

## Rev 26-07-12b

Let's resume our study now in the book of Revelation. We are surveying in a final way chapter 20, as we move into chapter 21. And I want to point out a few things as we summarize and prepare to leave chapter 20.

The millennial kingdom is an earthly kingdom. C.I. Schofield had this figured out in his original notes when he talked about there is a heavenly people of God and an earthly people of God. That is true during this thousand-year period.

We, if we're qualified, will have a supervisory role. And I know about this because we have those passages that talk about, for example, chapter four, verse two and verse four, that picture the 24 thrones and the elders, the mature ones sitting on them in white robes with crowns of gold on their heads. This is a separate group.

This is the church age believer who has already been raptured as of chapter four, verse one, in contradistinction to those souls under the altar in chapter six, verses nine through 11, who are the as-yet unresurrected Old Testament saints and represented by the tribulational martyrs - the most recent group of Old Testament saints, many of whom end up sacrificing their lives for their faith. They are slain for the word of God there. Here in chapter 20 it says they were beheaded for the word of God.

Both of these are inclusive of all types of persecution, of which these are the most recent and radical examples. But the redeemed from every tribe and language and people, you saw this in chapter five, at the right hand of him who sat on the throne, there's a scroll; a strong angel proclaims "Who is worthy?" And when they find the Lord Jesus, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

You have the redeemed celebrating in verses nine and 10 of chapter five. And what does it say? "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood."

Notice that the Lord Jesus' entire career in his first coming is summarized by his death. But his death is put for his faithfulness in life and faithfulness unto death. The same is true for the martyrs, those who are faithful unto death and receive the crown of life as church age believers (Rev 2:10). But just remember the Lord Jesus: "You are worthy to open the seals."

Is he only worthy because he died? The Lord Jesus lived a worthy life. He was faithful and obedient. He was tested in all points like as we are yet without sin (Heb 4:15).

But Revelation speaks in symbolic summary terms, not just symbols, but summary symbols. And the Lord Jesus' death is put for all of his faithfulness in being willing to empty himself, take on the form of a servant and come in the likeness of men and to be found in appearance as a man. I'm quoting Philippians chapter three, which you well know.

So, "You are worthy to take the scroll for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood." It is a summary of all of the Lord Jesus' work in dying and securing our redemption "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

These are those who are now in the heavenly realms having been raptured and are in heaven. They are not those who are going to be raised to fulfillment of Old Testament earthly promises. So this is us.

And notice the next verse. I'm quoting Revelation 5, 9. Verse 10 goes on to say, "And you have made them kings and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth." Kings and priests.

This is not the fate of the raised Old Testament millennial saints. This is rulership. We saw it also in the overcomer promises earlier on, sitting with him on his throne, ruling with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26-27, 3:21). You can go back and review that. All of that is taking place in the heavenly realms in the beyond these dimensions realms while the millennial kingdom is taking place on the earth.

So this is the first resurrection. "Blessed and holy," chapter 20, verse six, "is he who has part," *meros*, M-E-R-O-S, a portion, an assignment, an allotment "in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years." This is true in the earthly sense for the Levites and others who are fulfilling the earthly promises.

It is also a part of the pattern that fits us. Kings and priests. And in a supervisory function, if we qualify and we want this, we don't say, "Oh, I don't want that responsibility. I just want to sit under the trees that Ezekiel talked about in chapter 34 and have my garden of renown and just take it easy."

We want to be useful. We want to be employable. We want to have the skills and the knowledge, that we are desirable for God to incorporate us into his future plans and purposes, which are manifold and beyond our comprehension. You don't want to be in the rear with the gear. You want to be upfront, active, involved, accompanying the Lord Jesus, walking with him in white where he goes in a transcendent form.

Even during the earthly millennial kingdom, we will be enjoying the fulfillment of these promises in a transcendent state. So let's see how this answers our questions. What about all those who died in faith not having received the promises in Hebrews 11? This is when they are raised and they receive the literal, physical, material fulfillment of God's promises.

This is how God fulfills his promises. He doesn't say, oh, I was just using a metaphor and you're going to get some nice things. If God promises a thing, what God has said, he will do.

God magnifies his word above his name. And there is not one jot or one tittle that will fall to the ground of Old Testament scripture, Jesus said, until every single detail is fulfilled (Matt 5:18). Fulfilled, filled fully, no lack of attention to detail.

And this attention to detail is important because you have the books and they record our works in detail. God knows us in detail. God will reward or discipline and judge in detail. There is nothing that is in the shadows that escapes his notice. Everything is open and visible to him with whom we have to do (Heb 4:13).

So these millennial types are blessed and sanctified who have an inheritance in the first resurrection. That inheritance qualifies them to live in the land. As a part of the pattern, we who are similarly characterized by faith, love and obedience will in the kingdom of the Father have similar opportunities and privileges starting at the rapture and continuing through heavenly service in the millennial kingdom, if you will, and then extending into the future kingdom of the Father.

So there's a contrast between the first resurrection and the second death. This goes back to chapter two, verse 11, another overcomer promise. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be injured, will not be hurt, will not suffer loss because of the second death."

So the first resurrection implies that there is a second resurrection, and this is what is upcoming at the great white throne as we have seen in verse five. But when the dead small and great are raised in verses 12 and 13 of our chapter, it's not called the second resurrection. This is the first resurrection [for them]. There is a first death and a first resurrection. There is a second death.

There is not a second resurrection. Everyone gets a first resurrection, but there is no resurrection from the second death. And the second death is like the first death in that you are no longer awake, aware or participating. You are not a part of the proceedings. So the second death is in fact the lake of fire, verses 14 and 15, as we have seen.

So with this in verses seven through 10, we saw the release of Satan. We saw the Gog Magog rebellion, and there are misunderstandings of this. There are those who don't believe in a literal millennium who think Gog Magog is another reference to Armageddon.

There are so many differences I can't even begin to describe it. But this brief outbreak of evil at the end of the thousand years is what will "out" all those who are not of faith, which is faithfulness; those who have not accepted the Lord Jesus, who is visible. It isn't a matter of what you can't see.

And isn't it wonderful the way God shows the independence of human choice: perfect people, perfect environment in the garden of Eden. Fallen people, fallen environment after Eden. Fallen people, perfect environment in the millennial kingdom. There is only one constant in all of these different environmental situations, and that is the freedom to choose for or against.

You see perfect creatures in perfect environment in heaven. And yet Satan and a third of the angels choose against. You can't blame environment for choices. Our choices are free and independent, especially when it comes to accepting or rejecting the opportunity for relationship with God, Old Testament and New.

"He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he rewards those who diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). Seek and you will find. "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened" (Matt 7:7). But it is a free choice to ask. It is a free choice to seek. And it is a free choice to knock on the door.

So Satan will sponsor this rebellion at the end. The armies march across the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of God's people, the city that he loves. Fire comes down from heaven and devours them. And I think this is just an abstract reference to their fate in the lake of fire. But at this point, the armies are destroyed. Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet have been thrown. This is verse 10 of chapter 20.

And you can see this in chapter 19, verse 20. The beast is captured, the false prophet, the mark of the beast, those who worship his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone.

I am sure that this is far more than a literal physical fire. Interesting study you can do on brimstone. We saw a special around the Dead Sea and the areas where they think the five cities of the were destroyed that include Sodom and Gomorrah.

And brimstone is such that you can take a rock and light it on fire and it will burn. It's fascinating thing. Was that the one-legged archeologist? Somebody went and did that.

If you haven't seen the one-legged archeologist, Albert Lin is his name. He's got episodes here and there that you can find. But he went over there and with a guide, sat down and had a fire of brimstone.

It's really something. But the upshot of all of this is the reality toward which all of these things is moving is coming up in our chapter, chapter 21. So in John's visions, the world goes on for a thousand years culminating in this rebellion.

And we transition then from the old creation to the new. This is referenced time and again in scripture. The rule of man over the first earth was given as far back as Genesis chapter one, verse 28: "God blessed the male and female that he had created and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over every living thing that moves on the earth."

And with that, we now find in chapter 20, verse 11, the great white throne and him who sits on it from whose face this earth and the heaven fled away. And I think there are two ways that you can translate the Greek word *ouranos*, O-U-R-A-N-O-S. It is equally valid to translate it as sky or as heaven, depending on context. When you're talking about in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, this really, because it is conjoined with the earth, generally refers to the skies, what is later called the firmament in Genesis chapter one, but the skies.

God is not going to destroy the heavens in which he dwells, what you might call the third heaven. The place that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us is in the heavenly realms (John 14:2-3). That is not going to be destroyed. The Lord Jesus hasn't left to prepare a place for us only to have it destroyed at the great white throne judgment.

So you can understand this as this earth, this physical environment, which is the land and the sky. And in this context, you remember, we have the land, the sea, and the sky. That is what constitutes the human environment.

And all three of them, we see their ultimate fate. So again, in verse 11, when the great white throne is seen and God, the Father who sits on it, from his face, the earth and the sky flee away and there is found no place for them. God's throne is in heaven, he is sitting on it. The heaven in which he sits doesn't go away. So this "heavens" is our sky.

So the land and the sky flee away and there's found no place for them, and rightfully so. You know what has happened to the earth in the context of the judgments that we saw in the seals and the trumpets, whatever happens during the thunders, and the bowls. There is a renewal in the kingdom that surrounds Jerusalem that persists for a thousand years, but there's not much said about renewal of the rest of the planet.

And we know from Paul talking in Romans [8:22] that the whole creation groans waiting for the redemption of the sons of God. And this creation is going to be done away with. We know this from many passages of scripture.

Hebrews 1, 10 through 12. "You Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. The skies, they will perish, but you remain. And they will all grow old like a garment, like a cloak, you will fold them up and they will be changed, but you are the same and your years will not fail." That was Hebrews 1, 10 through 12.

First Corinthians 7.31: "Those who use this world as not misusing it for the form of this world is passing away." The substance, the content of this world is passing away. Second Corinthians 4.18. "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but that the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

First John 2, 15 through 17. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away and the desires of it, the lust of it, but he who does the will of God remains, abides forever."

So the judgment of the dead, 20:12 through 15. These are "the rest of the dead." We have studied this in detail. So if you have any questions, once again: what about the Old Testament believers and unbelievers? Believers will be raised to pass under the rod, Ezekiel 34 and parallel passages, at the beginning of the millennial kingdom to receive the fulfillment of promise.

The unbelieving dead of the Old Testament age, as with the unbelieving dead of the New Testament age, remain dead until this point, the great white throne. They are "the rest of the dead."

There is a category of people, because those who live and those who die in every age have the opportunity to express faith in God, what about those who never attained the capacity to make that decision? They don't have a choice to seek. They don't come to a level of understanding, a grasp of what is at stake. What about those? Are they living souls? We

have to think that they are, but they are limited. They are unable. They have to be able to make a decision. So how and when does that happen?

To go into the eternal future, that decision has to have been made in earthly times, in an earthly setting, in a mortality situation. So if you are mortal, but unable to make a decision in the Old Testament age or the New Testament age, what is the only remaining earthly environment where mortal people live in a greatly improved environment and can make that decision? The millennial kingdom. It is my belief as I've expressed many times. And you can look up the passages, Isaiah chapter 40, when the Lord returns, the Lambs are with him.

Descriptions of the millennial kingdom include children. I think Rachel weeping for her children that could not be comforted will be comforted because those children, those two years old and under that were slain by Herod are a representative group during the birth time of Christ. They come back.

I think they come back as children. I think those who were childless and mourned the fact that they could not raise a family may get that opportunity in the millennial reign of Christ. These children will come back.

They can come back to, if they were born to unbelieving, think of all the Canaanite babies who were slain by the Israelites. Think of this, you were going to grow up in a pagan land and potentially be sacrificed to Molech or be infused with all kinds of false pagan beliefs. You come back in the millennial kingdom, have every opportunity afforded to you.

And it shows that whether you were born to pagans and live in a pagan environment, or you were born in near perfection and raised by God-fearing people, the choice is still yours. Every different permutation is included in God's plan. It is the constant is free choice, free will.

So everyone is accounted for. There is no one that doesn't have the ability to make a choice. If not in the Old Testament age or in the church age, in the millennial kingdom, they will come back.

There is ample space because the vast majority of people that have ever lived are unbelievers and remain dead. So OT believers and those that have not yet chosen come back, have a thousand years. The Old Testament types have a chance to function with the Holy Spirit that has been poured out on them (Joel 2:28) so that they get the same opportunities for service and function in the kingdom of the Father, or not, as we do.

They are not shortchanged. They don't get judged on a different basis. "Well, we didn't have the Spirit and you did."

They come back and have the Spirit, so like us they can excel or they can be in the rear, taking up the dust of the parade. This answers every conceivable question about human life: opportunity to choose, opportunity to exercise faith, opportunity to be exercising faithfulness and obedience, levels of blessing, opportunity, reward and future potential based on levels of interest and motivation and service and function in this life; all of this heading toward the ultimate and final kingdom of the Father that is eternal. Everyone in

that kingdom is immortal. Everyone in that kingdom is occupying a place based on the choices that were made in this life, everyone. No one is left out. No one is unaccounted for.

So when you come to the great white throne judgment, you have two types that are raised. The books are opened, books of works and another book, which is the book of life. Some of the people raised at the great white throne are believers and their name is in the book of life. Others are unbelievers, the unbelievers of every age, the unbelievers of the millennium, [raised along with] believers of the millennium and any tribulational survivors.

It appears that there could potentially be those who enter into the millennial kingdom that survive all of the judgments. If you are a believer, you are going to be transformed and entered into the improved long-lived mortality. Those who are unbelievers and may survive and go in, maybe in other parts of the world and die during the millennial kingdom, they will be raised.

All unbelievers and believers who die in the millennial kingdom, who were not around to be transformed or had not yet been old enough to make a decision when they lived their earthly life. So they are now judged at the great white throne. The books of works are opened and the book of life.

Works are used for unbelievers to determine the insufficiency of their righteousness. They are not qualified to go forward. "I'm a good person. I'm sure God will include me with good people." Sorry, no. If your name is not in the book of life, it doesn't matter how altruistic, how charitable, what a good guy you might've been, shirt off the back, shake hands with your neighbor, hail fellow well-met – insufficient, because those works are ultimately self-interested, they are not dedicated to God. They are not a reflection of his glory. They are not appreciative.

Think about Romans chapter one. "When they knew him as God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom 1:21). It doesn't matter how good your works are from the human standpoint, they will fail at the great white throne. Those individuals, because their name is not in the book of life, they say, "Well, but my works." Sorry, the payment is insufficient.

You're attempting to qualify yourself with something that is an utter and complete disqualification. Into the lake of fire they go. Those whose names are written in the book of life, their works are the basis for placement in the kingdom of the Father.

Are you going to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem? Are you going to have property near the banks of the river of life? Are you going to be in the darkness which is outside? That is determined there. We have already been judged at the rapture. The rest of humanity is going to be judged at the great white throne.

So that then brings us to chapter 21. After the judgment of the dead, the book of life, we saw this mentioned first in Revelation 3, verse five, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments and I will not blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels." Revelation 13:8, "... all who dwell on the earth worship the beast whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

This is a source of confusion, especially to people who believe in election and predestination, reformed theology, Calvinists and so on. Think that your name is written in the book of life at the foundation of the world. As soon as God envisions you, he decides if you're a believer or an unbeliever.

Sorry, no. Hear me, if you don't get anything else out of this lesson, be sure you understand this. This verse and a parallel verse in chapter 17, 13, eight and 17, eight, both mention those who worship the beast and those who marvel at him, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

It isn't that all of the writing takes place, it is that this book was opened with blank pages at the foundation of the world. From the time of the foundation of the world, there has been the opportunity by faith, by acceptance to have your name written in the book of life. Who is the first name in the book of life? What is line one, page one in the book of life? Adam.

Who is on line two? Eve. Who is on line three? Be careful now. Who's on line three in the book of life? Cain. Cain is number three. Cain is a believer. Disobedient, murderous, not going to have a portion, not going to have an inheritance, willful disobedience, but Cain is a believer.

Who's on line four? Abel, the first martyr. From end to end, martyrs bracket the faithful, and so on. From the foundation of the world, the book of life has existed and names have been sequentially entered into this book to and through the end of the millennium.

That is the book of life. These who worshiped the beast in the last seven years, particularly the last three and a half years of the age of Israel, their names are not in the book of life. They are unbelievers. They throw in with Satan and the beast and the false prophet, and their names are not written in the book of life, which has been recording believers "from the foundation of the world." We're coming very close to the end of the world. So that is what this means.

[Revelation] 13:8 and 17:8. "All who dwell on the earth worship him whose names have not been written," and notice there is a kind of worship of the beast, just as there has been a Babylon harlot, ever since Satan has been interacting with human beings. This is a pattern. These individuals fulfill it during the tribulation, but this pattern has been being fulfilled ever since the first unbelievers. So this is our summary now of the 20th chapter.

We are getting ready to enter into chapter 21. We've already seen the concept of the sea and death and Hades. And really you can almost put chapter 21, verse one with the end of chapter 20.

We see this many times, don't we? "But anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." This is destruction. This is the second death.

People that experienced the first death, we observe the first death. We know what that is like. You're not around. You're not participating. You're not conscious. All of your options, all of your possessions, all of your hopes, dreams, aspirations, and goals.

You are no more a participant in this life. The second death means you are no more participant in any life. There is only one life, and that life is in God's Son (1 Jn 5:11). "In him was life" (John 1:4). That is the light of life. If you are not in Christ, there is no other life except in and through him. For human beings, life is in Christ. There is no life in the lake of fire.

Angels are a category under themselves, and I don't understand angelic existence. It appears that the beast and the false prophet and Satan, and by extension, the third of the angels that are also destined for the lake of fire, as Jesus says, Matthew 25, the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41). That is something beyond our comprehension.

I can tell you what happens to anything earthly, anything human that is thrown into the lake of fire. It is destroyed. It perishes and it is no more. Yes, the lake of fire, as far as humanity is concerned, is annihilation. There's no eternal conscious torment, never mentioned in scripture. It is the second death.

If you want to understand the second death, think about the first death. Everybody that has died, they're not anywhere living, thinking, experiencing, blessing, sorrow, joy, pain. The first death ends all of that because it ends this life.

The second death ends any life. As far as humanity is concerned, anyone not found written in the book of life cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, verse 14, along with death and Hades. There is now going to never be death and never be the grave and the power that death holds. Death and Hades. We saw that last time.

Now, verse one, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." By the way, I think that this is still basically skies. This is a new earthly environment. God's heaven doesn't need to be destroyed because God's heaven is perfect. Always has been, always will be. Those who are imperfect are cast out of heaven.

Satan and the third of the angels that the dragon's tail draws are cast out of heaven. Heaven doesn't need to be reinvented. The Lord Jesus has gone to that heaven to prepare a place for us. It is a heavenly realm. That is not what is new here. This is a replacement for the old heaven and the old earth who fled away from God's face back in 20:11 - not the year 2011, verse 11 of chapter 20.

So we have a new heaven, a new sky, and a new earth. "For the first sky and the first earth had passed away. Also, there is no more sea." What else constitutes earthly environment in which humans can dwell, but earth and sky and sea? All of them pass away. And God creates a new sky and earth, and there is no more sea. That's what we're told here.

"Then," and this could really start chapter 21, "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem." "John" seems to have been a later addition here, it doesn't matter if it's there or not. John is the one who's speaking, obviously. "I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

You get the idea that this is the “city whose founder and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). It'd be kind of a waste of time for God to build a New Jerusalem and then destroy heaven. These heavens continue to persist and exist.

And the New Jerusalem, in a sense, is already built there. But once there is a new earth and sky, this New Jerusalem comes down out of God's eternal heaven to exist in this new sky and new earth, new environment.

And remember, this parallels the creation story in Genesis chapter one. In the beginning, what did God do? He created the sky and the land. And what do you see in verse two? And the land is without form and void. Darkness is on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moves on the face of the waters.

In the first two verses of Genesis, what do you have? Sky and earth and sea. And the sea portends future trouble because the wicked are like the troubled sea and so on. Here, you have a new sky and a new earth, a new creation, a new physical creation.

“Holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men and he will tabernacle with them.” The verb is the same in Greek. *Skenoō*, S-K-E-N-O-O means to dwell. *Skene*, the [noun] from that is a tent. So this means God is going to tabernacle.

This is a temporary residence, right? When you dwell in tents, God's eternal home is always in the eternal heavens, but he will tent, he will tabernacle, he will spend time, extended time. He doesn't move his residence to the new sky and the new earth or the New Jerusalem, but he is going to spend a lot of time with us. He will, as it were, commute. “He will tabernacle with them.”

“They shall be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.” What a wonderful opportunity.

We will see next time how important it is for us to be aiming to be citizens of that New Jerusalem. But I hope this has clarified the sweep of God's plan and purpose. His intention is as he changes the parameters of the experiment of human experience, God is solving for human choice.

He is demonstrating whatever the environment, perfection or near perfection, fallenness, whether we have the spirit or don't have the spirit, our choices are our own. How important is it for us to stop, go in to the “closet,” as it used to say in the King James, spend some quiet time and judge ourselves, evaluate ourselves, and ensure that we're making our choices. Our choices are in the mundane world, but they reflect whether or not we have eternal values, whether we can think in eternal terms, whether the hope that God presents to us is real enough to motivate us to think and speak and live as we should, because this future is coming.

This is more real than the hologram world in which we are currently living. “The forms of this earth are vanishing away” (1 Cor 7:31). Are we living and preparing ourselves like the bride adorned for her husband? The wife in chapter 19 has made herself ready.

Are we ready? Are we getting ready? We still have time. We still have opportunity. Let's make the most of it.

Father, we thank you for the truth of your word and the promise that it holds before us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of who we are, why we're here, and how we can lay hold of these wonderful promises, fulfillment of your covenant in our case, so that we can walk with the Lord Jesus in white and be a part of your plan and purpose in and through him, now and in the ages to come. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.