

Observations of the Final Judgment in Revelation 20

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The following are observations I've made concerning Revelation 20. The verses observed are listed first, followed by my observations, which consist of a summary and any notes I deemed relevant to understanding the verse(s) beyond the summary.

Rev. 20:1-3²

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Observations on Rev. 20:1-3³

Summary: The dragon is bound, and is thrown into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, and that pit is sealed.

Rev. 20:4

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Observations on Rev. 20:4

Summary: Some of the people represented in 20:4 did not receive the mark of the beast or worship him; others are people who died physical deaths because of their witness of Jesus and the word of God. They all reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Notes: In this verse, John saw (1) thrones, (2) those who sat on them who, (3) the souls of those that had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus (NT saints) and because of the word of God (OT saints), and (4) those who "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands."

These four groups "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." It's obvious that those in the 3rd group were murdered/killed, but there is no mention of death for those in the 4th group. The 4th group of people are found in Revelation 13. They may be Jews and Gentiles who were not among those taken in 7:1-17, but who later converted to Christianity.

¹ I call myself the writer of this work, not the Author because God, the true Author, created all of this long before God ordained me to write it down.

² All scriptures reference Revelation, unless otherwise noted, and are taken from the KJV. Any emphasis on the text is mine.

³ Please see the "Chart: Revelation 20 and the FINAL JUDGMENT," on the page six of this document for a graphic representation of the observations made within this paper.

Rev. 20:5-6

5 But the *rest* of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Observations on Rev. 20:5-6

Summary: The *rest* (remainder) of the dead *lived not again until the thousand years were finished*. The text *this is the first resurrection* refers to those in 20:4, not to those in 20:5. The second death has no power over them—they are *priests of God and of Christ* and reign with him for the 1,000 years period.

Notes: There are two types of dead in 20:1-6: the dead that come back to life after their physical deaths (the first resurrection over whom the second death has no power), and the dead that remain dead after their physical deaths, who do not come back to life until 20:12.

Rev. 20:7

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

Observations on Rev. 20:7

Summary: At the end of the thousand years period, Satan is released out of his prison.

Rev. 20:8-9

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed *the camp of the saints* about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

Observations on Rev. 20:8-9

Summary: At the end of the thousand years period, Satan is allowed to deceive the nations. This means that there are people still alive going about their lives as if the events of 7:1-17 and 13:1-18 never occurred, or those events no longer reside in the collective human memory. Satan gathers the people “together to battle” who are outside of *the camp*. They encircle *the camp* of God’s people, but God sends fire from heaven to devour those who attack *the camp* of God’s people.

Rev. 20:10

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Observations on Rev. 20:10

Summary: Satan is cast into *the lake of fire* “where the beast and the false prophet are,” and will be tormented forever.

Rev. 20:11

11 And I saw a *great white throne*, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Observations on Rev. 20:11

Summary: The *great white throne* “from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away” may signify that the concept of time no longer exists because earth and heaven are measures of time.

Rev. 20:12

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*.

Observations on Rev. 20:12

Summary: The dead here are the *rest* of the dead from 20:5-6, and any others who have joined them since their deaths, such as those in 9:15, and 11:13. They are the goats of Matt. 25:33, and they now stand before God; their books are opened, **and** the book of life is opened. The dead are *judged* out of the things that they’ve written in their own books, *according to their works*.

Notes: The dead here do not appear to include those who were in *the camp* of 20:9. This could be true of anyone who has accepted Christ, like those in Revelation 13 who were left behind and did not take the mark of the beast or worship it, and the 144,000 who are redeemed in 14:3 who do not see physical death. It could even apply to some of those in 9:15 and 11:13. If so, they all continue to live as sheep on the right hand of Jesus at this point in the story. Therefore, the dead represented here are the goats on Jesus’ left. They are judged *according to their works*.

However, it must be noted that during this time of judgment, the Book of Life is also opened. This is curious because Revelation 20 focuses on two types of dead beings: the dead in 20:4 who immediately come back to life after physical death, and the *rest* of the dead in 20:5 who do not *live again* until the judgment in 20:12. In other words, in order for the *rest* to remain dead until 20:12, they would have to have been judged before 20:12. They do not live and reign like those in 20:4, which might mean that their names were not found written in the Book of Life. Therefore, having the Book of Life open at this point is not a formality of justice to “prove” that the people being judged in 20:12 really aren’t in the Book of Life—they already know that their names are not in that book. And, it cannot be used as a basis for judgment here since that book only records names, not *works*.⁴ Therefore, because the Book of Life is opened at this time, too, perhaps the goats have a chance, even now, to join the sheep and live with Jesus forever.

Revelation 20:12 may be the mercy and grace of God. Those judged here at the *great white throne* have a chance to recognize that they can’t defend themselves and that nothing written in their books amounts to anything. Maybe they’ve written laundry lists in their books about the great works that they have purposefully accomplished for Jesus, even to the point of evoking Jesus’ name, but without including Jesus. Maybe this is where they realize that with pride in themselves, they cannot stand before Jesus. In addition to Matt. 7:21-23, this recalls the verses in Matt. 25:31-46.

At this point, the dead have a chance to look down at all they have accomplished or done in life, and proudly read it out loud, or be too ashamed to read even one line of text. *Maybe their*

⁴ See Ex. 32:32-33; Ps. 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Lk 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12 and 15, 21:27.

honest shame here is why their names get written in the book of life at the last and final moment. At the last possible moment, they come to realize that they have no defense except the mercy of Jesus. Perhaps this is the second resurrection that is not explicitly mentioned in Revelation 20. Instead of receiving eternal punishment, because of their humility at this point, they are resurrected to eternal life with Jesus instead.

Rev. 20:13

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were *judged every man according to their works.*

Observations on Rev. 20:13

Summary: The sea gives up its dead and so do death and hell, and these are judged *according to their works* as well.

Rev. 20:14

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Observations on Rev. 20:14

Summary: The second death begins when death itself and hell are *cast into the lake of fire.*

Rev. 20:15

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Observations on Rev. 20:15

Summary: *Everyone* (those after the judgment in 20:12) *not found in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire, too.* This recalls Matthew 7:21-23 where Jesus never knew those who practice lawlessness. ***This would be the FINAL JUDGMENT***, and it infers that some, even after 20:12, argue that they deserve to be in heaven *according to their works.*

My Final Thoughts:

The Final Judgment in Revelation 20, like the entirety of Revelation, presents concepts that are foreign to the human mind. The natural inclination is to resist them as being impossible.

However, the familiar concept of shame presented in 20:12, and the Book of Life, may hold the key to understanding the Final Judgment of Revelation 20. As noted above, having the Book of Life open during the time of 20:12 is not an act of justice. And, it seems unnecessary if 20:12 is simply a foregone conclusion. In addition to that, the Book of Life cannot be used to mete out varying levels of punishment since that book only contains names, and besides that, there is only one punishment for all judged at the great white throne: eternal punishment in the lake of fire.

Therefore, something greater must be happening at this moment in the story for those who appear at the judgment of 20:12, and that is a chance to avoid the second death. After the thousand years period, Satan has a chance to avoid the second death, instead he goes about wreaking havoc. It is only just and fair that we humans be given the same opportunity to avoid the second death, and God gives us that opportunity in 20:12.

Such a second chance as that which occurs at 20:12 goes against our thinking. If we believe that we will not be among those who have to participate in the judgment of 20:12, then we probably

feel like we can say with all self-righteousness that the people who end up there have earned their spot in the lake of fire.

Indeed, some who find themselves at the Final Judgment may continue to cling to their own goodness, believing the lie that their good works have followed them to the Final Judgment, and therefore, they deserve eternal life with Jesus because of them. This belief comes from a misinterpretation of 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (14:13, KJV). The “works” in this verse are referenced in 14:12, where the works “here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (14:12, KJV).

In other words, the works that follow us are of the Spirit of God, and are not whatever good works we may have done on earth. However, our good earthly works are not in vain, they are reflected in Matt. 25:35-40 because we have taken 14:12 and Matt. 22:36-40 seriously. We can only do good works now because we love Jesus, and Jesus loves us. Or else there would be no need for 20:12 to save us from misinterpretations of scripture.

In that regard, it is comforting to know that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, and our ways are not God’s ways (*see* Isaiah 55:8-9). Compared to Jesus, our righteousness is as filthy rags (*see* Isaiah 64:6). My final thoughts, then, are that Revelation 20:12 might just be the mercy and grace of God.

Even so, while we can depend on God’s grace and mercy, we cannot depend on our ability to lay down our self-righteousness or unbelieve and accept it—20:15 makes it clear that not all will accept the mercy of 20:12.⁵ Therefore, while we live, we should make a habit of seeking Jesus, as sheep.

⁵ *See also* Dan. 12:2.

Chart: Revelation 20 and the FINAL JUDGMENT

Revelation 20 and the <u>FINAL JUDGMENT</u>		
Matt. 25:46	LIFE Eternal	PUNISHMENT Eternal
Matt. 25:31-46	On Jesus' Right	On Jesus' Left
Matt. 25:33	Sheep (represents righteous believers)	Goats (represents non-believers, and <u>self-righteous</u> believers)
Rev. 20:4-5 (7:1-17; 8:9; 9:15; 11:13; 14:3)	After Death, You Live and Reign with Christ for the 1,000 Years Period	After Death, <u>You Are Dead</u> and Remain Dead for the 1,000 Years Period FIRST DEATH
Rev. 20:11	N/A	<u>FINAL JUDGMENT</u> at the Great White Throne at the End of the 1,000 Years
Rev. 20:12	N/A	<u>Books Are Opened</u> AND the Book of Life is Opened (there is hope—even at this point, mercy—for those who humble themselves)
Rev. 20:12-13	N/A	<u>You Defend the Works of Your Hands That You've Written In Your Book(s)</u>
Rev. 20:14	N/A	Death and Hell Are <u>Cast into the Lake of Fire</u> SECOND DEATH
Rev. 20:15 (21:8)	N/A	If You Are Not Found in the Book of Life, You Are <u>Cast into the Lake of Fire</u>

Note: Please see the paper, "Observations of the Final Judgment in Revelation 20," by Diana Mitchell, for a clear understanding of the above chart.