

# THE FINAL JUDGMENT

A Bible Study For Small Groups



## **The Final Judgment – 8 weeks**

01 – O.T. & N.T. Scriptures on Judgment

02 – Common Erroneous Views & Necessity of Final Judgment

03 – Participants in Final Judgment

04 – Believers in Final Judgment  
& Thoroughness and Justice of Final Judgment

05 – Degrees of Punishment or Reward –  
Believers Part in Final Judgment

06 - Rev 20 – 20:1-3

07 - Rev 21 – 21:1-27

08 - Rev 22 – 22:1-21

This Study is designed to help discover a practical message, from the Final Judgment in the Book of Revelations, which can be applied to our everyday life. It is designed for use in a Small Group setting. Each person in the Small Group should read and complete the assignments for the week before coming to the Small Group meeting. The Small Group meeting will provide an opportunity for each person to share what they have learned and to ask questions regarding the week's study materials.

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen ( - ) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Does God punish people now for their sins -  
or is He waiting for the final judgment to punish people for their sins?

If God is punishing people now for their sins, -  
why is there a need for a final judgment?

Is God going to have one “final judgment” -  
or is He going to have a series of punishments throughout time?

If people go to heaven or hell when they die, due to their lifestyle, -  
why would we need to have a final judgment?

Does the Old Testament teach of a “day of judgment” -  
or is this just a New Testament teaching?

When the Bible speaks of a final judgment, -  
is this a literal judgment or is this simply a metaphor of people being accountable?

If there is going to be a final judgment:

What purpose does it have?

Who will be judged in this final judgment?

Will the forgiven sins of Believers be mentioned at this final judgment?

Will we be judged on what we did or what we said?

Will the final judgment result in degrees of reward and degrees of punishment?

Is there a good reason to study the final judgment?

The Apostle's Creed:

“I believe in God, the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; Who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary; was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried; The third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven; and sits on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body.” (prior to 8th century)

Every time a Believer recites the Apostle's Creed, they acknowledge Jesus “will come to judge the quick and the dead.”

Is there going to be a “final judgment,” or is this referring to judgment that Christ will bring about over a period of time?

Will there be one “final judgment,” or will there be several specific judgments that together will make up the final judgment?

The Bible teaches God punishes evil and rewards good in this present life. The Old Testament clearly teaches there is punishment now due to the life we live.

Read Deuteronomy 9:5 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

This text declares God’s people were not going to possess the land because of anything they had done but because of the “wickedness of these nations” which were currently inhabiting the land. This indicates they were going to be punished, by losing their lands, because of their wicked lifestyle.

Read Lamentations 5:7 and make notes:

This text acknowledges that we “bear” punishment because our “fathers sinned.” There are several texts that declare a punishment and reward relationship to the current lifestyle.

Read Psalm 37:28; Proverbs 11:5; Proverbs 14:11 and make notes:

The blameless will have their way made straight and the wicked will be “brought down.” The “upright will flourish” and the “wicked will be destroyed.” The argument can be made, if God is punishing evil and rewarding good now, there is no need for a final judgment.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

What do you think about this argument? Write your response here:

The people of Malachi's day noticed it appears all wickedness does not receive punishment in this life.

Read Malachi 2:17; Malachi 3:14-15 and make notes:

They cried out, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord", "Where is the God of justice?," and "the evildoers prosper." These same people also noticed all good did not receive reward in this life; "It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements?"

The teaching of the Old Testament regarding rewards and punishment in this life is true. However, it is also true that some who do wickedness and some who do good leave this earthly life without having received appropriate punishment or reward. This simple fact alone leaves enough reason for a final judgment.

Can you think of any other reasons for there to be a "final judgment?"

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

Read 1 Timothy 5:24 and make notes:

Paul indicated in his letter to Timothy that he understood “the sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.” This indicates the sin of some people may not be fully known until a later time. There are those who believe Judgment is both present and future.

Read John 12:31; John 12:48 and make notes:

Many people believe that John 12:31 speaks of the present judgment and John 12:48 speaks of the future judgment. There are other Old and New Testament Scriptures that indicate this is the correct view.

The Scriptures teach of a final judgment. The Old Testament view of the final judgment was a day in which God would rid the world of every evil, such as; haughtiness, idolatry, compromise with pagans, violence, fraud, complacency, and every type of person who is a sinner. Scriptures to support this statement include:



## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

Read Isaiah 2:12-18; Zephaniah 1:8-9; Zephaniah 1:12; Isaiah 13:9 and make notes:

The New Testament teaches of a final judgment that will be a time of accounting for the way we have lived our lives. Jesus taught a “day of judgment” was coming:

Read Matthew 10:15; Matthew 11:22; Matthew 11:24; Matthew 12:36; Luke 10:14; Matthew 12:41 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

Do you think there is any significance to the fact that Jesus spoke of “the day of judgment” or “the judgment” so many times?

Several of the New Testament writers also taught of a coming day of judgment.

Read Acts 17:30-31; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Acts 24:25; Romans 2:5 and make notes:

The apostle Paul told the Athenians God had overlooked things such as idolatry in the past because “he has set a day when he will judge the world”. He told the Corinthians God had an “appointed time” for judgment. When Paul was sharing the Gospel with Felix, he taught on “the judgment to come”. He warned the Romans, those who had unrepentant hearts were “storing up wrath” against themselves for the “day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed”.

Read 2 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 3:7; 2 Peter 2:4 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

The apostle Peter spoke of a “day of judgment”. He also spoke of being “held for judgment.”

Read Hebrews 6:2; Hebrews 9:27 and make notes:

The author of Hebrews taught of facing eternal judgment.

Read Jude 1:6 and make notes:

Jude spoke of “judgment on the great day” in Jude 1:6.

Read 1 John 4:17 and make notes:

Read Revelation 20:11-13 and make notes:

The apostle John taught there would be a “day of judgment” and he describes the final judgment that is portrayed in the vision he received; “a great white throne and him who was seated on it...The dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged...as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead...death and Hades gave up the dead...” The Scriptures indicate an event is expected on a particular day by using phrases such as “that day,” the “day of God’s wrath,” and “judgment day.”

There are those who believe the final judgment is the culmination of many precursors in which God rewarded obedience and punished disobedience throughout the history of his people. They usually point to the blessing and deliverance of those who were faithful such a Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, and the many faithful among the people of Israel. they also points to the times when God brought judgment upon those who persisted in disobedience and unbelief such as the flood, the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and others which occurred throughout history.

This appears to be the Biblical view, when we consider Romans 1:18-32, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,...since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen,...so that men are without excuse...they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images...God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts...Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion...he gave them over to a depraved mind,...” There is also Isaiah chapters thirteen through twenty-three to support this view.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 01

The New Testament affirms the certainty of the final judgment and the passages concerning the final judgment of Christ do not refer to a process but to a very definite event.

The Scriptures not only say the concluding event in history is the final judgment. All of the New Testament Scriptures concerning the final judgment also make it clear the end of history involves accountability.

What affect should this have on the way we live our lives?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

## COMMON ERRONEOUS VIEWS

Origen, in the third century, taught punishment of the wicked would be for the purpose of restoring them back to a place of fellowship with God. He believed all would be restored to their original righteous state. This view has not been embraced by the church and there is no Scriptural support for it. It is included only to let you know there are some who still want to hold on to this error today.

Dispensationalist do not view Matthew 25:31-46 as the final judgment spoken of in Revelation 20:11-15, but as the judgment that comes after the tribulation and before the millennium. They view this as a judgment of all nations as to how they have treated the Jews. If they have treated the Jews well, they will be allowed to enter into the millennium, and those who have not treated the Jews well will not be allowed to enter.

They believe there will be two significant judgments before the final judgment. The first is the judgment of the nations determining who will enter the millennium (Matthew 25:31-46). The second is the judgment of the believer's works (2 Corinthians 5:10), sometimes called the "bema" judgment from the Greek word for judgment seat. Then, after the millennium will come the "great white throne judgment" (Revelation 20:11-15) to determine the punishments for unbelievers.

The passages used by the dispensationalist to describe three judgments are all speaking about the same judgment. There doesn't appear to be any Scriptural basis for separating these texts into different judgments.

The Scriptural evidence stands against the view of the Dispensationalists. In Matthew 25:46 there is no mention of entering into the millennium. While the nations are gathered before Christ, the judgment is a picture of individual judgment rather than national. The final judgment will take place after the millennium. At the end of the millennium, Satan is loosed, he deceives the nations and gathers them together to do battle against God. After God defeats this rebellion, John says he saw a "great white throne" Revelations 20:11. He goes on to describe seeing everyone brought before the one seated on this great white throne and everyone was judged according to what was written in the books, Revelation 20:12-13.

What do you think about the Dispensationalist view regarding the final judgment?

Louis Berkhof cites four common erroneous views concerning the final judgment.

#1. The first erroneous view; the “judgment is metaphorical.”

He refers to Schleiermacher as one of many German scholars who interpret the final judgment as symbolic. Berkhof states this argument does not do justice to the strong statements of Scripture regarding the final judgment.

#2 The second erroneous view; the “judgment is exclusively immanent.”

He refers to Schelling’s dictum that “the history of the world is the judgment of the world.” This view holds that the retributive judgment of God is rendered through the events of history. Berkhof believes this view stands in opposition to the Scriptures.

#3. The third erroneous view; the “judgment is not a single event.”

Present day premillennialists hold to the idea of three judgments.

.A. The first is the judgment of the risen and living saints. They believe this will take place at the coming of the Lord.

.B. The second is the judgment of the Gentile nations in regard to how they have treated the Jews. This is to determine who will enter into the kingdom of God and who will not. They believe this will take place immediately following the great tribulation.

.C. The third is the judgment of the wicked dead at the great white throne judgment. They believe this will take place 1000 years after the preceding judgment.

#4. The fourth erroneous view is the “final judgment is unnecessary.”

Since each man’s destiny is determined at the time of his death, there is no need for a final judgment.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 02

It is a mistake to see final judgment as a non-event or to reduce it to metaphorical status. It is also unwise to see it as a continuing, immanental-historical process.

Perhaps the majority of people do not want to believe in a day of judgment. Most people would like to think we can do whatever we wish without there being a day of reckoning. Because sin is not always punished immediately some people use this as their basis for not believing in a day of judgment. Those who have come to this conclusion are surely ignoring God's Word.

Read Joel 2:13; 2 Peter 3:9 and make notes:

Both Old and New Testament writers understood the slowness of God punishing sin as an indication of God's love and mercy. Joel, a prophet from the Old Testament, said it was because of God's "abounding love". The apostle Peter said it was because God did not want "anyone to perish".

God's apparent inaction in the face of sin in the Old Testament was not an indifference on God's part; but it was due to his personal forbearing until Christ should deal with sin on the cross.



How do you connect God allowing sin to go unpunished in this life with the Scriptures?

## NECESSITY OF FINAL JUDGMENT

The argument can be made that because a person's destiny is determined at the time of their death, there is no need for any further judicial process. If a person is saved at the time of their physical death, then they will spend eternity with God. If they are not saved at the time of their physical death, then they will spend eternity apart from God. This makes a final judgment unnecessary.

What do you think about this argument? Write your response here.

God clearly teaches in His Word that there will be a final judgment. Since there is going to be a final judgment, the appropriate question would be “why is a final judgment necessary?”

The final judgment is not for the purpose of allowing God to find out the condition of a man’s heart or life. God already knows this since the righteous go to be with Him immediately upon their physical death and the wicked are immediately sent to a place of separation from God. This view could be seen as agreeing with the argument against the necessity of the final judgment.

This isn’t agreeing with this view. This is only agreeing that the final judgment is not for the purpose of determining a person’s eternal destination. This judgment will be to evaluate and determine the various degrees of reward to bestow upon the Believers. This judgment is not so God can receive new information regarding the persons being judged. This investigative judgment is for the purpose of clearly making known to each person why they are being judged faithful or unfaithful as a whole.

It is only half the truth to say the purpose of the final judgment is to determine the rewards for the believers. The purpose surely includes the determining punishment for the wicked. The purpose of the final judgment may help to establish the necessity of it. One purpose for the final judgment that has been proposed is “the cross was only the beginning of revealing God’s love and justice. The day of judgment is when God’s love and justice will be completely revealed.”

Another proposed purpose of the final judgment is to provide a proper opportunity for reward. Those who hold this view point out that we can not know the full of effect of the lie, or the incitement of someone to lust, greed, jealousy, to ill will, or malice of any kind, until the end of human history. Likewise, the full effect of good deeds can not be known until all deeds have run their full course. The total affect of one’s life is not known at the time of their death. Some point to Hitler and Stalin as examples of how the actions of one’s life continues to impact the world long after their death. They assert it is reasonable that a final judgment be rendered only after all accounts of historical agents are concluded, or at the end of time.

Those holding to this second proposed purpose also point to all the faithful who never received on this earth what was promised to those who are faithful, citing Hebrews 11:36-40; “Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated--the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”

For those holding this view, the final judgment is required to provide the faithful saved with the opportunity to receive their reward. This gives tremendous insight into the purpose, or necessity, of the final judgment.

What insight into the purpose, or necessity, of the final judgment do you how have?

The purpose of the final judgment is identified by J. Rodman Williams as being three-fold:

- #1. First, to exhibit the righteousness of God’s judgment.
- #2. Second, to reveal the totality of what is in every person.
- #3. Third, for the giving of rewards and punishments.

D.A. Hubbard presents six theological implications of the biblical teaching of the final judgment.

- #1. First, it is the ultimate triumph of God's will.
- #2. Second, it is a cosmic declaration of God's justness.
- #3. Third, it is the climax of Christ's ministry.
- #4. Fourth, it is a reminder that human and cosmic history move toward a goal.
- #5. Fifth, it is an absolute seal of human accountability.
- #6. Six, it is the most serious motive for Christian missions.

Comparing the purpose of the final judgment as given by Williams and Hubbard - with what the Scriptures say; - write what you believe to be the purpose of the final judgment. Does the purpose include any of those stated by these two men?

Does your view of the purpose of the final judgment differ?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 02**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

## THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Since there is going to be a final judgment, another question to be asked is, “who will be the judge at the final judgment?”

Read Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-33; John 5:26 and make notes:

Paul said God would judge the world “by the man he has appointed”. Jesus is identified as the one who would one day judge the world and the one to whom this authority has been granted by God.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 10:42 and make notes:

### Revelation – Final Judgment – 03

Both Paul and Peter identified Jesus as the one who would “judge the living and the dead”. The Scriptures make it indisputable that Christ is the judge at the final judgment. Now that it is established that Jesus will be the judge at the final judgment, the next question is, “who will be judged?”

Read Daniel 12:2; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10 and make notes:

The Old Testament prophet Daniel prophesied that those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; “some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”. Paul stated “we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” and again “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Read 1 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12 and make notes:

The Scriptures tell us everyone will be judged, but we will be judged as individuals. The final judgment before God is inescapable. The New Testament does not provide a means of escape through annihilation, or the loss of identity with the family, nation, or church. The summary answer is everyone will be judged. But more specifically “each” person will be judged.

Beyond simply saying everyone will be judged, we can identify specific groups of who will be judged. In the vision recorded in Revelation 20:12-13, John saw “the dead, great and small, standing before the throne.” It might be thought that this is referring to those who are spiritually dead, or the wicked only. The reference to the book of life as being a part of this final judgment indicates this is more of a general judgment including more than just the wicked; but it does include the unbeliever.

Read Romans 2:5 and make notes:

Those who are stubborn and have an unrepentant heart are storing up wrath against themselves on the day of judgment. These texts are enough to establish that, at least, the unbelievers are one group that will be judged.

The apostle Paul taught “we will all stand before God’s judgment,” Romans 14:10; “each of us will give an account,” Romans 14:12; and “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” 2 Corinthians 5:10.

(all listed above)

The language of these texts indicates it would be a misinterpretation of Scripture to exclude the believers from this judgment since these letters were written to believers and both used phrases such as “we all” and “each of us.”



### Revelation – Final Judgment – 03

Read Romans 2:6-11 and make notes:

This text is even more specific in stating God will give to “each person according to what he has done. To those who...persistence in doing good...eternal life...glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good...”

Also note the account of the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 speaks of Christ separating the “sheep” from the goats and rewarding the sheep. Believers are identified as the second group who will be judged. Besides the unbelievers and believers, there are others who will be judged in this final judgment.

Read Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4; Jeremiah 10:14 and make notes:

Other gods, even idols, are not left out of judgment.

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 03**

Read 1 Timothy 3:6 and make notes:

The devil is included in judgment.

Read 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6 and make notes:

Evil angels will be judged at the final judgment.

Read Matthew 8:29 and make notes:

The fallen angels know they will be judged and punished as indicated in their question to Jesus, “Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?”

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 03**

Can you think of anyone who will not be judged in the final judgment?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

## BELIEVERS IN THE FINAL JUDGMENT

There are basically three views of the believers being judged as it relates to sins for which they have repented:

- #1. The first view, believes the forgiven sins of believers will be revealed at the final judgment, but will be revealed as forgiven, or pardoned, sins.
- #2. The second view, not only believes the forgiven sins of the believers will be revealed at the final judgment but the believers themselves will be the ones to reveal their sins by way of their confessions.
- #3. The third view, believes the final judgment will be a private review of the individual that is carried on simultaneously with all who are being appraised.
- #4 Believer's sins that have been forgiven will not be mentioned in the final judgment.

The argument against the first two views is contained within one response.

Read Psalm 103:12; Hebrews 10:17

We are assured that our forgiven sins are placed at too great of a distance to be retrieved; “as far as the east is from the west” and “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” The language here conveys the eternal blotting out of God’s record our past sins and iniquities.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 04

It is inconsistent with the plain wording of this text to think the forgiven sins will not be remembered “until the judgment” and then remembered again. At the final judgment, neither God, nor the individual, will reveal the pardoned sins that have been attended to by the process of repentance and forgiveness.

Do you believe view #1, view #2, or the argument against them is correct?

Read John 5:24; Romans 8:1 and make notes:

Furthermore, the believer does not need to be afraid of the final judgment. We have the promise of Jesus that the Believer “will not be condemned”.

The third view regarding the silent or private judgment is clearly refuted by the New Testament.

Read Matthew 12:41 and make notes:

Jesus' teaching indicates the final judgment will not be a silent or private review between the Christ and the individual. The men of Nineveh, who repented after hearing the preaching of Jonah, standing up to condemn the unrepentant generation in Jesus' day, gives a very different picture.

The final judgment will not be a secret proceeding. One of the purposes of this judgment is to expose the sins of the sinners. This is not the sins that have already been confessed and repented of, but the secret sins for which no repentance has been offered.

The eternal destiny of men and angels will be publicly manifested at the final judgment. This could be interpreted in such a way as to think this is speaking of their destiny to spend eternity in heaven or hell. However, all of the condemned at the final judgment will be self-condemned. And not only this, there will be a revelation of character to every person to all who are around them that will render apparent the justice to each person. This view lines up with the simple reading of the biblical text concerning the judgment.

What do you think about view #3?

Floyd H. Barackman makes several observations regarding believers at the final judgment:

- #1. First, we will not lose any rewards that we have gained.
- #2. Second, all believers will receive the same kinds of rewards but not the same amount.
- #3. Third, we can earn more rewards by being more obedient now.
- #4. Fourth, we decrease the Lord's reprimand of us by faithfully dealing with our sins by repentance and confession. He does point out that our sinning, although forgiven, will leave gaps in our lives that could have been filled with good and faithful works.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:3 and make notes:

Paul taught that believers will one day judge angels.

Some believe this will include the righteous angels since there is no qualifying words such as “fallen” or “demon.”

We can not determine from Scripture with certainty whether the good angels will be judged at the final judgment. However, it is likely that good angels will not be included in the final judgment. All the creatures, mentioned specifically in the Scriptures, before Christ at the judgment are sinful ones; i.e. Devil, fallen angels, and men. The good angels never sinned. They have been justified through some means that is not applicable to the fallen angels.

While there are Scriptures that indicate fallen angels will be punished, nowhere is there any indication that good angels will receive a reward. This view is the most viable light of biblical text and this would mean Paul is indicating believers will judge fallen angels.

Do you believe the good angels will be judged in the final judgment? If so, why?

## THOROUGHNESS AND JUSTICE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

The thoroughness of the final judgment can be seen first in the fact that all people will be included; Romans 14:10, “we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” and 2 Corinthians 5:10, “we must all appear before the judgment seat.” There is no one too important to be exempted and no one too insignificant to be left out.

Read Colossians 3:25 and make notes:

This text affirms everyone will be repaid for wrong because with God, “there is no favoritism.”



## Revelation – Final Judgment – 04

Read Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 6:2; Luke 8:17 and make notes:

The thoroughness is further revealed in the fact that every deed will be judged; even what is done in secret; everything that has been hidden will be revealed.

Read Matthew 12:36; Luke 12:3 and make notes:

Not only our deeds, but our words will be judged as well; even what has been said in the dark or whispered.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 2:14-15 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 04

The complete thoroughness of the final judgment is further emphasized by our very motives being judged. We will even be judged by the way we obeyed or disobeyed our own conscience.

The Final Judgment will not only be a judgment of our deeds both public and private; but of every word we have spoken, publicly and in private; the motives of our hearts, and even our obedience based upon our own conscience.

Some Bible scholars believe all persons will be judged by the will of God that has been made known to each. The Gentiles judged by the natural law, Jews judged by only the Old Testament, those who have enjoyed the Gospel will be judged by all three. This would be an incorrect statement if it is meant to imply what is right or wrong varies from one people group to another. If however, it is only meant to imply the degree of punishment will be determined by what they know, then it is correct.

Read Luke 12:47-48 and make notes:

In one sense, the same will be expected from everyone. What is right and wrong does not change. What is expected from an individual depends upon what they have been given. In a quantitative sense, this means those who have been given more will have more expected from them. But in a qualitative sense this is asking the same from everyone in much the same way as the 10% tithe is the same for everyone.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 04

Read Psalm 96:13; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17 and make notes:

Read Revelation 19:1-2 and make notes:

Scripture declares the complete justness of God's judgment. The Psalmist declared God will judge the earth in righteousness and in truth. The apostle Paul declared there is "no favoritism" with God. Peter declared our Heavenly Father will judge "impartially". The proclamation recorded in Revelation declare of God; "true and just are his judgments."

Floyd Barackman uses Romans 2:1-16 as the basis for the summary of the justness of Christ judgments.

- #1. First, his judgments are according to truth, verse 2.
- #2. Secondly, his judgments are according to people's needs, verse 6.
- #3. Thirdly, his judgments are without respect of persons, verse 11.

Divine justice is pure and faithful. Divine justice is not subject to the weakness or imperfections of man's judgment. This is demonstrated by recorded instances of divine justice being metered out in man's history. Man very often assesses divine justice to be unfair by demanding too harsh a punishment for violation of the law.

Some examples found in Scripture include:

- #1. Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back at Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:26
- #2. Nadab and Abihu both being consumed by fire from heaven because they used unauthorized fire in their priestly duties, Leviticus 10:1-2
- #3. God commanding a man be stoned to death because he was gathering wood on the Sabbath day, Numbers 15:32-36
- #4. Moses being disqualified from entering the promised land because he struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it, Numbers 20:11
- #5. God commanding Achan and his family to be destroyed by fire because he had kept some of the plunder from the enemy, Joshua 7:11-25
- #6. God striking Uzzah dead because he touched the ark with his hand in an effort to steady it, 2 Samuel 6:6-7
- #7. God striking Ananias and Sapphira dead because they lied, Acts 5:1-10.

What does the absolute thoroughness of the final judgment say to you?

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 04

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

## SENTENCED TO HELL

Read Galatians 6:7-8 and make notes:

It is not so much God who decides what a person is to receive in the way of rewards or punishment as it is the standard which he has established. What each of us receives in the final judgment is more a result of what we have sown than it is one of God weighing out our actions, attitude, and heart.

Alister E. McGrath presents two primary objections to reality of Hell:

#1. The first, he gives as the position of Origen, is that of universal restoration. If good is to triumph over evil, how can hell exist? Would not the triumph of good over evil necessitate the winning over of all to the side of good?

#2. The second, it is difficult to reconcile the idea of a loving God participating in vindictive and retributive punishment. There seems to be no point to the suffering of the condemned.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 and make notes:

We are told the quality of each man's work will be tested by fire. Is the "quality" of each man's work going to be used to determine if he gets a reward or to determine how much reward he will receive? There are two strong reasons to believe the quality of each man's work is to determine the level of reward.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 05

Read Ephesians 2:8-9 and make notes:

Read Revelation 21:27 and make notes:

First, our salvation is not of works. Secondly, the determining factor of who gets to enter into the New Jerusalem is that their name is written the book of life.

Most of us do not want to talk about hell and its terrible prospect. If we do not speak honestly about hell then we will become guilty of suppressing the awesome witness of the Scriptures and may even become accomplices in the condemnation of others.

Read Matthew 25:34; Matthew 25:41; John 3:18;

The doctrine of hell will be left to be addressed by a separate study. There are two things that are important to address here as pertaining to the final judgment:

#1. The first is the two basic verdicts in the final judgment.

One is found in Matthew 25:34 where the believer is invited to come and “take your inheritance.” The other is found in Matthew 25:41 where the unbeliever will be told to “depart from me...into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

#2. The second important thing to be addressed here is no one will be condemned to hell in the final judgment. This condemnation has already taken place and is the result of the individual’s own choices, John 3:18.

## DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT OR REWARD

Read Matthew 11:22 (also Matthew 11:24) and make notes:

Jesus taught there would be degrees or levels of punishment. He did not say a person would not be punished if they did not know their actions were wrong. He said the person who sins unwittingly will be punished less severely (Luke 12:47-48) than the one who sinned knowingly. Another evidence of Jesus teaching degrees of punishment is found in Matthew 11:22 and 11:24 where he states it will be “more bearable” on the day of judgment for some.



The conclusion concerning degrees of punishment is that all the biblical passages dealing with the final judgment imply there will be degrees of punishment. The same destiny awaits the unrepentant sinner as for the devil, the beast, and the false prophet; unending torment day and night. But the degree of the unending torment will differ according to their deeds.

Paul told the Corinthians the reason we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ is to receive what is due us for the (good) things we did while in the body; 2 Corinthians 5:10. Paul also taught that while we all work for the same purpose, we will each be rewarded according to our own labor; 1 Corinthians 3:8. Everyone will be rewarded for whatever they do, regardless if they are slave or free; Ephesians 6:7-8.

Read 2 John 1:8; Luke 6:35; Hebrews 10:34-35 and make notes:

The apostle John implies degrees of rewards when he warns us to watch out so that we receive the full reward. This can only mean that some will receive something less than the full reward. If everyone was going to receive the same level of reward, then Jesus would not have said the reward of some “will be great.” The author of Hebrews states some will be “richly rewarded” and some would receive a “better resurrection”. It is hard to imagine what could be a better resurrection than to be resurrected back to life, but this implies degrees of reward.

While there will be degrees of rewards in heaven, each person will have the full measure of joy for eternity. We must be careful not to confuse the happiness we experience on this earth due to the level of the material goods we have with the complete joy of being with God forever.

## BELIEVERS WILL PLAY A PART IN THE JUDGMENT

Read Revelation 20:4 and make notes:

John, in the vision recorded in Revelation, states he saw others besides Christ seated on thrones who had been “given authority to judge.” The text does not identify those seated on the thrones, but this text does indicate Christ will delegate some aspect of the judgment to others.

Read Matthew 19:28 (also Luke 22:30); 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and make notes:

Jesus told the twelve disciples “...you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Paul stated “that the saints will judge the world” and “we will judge angels.”

This could mean Believers will be watching the declaration of judgment by Christ and approving of it. However, this view does not fit the context of this passage. In this text Paul is encouraging the Corinthian Believers to settle disputes between themselves. He points out they have the ability to carefully evaluate and discern what is right and implies this is what we will do on the day of judgment.

Some Bible scholars point out the saints cannot be expected to know all those who appear in judgment and to justly apportion the penalties. While they admit it is impossible to say exactly what part the believers will play in the judgment, they do affirm that the believers will in fact play some part.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; 1 Corinthians 13:12 and make notes:

The objection regarding the knowledge of the believer seems to ignore the new state into which we will be “changed”. Paul indicates we will “know fully” at that time. It is reasonable to accept we will “know” what we need to know in order to fulfill our allotted participation in the judgment.

J. Rodman Williams, reflecting on the fact that man was created lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:6-7), poses some interesting questions regarding man judging angels:

#1. First, why will God not use the good angels to judge the fallen?

#2. Secondly, why will Christ not simply judge the fallen angels by himself without using man in the process?

Then he offers some possible answers to these questions. While man is lower than angels now, in his glorified body man may no longer be lower than angels. It will not be simply man judging angels. It will be the one time sinful man who knows confession, repentance, and forgiveness that will be judging fallen angels. If the fallen angels played a part in the fall of man, then it is proper for the fallen angels to stand before Christ and also before the redeemed humanity.

## TIME OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

From the Scriptures, already cited in discussing the various aspects of the final judgment, we can determine the fixed relative time of the final judgment, but not the absolute time. It will take place at the end of this present world. It will follow the second coming of Jesus Christ. It will follow the resurrection of the dead.

Neither can we specifically determine the duration of the final judgment. The text which speaks of the “day” of judgment uses a term which can refer to a twenty-four hour period of time but can just as easily refer to simply a period of time.

## MORAL APPLICATION OF FINAL JUDGMENT

The moral implications of the doctrine of the final judgment determine what, if any, impact this doctrine will have on our lifestyle. Thomas C. Oden asserts, in this final court, sin will be understood in its “essence simply as unresponsiveness to God’s saving activity.” This is no doubt a true statement, but the final judgment has more to say to us today.

Paul encouraged slaves to be submissive to their masters because the masters who do wrong will be paid for the wrong doing (Colossians 3:25). This should encourage employees to be faithful and obedient workers in regard to their employers, knowing that these employers will one day be paid for what they have done. In every area of our life, we should refuse to take revenge on those who mistreat us, knowing that God has said, “I will repay” (Romans 12:19). The person who has wronged us will be required to answer to God for what they have done. Ideally, the Believer would pray for the offender to repent to God and be forgiven before the day of judgment. Whether they do or do not repent, we know that they will not “get away” with the offense, and this should help us to forgive them.

The righteous have the assurance that a record of remembrance is kept by God so nothing is forgotten (Malachi 3:16). These books of remembrance are probably the books opened in Revelation 20:12.

Wayne Grudem suggests four positive moral influences on the life of a Believer because of the doctrine of final judgment:

- #1. First, the doctrine of final judgment satisfies an inward need for justice for the Believer.
- #2. Second, the doctrine of final judgment helps us to forgive others.
- #3. Third, for Believers, the doctrine of final judgment is an incentive to faithfulness in order to gain greater eternal reward.
- #4. Fourth, the doctrine of final judgment is a great motive for evangelism.

James Packer adds the knowledge of the future judgment is a summons to present repentance.

The knowledge that everyone of us will most assuredly give an account for every deed, word, thought, motive, and act of conscience, should be sufficient incentive for us to daily apply 1 John 1:9 to our life so that we can walk in the condition of Hebrews 10:17.

We will be spiritually and morally benefited if we could better understand the New Testament teachings regarding degrees of rewards. A proper understanding in this area would not make us competitive but would encourage us to help one another on toward better works as we are encourage to do in Hebrews 10:24-25; “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

What insight regarding the final judgment did you receive from this study?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 05**

In what way did your view of the final judgment change as a result of this study?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 05**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The first 10 verses of chapter 20 are given great importance by a number of Christian teachers. The way it is presented by some gives the impression that these 10 verses are the most important part of the book of Revelation. Many of those who place such importance on these verses are trying to use them to support their particular view of the “millennium.”

Read Revelation 20:1 and make notes:

The angel in this verse may very well be the same angel who released the demonic locust in chapter 9. Earlier an angel was given the key to the abyss. Here an angel appears with the key to the abyss. He also has a “great chain.”

Read Revelation 20:2-3 and make notes:

Verse 2 is an important verse. It stands against those who believe there are two equal but opposite gods in the universe; one good and one evil. It isn't the “good god” who captures and imprisons the “evil god.” An angel, a mere servant of the Lord Most High, is the one who “seized” the devil, “bound” him, “locked” him in the abyss, and “sealed” the lock. This is done to keep the devil from performing his work of “deceiving the nations.”



## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

In this passage, Satan is called by all the major titles by which he is referred in Revelations. He is the “dragon” who is defeated in heavenly war (Rev. 12:7-8), he is the “serpent” who tried to destroy God’s people with a flood (Rev. 12:15), and he is the “devil” who knows that his time is short (Rev. 12:12).

The imprisonment of Satan in the Abyss is not punishment. The punishment will occur later. The purpose of his being locked away is to prevent him from being able to deceive. During this thousand year period, no one will be able excuse their sinfulness due to the overpowering temptations of Satan. A world with no Satan to tempt or to deceive has no reason for continuing in sin. There will be no obstacle to hinder people from accepting God’s invitation for all to be saved.

Try to imagine what the world could be like today, if Satan was not allowed to deceive, tempt, and entice people into sinful acts.

Read Psalm 50:10; 2 Peter 3:8 and make notes:

The term “thousand” was used in both the Old Testament and the New to speak metaphorically. Certainly God owns the cattle on every hill, not just one thousand hills. To set “one day” to be as “one thousand years” as a literal interpretation would be to set God into a timed existence. His time would simply be over 365,000 times slower than ours. This verse in 2 Peter is better understood to mean that any number of years is just like one day with the Lord because He is not bound by time.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

The thousand year imprisonment of Satan may not be a literal one thousand years. It may be intended to convey the concept of a long time period with the specific number of years being unimportant.

Whatever the actual length of time, there are two things that are important to notice. First, the thousand years of confinement did not teach Satan anything. He gathers another army and attacks God when he is released. Secondly, the thousand years without the evil influence of Satan did not teach the people on earth anything. There isn't a turning to God and these people willingly follow Satan when he is released.

Seeing in this text that an Angel can bind Satan lets us know that there are angels who are as strong and stronger than Satan. What message does this convey to you regarding your daily walk and the influence of Satan in your life?

Read Revelation 20:4 and make notes:

There are several interpretations as to who is sitting on these thrones John sees in his vision. Some believe it is those who lost their lives for the sake of Christ; using the second sentence of this verse to identify who is sitting on the thrones. This can be connected to the martyrs in chapter 6 who were told to wait just a little longer.

Read Matthew 19:28 and make notes:

Others believe it is the 12 apostles, using Jesus' words recorded in Matthew to identify those sitting on the thrones.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 and make notes:

And still others believe it is saints in general, who will be sitting on these thrones.

The last part of verse 4 seems to point to a special privilege, or reward, that will be given to those who suffered specifically under the reign of the beast. It seems to point to those who had been killed because they refused to receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads or their hands. "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

If the vision is still to be seen primarily in symbolism, then this could easily apply to every person who refused to be a part of Satan's system throughout any age of mankind. This could apply to God's people throughout the earth's history. The next couple of verses lend evidence toward this interpretation.

Read Revelation 20:5 and make notes:

Some interpret verse 5 as the “rest of the dead” includes those who are dead but were not saved as well as those who are dead but did not die as a martyr. For them the only persons included in the “first resurrection” are those who were killed because of their stand for Christ.

The next verse cannot be separated from verse 5 and these two verses cannot be separated from verse 4. This is better to be interpreted as the “rest of the dead” referring to those who are dead and were not saved.

Read Revelation 20:6 and make notes:

Three things are said regarding those who participate in the “first resurrection” and it is important to interpreting verses 4 and 5. First, these people are called “blessed and holy.” Surely, the saved who died a physical death of natural causes are also blessed. Since they are saved, then they too are holy.

Secondly, the “second death has no power over them.” This is also true of the saved who died throughout the ages, but were not necessarily killed because they were believers.

Thirdly, they will be “priests of God and of Christ.” All of God’s people are intended to be a kingdom of priests. God promised this to His people in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:6), it is expected of His people in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:5), we are declared to be this in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10.

It would appear to be most appropriate to understand that every person who has ever lived and accepted God's plan of salvation will be reigning with Christ during this millennium period of peace and absence of Satan's influence.

There are 4 basic views concerning the "millennium:"

(1) no-millennium, (2) past-millennium, (3) present-millennium, (4) future-millennium.

(1) no-millennium basically views this as symbolic of the time when "swords will be beaten into plows," "the wolf will live with the lamb," and "the lion will eat straw" and no specific time period is intended.

(2) past-millennium basically views this as a time of peace that has already occurred in man's history. Some who hold this view see it as a literal 1,000 year period and others only as a span of time; not necessarily a literal 1,000 years. While there are different views as to when this past-millennium began, most believe it was in the 4th century during the reign of Constantine and ended with the assault against Christianity in the 14th century by the Ottoman Turks. There are simply too many evidences against this view to seriously consider it. It is only presented here for reference.

(3) Present-millennium basically views this as a non-literal 1,000 years which began with Christ's first coming and continues until His second coming. This would mean that we are now living in the millennium. As we look around us, we can at least agree that Satan has not been bound at this time. His influence is very prevalent in contemporary American society. So this view is not very realistic.

(4) Future-millennium basically views this as a time which will come in the future. Among those who hold to a future-millennium view there are 2 basic divisions; post-millennium and pre-millennium. Post-millennium refers to those who believe Christ's second coming will occur after the millennium. Pre-millennium refers to those who believe Christ's second coming will occur before the millennium.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

In regards to the millennium of peace and the second coming of Christ, if we accept the record of John's vision to be in the order that events will occur - then pre-millennium would be the most appropriate view of the Future-millennium position.

What do you think is significant about there being a period of time when Satan is bound, the Saints are with Christ, and the whole world having a time of peace? And why do you think there will there be a millennium period?

Read Revelation 20:7-9 and make notes:

This release of Satan was predicted in verse 3, "After that, he must be set free for a short time." The excuse of mankind that "Satan made me do it" has been completely refuted. The passing of time does not alter the course of the human heart nor does it change Satan and his evil plans. The judgment can now come and there will be no place for anyone to say, "If only I had been given time" or "the devil made me do it."

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

As soon as Satan is released, he gathers an army. It is a rather large army for it is said to number like “the sand on the seashore.” They came from all parts of the earth, “four corners of the earth” and “marched across the breadth of the earth,” and surrounded God’s people. This is the final mistake. They are completely defeated and devoured which is to say they are destroyed. Everyone is now physically dead.

“Gog and Magog” are best interpreted as symbolic of hostile people toward God’s people. The efforts to identify Gog and Magog with specific nations and specific geographical locations have too many problems and distracts us from the message of the text.

Read Revelation 20:10 and make notes:

In the preceding chapter John saw the beast and the false prophet thrown into the lake of fire. Now the devil is cast into the same lake of fire where they are. “They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Satan, the beast, and false prophet will not come before God in the day of Judgment. They have already been judged and their punishment is determined.

Read Revelation 20:11 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

The destruction of the “earth and sky” is interpreted by some as a literal destruction of the universe and by others as symbolic of the destruction of all the “old ways” of doing things. Which of these is meant by this text is not nearly as important as the message it transmits; that God is in charge.

Now all human beings have been killed; Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire; the earth and sky are destroyed, “fled from his presence.” The “great white throne” judgment will take place.

Read Revelation 20:12-15 and make notes:

Everyone comes before the Judgment Throne, “great and small.” No one is so important as to be exempted from judgment and no one is too insignificant to be overlooked. No one is too young and no one is too old.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10 and make notes:



There are those who argue about who is the one sitting in the judgment seat. Some say it is Jesus and others say that it is God. The New Testament doesn't appear to have any difficulty saying one or the other. John 10:20 records Jesus' testimony that "I and the Father are one." The argument about who is seated on the Judgment Throne is not a good use of our time.

Verse 13 states "the sea" gave up those who were lost at sea or those who's bodies were disposed of there. It further states "death and Hades" gave up all those they had taken captive. All the saved persons have already been taken to be with Christ, so this is referring to all the lost people. In Revelations 6:8 "Death and Hades" was the rider of the pale horse. Today there are several beliefs as to the exact location of people after they die. "Hades" was considered to be the place of the departed dead. Whatever our personal belief concerning where they dead go after they die a physical death, it will have to give up the dead it has taken captive. This is the primary message in this passage concerning "Hades."

After "death" and the "place of departed dead" gave up all the dead they were holding, they are cast into the lake of fire along Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. Death and the place of the departed dead are put into the place of torment that was created for Satan and his angels.

"Books were opened" and the dead were judged "according to what they had done as recorded in the books." There is no indication of how many, just that it takes a multiple number of books to record the deeds of all mankind.

Read Psalm 62:12; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 2:6; 1 Peter 1:17 and make notes:

In the Old Testament as well as the New, there has been testimony that we will be judged according to our lifestyles, or our actions and works. The Great White Throne judgment will not be arbitrary, nor will it be done on the basis of favoritism. This judgment will be based upon the evidence of the recorded works of each person.

This brings about an interesting picture. Consider two persons standing before this Great White Throne Judgment. Person “A” is lost and all the good and bad things they have ever done is recorded in these books. Person “B” is saved and they did exactly the same things in life as did person “A”, both good and bad. There is a substantial difference however. Recorded in these books is the time when person “B” accepted Jesus as their savior. Also person “B” confessed and repented of most their bad deeds. According to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:15-18 each of these bad deeds were removed from the books and “remembered no more.” Even though in life both person “A” and person “B” did the exact same things, on Judgment Day, person “B” has very few, if any, bad deeds to answer for. Person “A” is still being charged with every bad thing they ever did.

It is important to note that each person will not be judged by what they have done, but we will be judged by what we have done “as recorded in the books” (Rev 20:12). If it is not in the books, then we will not be judged by it. What a wonderful incentive to make use of 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:15-18.

It must be acknowledged that a great number of Bible teachers believe only the lost people will stand before God in judgment. If we look only at the text in Revelation 20 we can admit it can be interpreted that only the dead come before the judgment throne. However, there are other Scriptures regarding the judgment which must not be ignored.

Read Matthew 25:31-46 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

Jesus taught the saved persons (sheep) would be put on the right side of the judgment throne and the lost (goats) would be placed on the left side of the judgment throne. If nothing else, this text tells us the saved people will be at the judgment scene.

Read 1 Peter 4:17 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit taught through the apostle Peter that “judgment” will begin in the family of God. It isn’t that the believers will be included in the judgment, but we will be the beginning of judgment.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:5 and make notes:

This Scripture speaks specifically of “each” person receiving “praise” from God at the appointed time of judgment. If the word “everyone” was used, we might interpret this to say everyone receives the same. Since the word “each” was used instead of “everyone”, it is reasonable to understand that it will be “each” according to the judgment of Christ.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 06

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit taught through the apostle Paul that “we all” must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, whether “good or bad.” The purpose of appearing is not just that we can be separated but that “each one may receive what is due him” for the things done.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 speaks of receiving rewards for our godly deeds and some entering but with no reward beyond being saved. These two Scripture texts indicate degrees of reward based upon our good works.

Read Matthew 11:22; Luke 20:47 and make notes:

These two Scriptures indicate degrees of punishment. The people of Tyre and Sidon will have a “more bearable” punishment than for the people in Korazin and Bethsaida. If everyone were going to receive the same degree of punishment then it would be meaningless for Jesus to say some would be punished “most severely.”

The Great White Throne Judgment is the time when the saved will receive degrees of rewards according to the good life they have lived and the lost will receive degrees of punishments according to the sinful life they have lived.

In addition to these books, “Another book” which is the “book of life” is opened. Just one singular book to record the names of those who are saved.

Verse 15 is an important verse. No one is judged into “the lake of fire” or out of “the lake of fire” based upon their deeds. The sole determining factor as to who is sent to hell is the book of life. If your name is in the book of life, you are not cast into “the lake of fire.” If however, your name is not found in the book of life, then you will be cast into “the lake of fire.”

Being cast into the lake of fire is not a result of how many bad deeds or the magnitude of the bad deeds. This will also mean that we can not perform enough good works to earn our way out of an eternity in hell which will be shared with Satan, his angels, the beast, and the false prophet.

Can you see the danger that lies ahead for all of those today who have believed the lie that they must do more good things than they do bad things?

Do you see the tragedy that is in store for the person who realizes they are guilty of some terrible deed and sets out to perform a certain amount of good works to make up for their error?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 06**

What is the most enlightening message you received from texts concerning the Great White Throne Judgment?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 06**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

At this point in the vision John is receiving, all of the enemies of the church have been destroyed. There is no longer any struggle between good and evil. There is no longer any corrupt government. No more bad leaders. The saints of God, the church, stands victorious with Christ Jesus.

Read Revelation 21:1 and make notes:

Read Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22 and make notes:

God promised through the prophet Isaiah that He would “create new heavens and a new earth.” He also promised that this new heavens and new earth would remain before him. We see the fulfillment of this prophecy and promise in the vision John is recording.

The Greek word translated “new” in verse 1 is “kainos” which means something that has been rejuvenated, or something that has been made over. It is worth noting that John sees the first heaven and earth being replaced by a new heaven and earth. John is being shown a “renovation” of the old order rather than a transporting of man to another location.



Read 2 Peter 3:10-13 and make notes:

Bible teachers differ greatly over how much of John’s vision is to be taken literally. There are plenty on both sides of the issue of whether John’s vision is referring to a literal destruction of the old heaven and earth. The language in Revelation does leave open the possibility of a symbolic destroying of the old. However, when we consider other passages of Scripture, such as 2 Peter 3:10-13, it would appear more difficult to reject the literal destruction of the old and creating of the new.

The new earth has no sea. There are many interpretations that give a somewhat mystical meaning to this statement. The truth is probably not mystical, but practical.

Read Isaiah 57:20 and make notes:

God, through the prophet Isaiah, spoke of the lost as a “tossing sea.” It was from the sea that the beast came. There will be no lost people on the new earth.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 07

Read Revelation 21:2 and make notes:

Read Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 13:14; Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26 and make notes:

Read Revelation 3:12 and make notes:

While no one can settle the debate over the New Jerusalem being literal or symbolic, there are some things that we should be able to agree upon. The New Jerusalem indicates a community of men in fellowship with God. The ideal of perfect community has not been experienced on earth during man's history. The New Jerusalem is of heavenly origin and does not come from the programs or plans of man.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 07

What do you think? Is this going to be a literal new earth, or is it going to be a “renovated” earth, or is it going to be a new “order” of things on the existing earth? Why?

Read Revelation 21:3 and make notes:

What words of encouragement to a struggling group of Believers! God dwelling with His people! Fellowship with God in the Holy City! Saints, don't let the things of this earth or the actions of the lost get you discouraged. A glorious time lies ahead for God's people.

Read Leviticus 26:11-12; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 8:8 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 07

God made this promise to His people as far back as the days of Moses. He re-affirmed this promise several times throughout Old Testament history. This promise will become a permanent reality in the New Order of things.

Read Revelation 21:4 and make notes:

All those things that are part of the “old order of things” such as death, mourning, crying, and pain, will be abolished. These are all closely associated with sin. There will not be any sin in the “new order.”

Read Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 65:19; 1 Corinthians 15:54 and make notes:

The benefits of this “new order” were promised to God’s people through the prophet Isaiah. The apostle Paul saw it as being “swallowed up” in the victory of what God is doing. The old order, infected by sin, gives way to and is replaced by a perfect order of eternal blessing. What personal message of encouragement do you get from the Scriptures this Lesson?

Read Revelation 21:5-6 and make notes:

Some commentators interpret the one speaking in verse 5 as one of the angels. To stay true to the text, it is the one who is “seated on the throne” that is speaking and this is God. What is said by God can be written down because it is “trustworthy and true.”

When God says something is finished, it “is done.” There is nothing more to do or to be added to it. Since God is not only the beginning of things but also the end of things, who could possibly know better than Him when something is finished or complete?

There was a long time in America’s history when physical water was free. No one ever considered charging another for water. This text may not have been as meaningful as it was to the first century Christians. But it is quickly becoming meaningful to contemporary Christians, because more and more people are being required to purchase our water today in America.

The essential “water of life” will be given freely to any and all who are thirsty for it.

Read Revelation 21:7-8 and make notes:

In the Letters to the Seven Churches there are a number of things promised to those who overcome. The overcomer will “inherit all this.”

Read Mark 8:35 and make notes:

A major contrast is again shown between those who are faithful and those who are not faithful. The cowardly, those who chose personal safety and comfort instead faithfulness to God, will inherit the lake of fire. This is a significant statement. The simple fact that those who commit serious sins are mentioned separately from those who are cowards appears to indicate a truth that our present generation may not want to hear. Someone who did not commit vile sinful acts but chose personal comfort or personal safety over faithfulness to Christ receive the same punishment as those who commit the worst of sins.

Read Revelation 21:9-10 and make notes:

God’s people are called the “bride” of the lamb, the “wife” of the lamb, and the “Holy City.” Again here, as in verse 2, the “coming down out of heaven” is indicating God as the origin more than a literal physical event. Nothing of this new order is of man.

Read Revelation 21:11 and make notes:

The first thing noticed about this new order is the shimmering radiance.

Read Revelation 21:12-13 and make notes:

This new order is represented by a city with a “great wall” with “twelve gates,” and an angel sitting on each gate. The wall isn’t to provide security in the new order where there is no sin or evil. This picture speaks of the perfect city to the ancient mind. The twelve gates symbolize abundant entrance availability. The gates being located on every side symbolize the universal availability to all.

Read Revelation 21:14 and make notes:

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The twelve foundations symbolize the completeness, or perfection, upon which this new order is founded. The names of the twelve apostles “of the Lamb” symbolize the apostolic work or ministry through which many came to this new city. Taking the names to be a literal listing of the apostles brings about many conflicting interpretations and takes us away from the message intended. For instance, Judas would not be included; Paul was not an apostle during the earthly ministry of the Lamb, and Paul was not the only person called to be an apostle by Christ after his ascending to the Father.

Read Revelation 21:15-17 and make notes:

Earlier in this vision, John was allowed to measure the temple of God, its altar, and those who worship there. The holy city was measured by an angel of the Lord Most High. The rod the angel used was made of gold.

Read 1 Kings 6:20 and make notes:

The inner sanctuary of the Old Testament temple was a perfect cube, each side exactly the same size. A “stadia”, or furlong in some translations, is approximately 202.5 yards. A “cubit” is approximately 18 inches.



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The numbers of this measuring are best interpreted as symbolic. A cube has twelve edges. The sum of all twelve edges of this cube would be 144,000. This is the sacred number of God's people that has been used repeatedly throughout this vision.

The wall measured to be 144 cubits. This would make the wall literally approximately 216 feet thick. The text does not give the height of the wall. Some scholars believe the Greek text can properly be interpreted as 144 cubits high. But a wall 216 feet high would be rather insignificant for a city that is 1,300 to 1,400 miles high. The 144 cubits of the wall thickness is best interpreted as symbolic and recognized as a multiple of 12.

What do you think is the real message in the “measuring” of the New Jerusalem? Why?

Read Revelation 21:18-21 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 07

The efforts to interpret these verses literally have led to a number of different explanations. None of which seem to convey a message of any significance. The best interpretation seems to be the symbolism employed in an effort to communicate the beauty and magnificence of the “new order” in which God’s people will live with Him forever and ever. The city is of brilliant pure gold. The wall of the city as well as its foundations are all dazzling and beautiful. A single pearl so large as to be used as a city gate simply boggles the human mind. With what physical words could we describe the splendor, glory, and majesty of the divine presence?

Read Revelation 21:22-23 and make notes:

No temple is seen because the saints, who are the temple of God under the New Covenant, are personally in the presence of God Almighty. There is no sun or moon because God’s glory lights the entire “new order.” Is this surprising from the one who said “I am the light?”

Read Revelation 21:24 and make notes:

Nothing but confusion comes from making literal interpretations of verse 24. There is nothing but redeemed people left at this point in time of the vision. All of the redeemed live inside the “city.” To the ancient mind, who saw great significance in a city, what a message to think this city would provide the light for all other nations and the kings of the earth would be bringing their splendor to it! Again, the symbolism is intended to convey the splendor and majesty of this “new order.”

Read Revelation 21:25-27 and make notes:

Since there is no longer any evil, there is no need to have a gate closed or locked. There is no longer any night where one could sneak into the city. There is only daylight in which everything is plainly revealed.

There is nothing impure left to enter through the gate. There is no one left who is shameful or deceitful. All of these have been placed in the lake of fire. What security! What a sense of safety!

What do you think is the message that God desires for Believers today to receive from this chapter on the New Jerusalem in this Lesson?

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 07**

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

**Revelation – Final Judgment – 07**

( this page for additional notes )

The description of the New Jerusalem which began in Revelation 21:9 is continued through verse 5 of chapter 22.

Read Revelation 22:1 and make notes:

This river was seen by the prophet Ezekiel as that which would heal the Dead Sea so that living things could once again live there.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12 and make notes:

Some scholars have seen this river as representing the Holy Spirit; others see it as the promise of immortality; and others as representing the abundance of life which God gives to his people. Each of these interpretations seems to cheat the rich imagery of this text from its full and comforting message. The people who lived in the hot and arid land of Palestine would find this text exciting. They are being told that they will be living at the very source of the life giving river of life. At the source the water of life is “clear as crystal.” This speaks of the exceeding purity of the life giving water.

The source of this life giving river is the throne of God. This is the place of honor that is shared with the Lamb. The Lamb has been made worthy of heavenly praise by way of his righteous life and his sacrificial death.

Read Revelation 22:2 and make notes:

As with the river seen in Ezekiel's vision, this river has trees on both sides which bear fruit in all months of the year. And the leaves of these trees provide healing for the nations. It is worth remembering, if Adam had eaten of the Tree of Life, he would have received immortality (Gen 2:9, 3:22).

The Tree of Life which stands on each side of the river produces 12 crops of fruit. A new crop of fruit each month. The fact that the Tree of Life produces fruit all year speaks of God's never ending abundance and supply. The fact that there is a new crop each month speaks of the fact that God's provision is always fresh and new. Never is God's provision old, stale, or boring.

We must not lose sight of the message being given in great imagery. The leaves of the Tree of Life providing healing for the nations is important imagery. This is not to be taken as literal healing leaves nor to taken that nations still exist on earth. Remember, at this point everyone is either in the New Jerusalem or in the Lake of Fire.

This message of the leaves that are present all year long and which provide healing for the nations is simple but profound. The glory of the people in the New Jerusalem includes the absence of all physical and spiritual need. Life here will have an abundance and a perfection.

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 08

If you believe another interpretation of the River and the Tree of Life to be correct, what is it and why do you believe it to be correct?

Read Revelation 22:3-4 and make notes:

Read Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:2 and make notes:

What a blessing is in store for the Believers! Moses was not allowed to see the face of God. Exodus 33:20 and 33:23 tell us that man cannot see God and live. In the New Jerusalem the Believers will see “his face.”

In the ancient world criminals were banished from the presence of the king and never again allowed to see his face. Examples of this can be found in Esther 7:8 and 2 Samuel 14:24. The promise to every Believer is that we will one day be allowed to see God face to face.



Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 and make notes:

There is an ongoing transformation that is supposed to be taking place with each Believer as we live on this earth. In the New Jerusalem this transformation will be completed. God's name reflects His Character. Moses' appearance was transformed when he was allowed to see only the righteousness of God (Exodus 33). Try to imagine how transformed the Believers will be when we are allowed to see God's face. God's name being on the forehead at this point speaks of each face shining forth with the radiance of God's character.

The metaphor of bearing the name upon the forehead indicates ownership and/or likeness.

Read Revelation 22:5 and make notes:

Read Isaiah 60:19-20; Zechariah 14:7 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 08

The radiance of God’s glory will be such, especially as it reflects off the face of every person present, that there simply will be no darkness. There will be no need for the sun, or a lamp of any kind. This day of the Lord will be an eternal, or everlasting, day.

Read Daniel 7:18; Daniel 7:27 and make notes:

The people of God will not be in the New Jerusalem as servants or slaves. We will “reign” forever.

Read Revelation 22:6-7 and make notes

Read Matthew 24:42-44 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 08

Some scholars argue whether Revelation 22:7 is saying the angel is coming soon or if it is referring to Jesus. This argument is probably not a good use of our time. The words are those of Jesus. In Matthew, Jesus encourages all believers to remain alert and ready for His immanent return. Whether Jesus is speaking through the angel or the angel is speaking on behalf of Jesus is not as important as the message to “be on your guard.”

Read Revelation 22:8-9 and make notes:

The apostle John is so real! There is no pretense of John being some super person who is beyond the normal actions of every other person. In Revelation 19:10, John fell down at the feet of an angel to worship him and was corrected for this bad decision. Here we see John making the same mistake again.

He is corrected quickly and reminded that he is to “worship God.” Since angels are fellow servants along with the Believers, they may be appreciated for their obedience and participation but angels are not to be worshiped.

Read Revelation 22:10 and make notes:

Read Daniel 12:4 and make notes:

## Revelation – Final Judgment – 08

How things have changed! Daniel was told to “seal up the words” until the “time of the end.” John is told “Do not seal up the words” because the “time is near.” Since the time is at hand, it is important for the message to be proclaimed to all the churches and to all believers.

There are those who say John missed it by believing and proclaiming the end is near when they consider that nearly 2,000 years have come and gone since this was said. When we consider that each generation could in fact be the last, then the end has always been near.

Read Revelation 22:11 and make notes:

This verse indicates the seriousness of the “end is near” message. This is saying it is so close that there isn’t time to change the habits and lifestyles of people. Each one will surely reap the fruit of the kind of life they have lived.

Read Revelation 22:12 and make notes:

Read Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 2:6; 1 Peter 1:17 and make notes:

Not only is the coming of the Lord near at hand, but he is bringing with him the reward for each person according to the lifestyle they have lived.

Read Revelation 22:13-14 and make notes:

A blessing is declared for all those who wash their robes. The great multitude around the heavenly throne in Revelation 7:14 was said to be those who “washed” their robes. The Greek verb in 7:14 is aorist meaning it was an action which took place at a specific point in time. Here in 22:14 the Greek verb is present tense and indicates a present and continual action.

Again, this is a good place to remind ourselves this is probably imagery and not to be taken literally. Since there is no evil or sin in the New Jerusalem, no one would ever soil their robe. It would not be necessary to continually wash the robes. The image speaks of those who are kept pure and have eternal access to the Tree of Life.

Read Revelation 22:15 and make notes:

This text reminds us that there are no sinners in the New Jerusalem. These are all in the Lake of Fire which is outside the city of the New Jerusalem. This should not be taken to say the Lake of Fire and the eternal punishment of the wicked lies just outside the city. It is intended to focus on the tremendous contrast between those in eternal blessing and those in eternal punishment.

Read Revelation 22:16 and make notes:

The angel who has guided John through the various parts of this great vision is validated in this text. This is the angel of Jesus Christ (“my angel”) and has been sent by Christ.

The Greek word translated “you” in this text is plural. The message, or testimony, was intended others besides John.

Jesus declares himself to be both the “root” of David and the “Offspring” of David. This fulfills many prophecies of the Old Testament. The “Morning Star” is a promise that the night is almost over and the day is just about to arrive.

Read Revelation 22:17 and make notes:

This four fold invitation is basically an invitation to the whole world. Not only does the “Spirit and the bride” say “Come”, but the one who hears this should pass it on to others and say “Come.” The second half of this verse is probably best interpreted as an expansion of the first half to make sure everyone understands they are invited.

Read Revelation 22:18-19 and make notes:

Read Deuteronomy 4:2 and make notes:

The message is that it is a very serious matter of tampering with the Word of God.

Read Revelation 22:20-21 and make notes:

Jesus affirms his soon return. John pleads “Come, Lord Jesus.” And then John pronounces an overall blessing upon God’s people. The desire for the grace of the Lord Jesus to be upon all of God’s people is the mark of a mature believer in Christ.

As we conclude the Study on the Latter Times, do you find the overall message to be one of hope and encouragement, or is it one of doom and warning? Explain.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: