

LifeSavers Bible Studies

#11: Destinations

At the end of every game—there are winners and losers! The same is true in life! As the contest between good and evil comes to an end, there are winners and losers.

God has received a lot of "bad press" regarding His treatment of losers (those who have chosen evil). Satan wants us to believe that God is a vengeful, cruel tyrant who delights in the torture of evil-doers. He also wants us to believe that God will torture sinners in hell-fire throughout eternity. Understandably, many have a difficult time loving such a God.

Yet God Himself asks, "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die...and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11. Christ's mission to this earth was not to judge the world nor to condemn it, but to do everything in heaven's power to save humanity (John 3:17).

However, in spite of all God has done to save sinners, one day He will cleanse the universe from every trace of sin (Revelation 21:8). This deed is so unusual and difficult for God to perform that it's referred to as "His strange act" (Isaiah 28:20-22, KJV). Yet, notwithstanding His judgment of the wicked, everyone will declare the fairness of God by exclaiming, "Allelujah! Salvation and glory and honour and power belong to Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments..." (Revelation 19:1-2).

In order to vindicate, or exonerate, His character and reputation among all the created beings of the universe, God has provided a system of justice that allows everyone, saved and unsaved alike, to examine the records and rationale concerning His decisions so that all are completely satisfied with His fairness.

Check one answer for each question:

I. Everyone's Coming Back

1. Jesus said the dead will be raised in two resurrections.

John 5:28, 29: TRUE FALSE

2. Those who have died trusting Jesus will be raised when He appears in the clouds.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: TRUE FALSE

II. A Resurrection at the Beginning of the Millennium

3. Those who follow Jesus, and who are alive when He returns, will join their resurrected companions to meet Christ in the air.

1 Thessalonians 4:17: TRUE FALSE

4. The righteous will become involved in a special work with God that will last 1,500 years.

Revelation 20:4-6: TRUE FALSE

In our own system of justice, judgments are subject to a review and appeal process that assures justice has been served in each case. God's judgments certainly are not subject to appeal, but with fairness and wisdom, "He will grant everyone an opportunity to review the heavenly records (1 Corinthians 4:5).

The righteous and the wicked are brought to life in separate resurrections (Revelation 20:5). Upon their resurrection, the righteous are transported to heaven where they are appointed as judges with Christ. However, it is not for them to decide who will be among the saved or lost since that decision has already been made, prior to Jesus' Second Coming. This session is a judgment review by the resurrected saints from all the ages. They will be given opportunity to confirm and understand for themselves the fairness of God's verdicts. This is a very important part of a process that will forever clear God's name of all unjust accusations.

But, more than *judgment* will occur during this millennial period. There will be a grand reunion of all the saved on the "sea of glass" in heaven (Revelation 4 and 15:2-4) where we will sing praises to our God and to the Lamb, our Saviour. We will have the opportunity to meet the saints from all the ages. At the *Marriage Supper of the Lamb*, we will participate in the greatest wedding party ever held (Revelation 19:7-9).

For a few minutes, let's return to the *judgment* motif. There is a solemnity about this judgment review in heaven, for God is allowing time for the righteous to prepare for a sobering sight. "Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked" (Psalms 91:8).

III. A Resurrection at the End of the Millennium

5. The wicked who are alive at Jesus' Second Coming will be killed by His brightness.

Jeremiah 25:31-33; 2 Thessalonians 2:8: TRUE FALSE

This is not an arbitrary act on God's part—but simply the reality that those who have chosen evil, die, because evil (darkness) cannot live in the presence of pure righteousness (light).

6. According to Revelation, evil people who are in their graves when Jesus comes will not be resurrected until 1000 years later.

Revelation 20:5: TRUE FALSE

This 1000 year-period is referred to as the *millennium*.

7. During this 1000-year period of time, Satan and his angels follow the saints to heaven to tempt them there.

Revelation 20:1-3: TRUE FALSE

Actually, Satan and his angles are confined in a *bottomless pit*. The expression "bottomless pit" (KJV) is translated from the same word that is used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) that is in Jeremiah 4:23-25, describing the condition of the earth after Christ's return. In Genesis 1:2, this word is used to refer to the earth's pre-creation condition and is rendered, "without form and void." The word is *abussos* (Greek for abyss) and portrays the earth in its desolated, wasted, chaotic, dark and uninhabited condition. During the millennium the earth will be left in a similar condition (Jeremiah 4:23-26) due to the seven last plagues that will ravage the earth before the Second Coming of Jesus (Revelation 16), one of which is a great earthquake that will take place when He comes. Satan and his angels will be abandoned on the earth for a thousand years, imprisoned by a chain of circumstances that will leave them with no employment, but to contemplate the misery they have caused over thousands of years.

8. After the 1000 years is over, a heavenly city called, New Jerusalem, descends from heaven to earth.

Revelation 21:2: TRUE FALSE

9. Immediately, Satan renews his evil efforts with the newly resurrected masses.

Revelation 20:5, 7-8: TRUE FALSE

(Note: The last part of verse 5 belongs with verse 6). Many times the chapter and verse demarcations seem to have no rhyme or reason. Punctuation and the chapter and verse demarcations were added many hundreds of years after the Scriptures were written for the sake of guiding Bible students to particular passages, but they have no bearing on theological interpretation. When you read the entire passage, not paying attention to the verse divisions, the meaning of the scripture becomes clear.

IV. Lucifer's Last Stand

10. Satan's deceptive efforts prove that his character hasn't changed one bit.

Revelation 20:7-8: TRUE FALSE

When the Holy City comes down to the earth from heaven, those who chose not to accept God's way will be resurrected and Satan will be freed from his prison of isolation. He will revert to his old ways of "deceiving the nations."

11. With the resurrection of the wicked, Satan will be free to deceive people for a short time (a little season).

Revelation 20:3, last part. TRUE FALSE

12. According to the prophet Enoch, when the Lord (Christ) returns with His saints, He will execute judgment upon all and convince the ungodly of their sins.

Jude 14-16: TRUE FALSE

13. The final destruction of the wicked will occur with a hailstorm of fire from heaven.

Revelation 20:9: TRUE FALSE

14. Before the fire, however, a special review session will be held for those who are lost.

Revelation 20:11-13: TRUE FALSE

The lost are given an opportunity to review God's verdict. Verse 13 says the graves will give up their dead to be judged. In this instance, judgment involves the reading and execution of the sentence.

At that time the prophecy of Isaiah 45:23-25 will be fulfilled:

"I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall take an oath.
He shall say, 'Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.
To Him men shall come,
And all shall be ashamed
Who are incensed against Him.
In the Lord all the descendants of Israel
Shall be justified, and shall glory.' " NKJV

It is here that Satan, his angels and all who have given allegiance to him, will be thrown into the fires of destruction. This is hell.

V. Complete and Total Destruction

15. John refers to the destruction of the lost as "the second death."

Revelation 20:14: TRUE FALSE

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Life and death are shown to be opposites in the Bible. God does not say that the wages of sin is an eternal life of misery in hell. Death is not to be interpreted as "eternal life under unfavourable circumstances," but rather is a total cessation of life, a state of nonexistence. God says, "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

16. According to the following references, the destruction of the wicked will be complete.

TRUE FALSE

- a. Malachi 4:1-3.
- b. Psalms 37:10-13.
- c. Psalms 37:20.
- d. Obadiah 15-16.

VI. Will Hell Fire Last Forever?

Words like "everlasting, eternal, and forever and ever" are used in the Bible to describe the punishment of the wicked in hell fire.

17. Paul describes the destruction of the wicked as being "everlasting" in nature.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: TRUE FALSE

Paul says that the destruction is everlasting—not the process of destruction. The result of living apart from Christ is to perish forever (John 3:16).

18. Jesus said that Satan and his angels will be destroyed with everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41). This idea is also found in Jude 7.

TRUE FALSE

Peter explains how the cities of Sodom and Gomorra are an example of the eternal flames that will destroy those who live ungodly lives. The destruction of these cities was complete, and they are no longer burning. They were completely reduced to ashes in the flames (2 Peter 2:6).

Our use of the term "forever" is much like it was used and understood in Bible times. It can denote a period of time that is assumed to be understood. When we say that we will love someone "forever," we mean as long as we live, and everyone understands what we mean. This is the obvious meaning of "forever" in Exodus 21:5-6. Here, reference is made to a slave who agrees to stay with his master "forever." However, in some instances the term merely means a "long" period of time that seems like forever, as referring to the period of time Jonah felt he was in the fish's belly. He felt like it was "forever," yet in actuality, it was only three days (Jonah 1:17; 2:6). And of course, forever can actually mean forever, an unending period of time. Therefore, the meaning of the word must be understood in terms of the subject it is modifying.

19. In light of this, the unquenchable fire mentioned in Matthew 3:11-12 means it cannot be put out until it completely burns up the chaff.

TRUE FALSE

20. This kind of fire is referred to in Jeremiah 17:27.

TRUE FALSE

When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar burned the city to the ground and no one was able to put it out. An unquenchable fire is not one that won't go out, but one that can't be put out. Therefore, when God destroys the wicked, no one will be able to quench the fire and deliver them. The fire will do its work and reduce the wicked to ashes. (See 2 Peter 3:10-12).

21. After the destruction of the wicked, flames and smouldering coals will linger for years.

Isaiah 47:14: TRUE FALSE

22. Eventually the fires of hell will go out and the wicked will be reduced to ashes.

Malachi 4:3: TRUE FALSE **VII. After**

the Fire, What Next?

23. New life will emerge from the ashes of destruction.

2 Peter 3:12-13: TRUE FALSE

According to Isaiah 65:17, God will restore the earth to its original beauty.

24. This new life will be unlike anything we've known (no more death, sorrow or crying).

Revelation 21:1-8: TRUE FALSE

Revelation 21 and 22 give a wonderful description of the New Jerusalem, the eternal home of the redeemed. The Holy City will be transported to the earth and God will make the earth His new centre of operations in the universe. The "meek (surely) will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

25. It's difficult to imagine such a place because no one has ever seen anything like it.

1 Corinthians 2:9: TRUE FALSE

26. We can experience this wonderful place by being "baptized into Christ," and identifying with His cause.

Galatians 3:27-29: TRUE FALSE

The persons described in Revelation 21:8 would be miserable in heaven. They would find nothing there to interest them for all will be peace and harmony, love and unity. Read Isaiah 65:17-25 for a beautiful description of eternal life.

27. Would you like Christ to transform you so that you will be happy in heaven?

YES NO

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