes you out of this life. Hades follows after. And the idea is Hades would be whatever keeps you from coming back to a wonderful, blessed future, eternal life of reward and inheritance.

So death is the process and the event of leaving this life. Hades is wondering what is going to happen when the final judgment takes place. Is it good or bad? Is it reward or judgment? So in Revelation 6, we already see that they are two separate and distinct things, although closely linked.

Death kills. Hades receives. Hades is the question mark.

What is our fate after we leave this life? Because it has not yet been determined. Other people are continuing to live. They haven't seen people raised to go into glory, nor have they seen people punished and go to the lake of fire.

So for the living, the dead are, I would not call it limbo, but it's Hades. Hades is how we describe what from a human perspective appears to be a gap between this life and future life, this life and future judgment. So death is sort of an execution.

It is a removal from this life. Hades is custody, if you will. You are held, in some sense, until the judgment.

So hopefully that kind of makes sense. And if it does, what is the role of the sea? There are some who think that this just means it is a death that is invisible to people. You left and you never came back.

You got in a boat, you went over the horizon, nobody ever saw you again. You must have gone into the sea. This would be the unknown deaths that aren't marked.

You can't bury the corpse. You can have a memorial service, but you've got no physical remains. You assume that something bad happened.

Throughout Revelation, the sea has symbolic significance. The beast rises from the sea, the one called the Antichrist, the first beast, this angelic human hybrid, apparently. He suffers a wound and this mortal wound is healed.

He's sort of a Christ substitute, which is why it's legitimate to call him the antichrist, the instead of Christ. But he rises from the sea in Revelation 13. The sea is associated with chaos going all the way back to Genesis chapter one, Isaiah 57, 20.

The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked. It's association with the Gentile world, with that which is outside the land.

You could look at the land of Israel as the place of stability and the presence of God and the opportunity to worship and serve Him. And the sea that surrounds it with its frothing waters and mire and dirt would be the unbelieving world, the Gentiles, the enemies of the people of God. There is a type of death that is known.

There's a type of death that's unknown. I think that's legitimate. You wonder what happened to somebody.

They've passed out of sight and they are no more. Nobody knows why. Did God judge them? Were they struck down because they lived an evil life? Were they a good person and they disappeared for some other reason? We don't know the reason and we don't know what to expect in their regard.

But each of these is a place that harbors the dead and then gives them up for this judgment. But the sea is not judged in the way that death and Hades are. Death is a result of sin.

Hades, Sheol, this is the power of death, even over believers. Believers don't become immortal at the point of salvation. I used to wonder as a kid, if I'm saved, why didn't God just make me immortal now? Why can't I just go to heaven or stop living the rest of this life? Because we need an opportunity to learn and grow and prepare ourselves for the eternal future.

And this is training. This is practice. These are the story problems to solve and learn the principles so that we are qualified for service and function.

We need this life. And whether this life ends visibly or invisibly, whether it ends well or poorly, it will end in death. Death passed upon all men because all have sinned.

And even as saved individuals, death will have its way. The sea is the unknown. There is chaos.

We can't see below the surface. There's a lot of it that's over the horizon. We just don't know.

You see somebody that seems to have been saved when they were a child, believed in Jesus,

went to Sunday school, affirmed their faith at camp or at the behest of their parents or whoever else. But somewhere in their teens, they turn all of that off. They live like an unbeliever.

They disavow God or anything related to Jesus Christ throughout their adult life. And then they die. Were they a believer or an unbeliever? I don't know.

I personally think this is the sea. We have no clue. It is known to God alone whether they made a decision that qualifies them for a believing resurrection or an unbelieving resurrection.

We just don't know. And that's the sea. That would be my guess.

But once the final judgment occurs, there is no more death. Sin and the power of sin are broken. There is never any death again.

And Hades, the awaiting a resurrection, is over with. This is the final resurrection. This is fourth at the great white throne.

Nobody else is going to be raised. Nor is there anyone that is going to die again. The last death occurs in the last throes of the Gog-Megog rebellion at the end of the Millennial Kingdom.

And there is no more death. And there is no more Hades, which is that intermediate time, if you will, between death and judgment. This is the final judgment.

And so there will be no more judgments. You don't need death and you don't need Hades. They themselves as a consequence of sin and associates with Satan are thrown into the lake of fire with him and they are gone.

It's not the sea's fault. The things happen that human beings don't know, can't understand, can't fathom, to use a bit of a pun. You can't fathom what happens in the sea.

And in the same way that we can't plumb the depths of the universe, we can't travel to far off galaxies, we can't know what is going on in the infinite reaches of space and time. The sea represents all of that. And so that isn't associated with Satan.

There was a sea before the creation began. The Spirit of God hovered on the face of the sea, the face of the waters in Genesis 1. There isn't a sin association. Ignorance isn't necessarily sin.

Us not being able to understand or know or plumb the depths of something doesn't need to be judged. It is a simple fact of our limitations. So the sea goes away when this heavens and earth go away.

There is a necessary degree of things we don't know, chaos that we can neither control nor fully understand. So I think that this is the best explanation I can offer for why these things are so carefully distinguished throughout the Revelation and especially here. So to conclude the chapter very quickly, death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.

This is the second death. Remember one of the overcomer promises is that we will not be hurt by the second death. Loss of opportunity, loss of reward and inheritance is no longer a function, no longer a possibility.

Whatever we have established is fixed and immutable going into the kingdom of the Father. And so whatever we lost goes into the lake of fire. That's the second death.

Those who fail to redeem the time, to be faithful and obedient in whatever age they lived and to make the most of this opportunity, all of that is finished after this judgment. And that is the second death. It is the second and the last death.

There is no more death. It has been destroyed in the lake of fire. That brings us to chapter 21.

There is a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and there is no more sea. This is going to be an event unlike anything we have ever witnessed. I think all of creation, sentient creation is going to rejoice and celebrate when God lets us all view, just like the stars that sang together and the sons of God that shouted for joy when God created the first heavens and earth.

Imagine the celebration when God brings in the new heaven and the new earth and there is no more chaos. There is no more materiality such as we see in this cosmos. All things are become new.

Old things have passed away. New creation in Christ as people, new creation in environment, the new heavens and the new earth. So we will pick up at verse 2 next time.

But how important is it for us to look ahead and make the most of the opportunities that remain to us to be ready for the judgment, to concentrate on not being seduced, not being fooled, not being lulled to sleep or distracted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, to recognize, wake up in the morning and remember, this is a day God has given me to rejoice and be glad in and to make the most of because the judgment is coming. We have the opportunity to do well. There is no reason to fear it unless we are apathetic and indifferent.

In Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, the light of the word of God, there is no reason not to be excited about the coming judgment. Can't wait to see what the opportunities are in the eternal future. Father, thank you for the revelation that we have before us in your word, the living example of the Lord Jesus Christ as the word, the presence of your Holy Spirit to understand both of those inspired incarnations of what is and what is to come.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will help us to not only understand it, but make application of it in the days that remain to us in this life. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.