

Chapter 20

INTRODUCTION:

There are 3 parts to this chapter: the **thousand years, the defeat of Satan**, and the **Judgment before the Great White Throne**. As we proceed and deal with all three, you might notice a blurring of the dividing lines, especially between the first two parts.

But before we get started, let's tally up the casualties in the war between Good and Evil up to this point: the harlot (Babylon) in chapter 18, the beast and the false prophet in chapter 19 which were cast alive into a lake of fire, and the army of the beasts' followers that perished in the battle, their fleshly remains consumed by the fowls, which leaves Satan (the dragon) as the only enemy left standing.

Now let's refresh our timeframe. As we began this study, we established our timeline to be from the establishment of the church (34 AD) until the eventual day when the world will be destroyed. Everything in chapters 1-11 fits inside of that period. However, when we see the woman in labor in chapter 12, by necessity our timeline shifts to include the birth of her child (Jesus) some 35 years earlier. Therefore, since chapter 12 we have been operating under a new extended timeframe that stretches from the birth of Jesus to the day the world ends. Well, that day occurs in chapter 20 between verses 10 and 11 when the Judgment scene is depicted. Since time is an earthly concept, end of world = end of time. So, from verse 11 on through the end of the book, everything we read will be taking place in the "afterlife" where eternity is timeless.

The concept of a "timeframe" more often than not, it suggests the concept of "sequentialness," making it is only natural to assume that this book is revealing events to us one after the other, as they take place, but that isn't so. The things that are happening are not necessarily listed chronologically. For instance, it is in chapter 12 that we are told of the dragon's anger when he was unable to devour the newborn child. Because this moment comes in our reading after the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets, does that mean it happened after these events? No, that's impossible, because it is describing the moment of Jesus' birth, years before.

So... With all of this in mind, let's read verses 1 - 6 which in my bible has the heading:

The Thousand Years

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 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. 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. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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.”

These verses deal with two concepts and two concepts only: First, the limiting of Satan's power over mankind, and Second, a special reference to Christians and the position they hold in the world. But since most people get distracted by the “elephant in the room,” so to speak, let's deal with it before we go any further. I refer, of course, to the much debated “**thousand years**” mentioned above.

The Thousand Years of Revelation 20:1-6

This little segment has been a source of confusion ever since the early days of Christianity. I'm sure you can guess where the problems start: Not remembering that this is an apocalyptic book, utilizing “signs and symbols” that are not meant to be taken literally.

Perhaps the most popular interpretation applied here speaks of a thousand-year reign of Christ. My understanding of this view is briefly stated below: (I do not share it, but want you to clearly see its tenets and variations.)

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

Just before the thousand years is to begin, while Satan is bound in the Abyss, Christ will start His return to earth. On the way, He will stop somewhere in the sky and await the “Rapture.” This refers to the joining of the righteous living with the resurrection of the faithful dead. Simply put, that would be all the righteous of all time. Every one of these righteous will be “changed” (*I take that to mean receive a new spiritual body*) and caught up into the air to meet the Lord. It is at this time that the marriage feast of the Lamb will occur, during which there will be great tribulation on the earth. After the wedding, Christ and His bride, the church, will then return to earth where Jesus will set up His earthly kingdom and sit on David’s throne in Jerusalem to reign for a literal one thousand years. During this thousand year reign, the Jews who were NOT among those raised from the earth during the “Rapture” will be converted to Christianity and return to Palestine. Once this is done, Old Testament worship will be restored albeit with some modifications, and everyone will lead an idealistic life on earth for another thousand years.

[According to some variations, during these thousand idyllic years, the rest of the people on earth (*assumedly, the unrighteous left behind at the Rapture*) will recognize Christ as the Messiah and will turn to Him. At this point, everyone alive on the earth will have been converted, enjoying a rest from their labors.]

Then, at the end of the thousand year reign, Satan will be loosed from the Abyss and will make one last furious effort to destroy the Lord’s people and their work accomplished during the thousand years. The wicked dead (*all those who died without repentance?*) will be raised and should there be anyone of like-mind still on earth (*how could there be according to earlier statements?*) they will join the wicked dead, become a part of the army of Satan, and fight against Christ and His followers in the battle of Armageddon.

Following the battle of Armageddon, the final judgment will occur and the eternal destinies of all will be meted out. That’s a lot to extract from these few verses. It requires quite a bit of speculation and, dare I say, wishful thinking.

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Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

Look at the text again. The theory I've just summarized claims the following 6 things will happen. Do you see any of these mentioned in those 6 verses?

1. The Second coming of Christ.
2. A bodily resurrection.
3. A reign of Christ on earth.
4. Jesus sitting on the literal throne of David.
5. Jesus' kingdom in Jerusalem of Palestine.
6. A conversion of the Jews.

Any theory which rests on such a small passage of scripture, in which NONE of its tenets are found, must be false. I think you will see the error of this theory as well as we discuss these verses.

John begins this chapter with the phrase, ***"And I saw an angel come down from heaven."*** Many believe that this angel is the Lord Himself, but I don't think so. Nowhere else in this book is Jesus referred to as an angel, even though we have seen many – each carrying out a necessary function. I believe this is simply another of those angels doing the Lord's bidding and he has two things in his hand – the key to the "bottomless pit" and a great chain. These are neither a literal key nor a literal chain. In fact, the word "key" is never used to refer to an actual key anywhere in the New Testament. It is always a symbol just like the door that Jesus stands before and knocks.

A key is the symbol of power to open/close, lock/unlock, or allow/prevent access, as we learned in 1:18 where we read that Jesus has the "key" (authority and power) over Hades and Death. So, even though it isn't spelled out for us, I believe this angel had been given this "key" and chain by our Lord Himself, to go bind and confine Satan. This is a "timeframe check" – the binding and confinement haven't just occurred at this moment. They have long since taken place. Stay with me on this as I explain: The bottomless pit of these verses is, of course, the "abyss" we talked about in chapter 9 as being Satan's dwelling place. It is also the same place from where Satan released the smoke and the locusts, but he, himself did not emerge. Why? He was only granted the authority to loose the smoke and locusts. In chapter 13 Satan dispatched his two goons (the beasts) to do his dirty work for him. Why? Because at those times he was (and still is) both confined and bound as we see here in chapter 20. The "key" needed to exit the

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

pit is in the hand of the angel, a direct messenger of God, who also holds a second symbol of control – a chain. John says the angel “***laid hold***” of the dragon “***and bound him a thousand years.***” In none of the original manuscripts of this text does the angel say he bound Satan for a thousand years. Instead, it reads, “a thousand years.” The difference is the fact that this phrase isn’t talking about a period of time like “for 6 months” or “for 20 years.” The simple “a thousand years” is meant to show us that the phrase is symbolic – used here to emphasize the strength of the binding, not the length of time bound.

So I repeat, the “1000 years” statement has nothing to do with actual time, and this is not unprecedented. In apocalyptic writings, a time expression is often used not to express *how long*, but instead, *how complete*! Here’s an example from the Old Testament, found in Ezekiel 39: 9-10. The text reads, “***And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and...the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years...***” *not for seven years.* Further on in the same chapter, verse 12, we are told of the house of Israel burying Gog: “***And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying them***” *not for seven months.* In neither of these cases is Ezekiel talking about how long it will take to burn or bury, but instead is referring to the *completeness* or *the quality* of the job being done.

We’re far enough into our study to recognize that the number 1,000 was not chosen randomly, either. It carries symbolic significance in and of itself. It’s a derivative of the number 10 which means “power” or “rule.” (I remind you of the ten horns on the beast and the ten crowns.) But when the number 10 is used as a multiple, (100 or 1000), it represents power to an unlimited degree because we’re multiplying the symbol for **power** by itself! So... power multiplied by power, multiplied by power! (At this point I *could* mention that these multiplication figures are repeated 3 times... but I don’t think I need to.) So, in saying that Satan was bound “*a thousand years*,” we are not only being given a time expression to indicate “*strength of binding*” but also a number to represent “*unlimited power*.” Bottom line: **Satan won’t get loose until God releases him!**

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

As I mentioned above, chapter 9 told us that Satan is confined in the abyss. Luke 8 says this abode is a place dreaded by the demons. Apparently it was their original “address” and they did not want to go back there! (Luke 8:26ff).

But being confined to the abyss is not all... here in chapter 20, we also read that Satan is “**bound**.” From the original Greek meaning, “*wrapped tightly*.” In the chapter 20 text, the word is used in the past tense, meaning that the binding has already happened. When was he cast into the abyss? When was he bound? Most likely when Jesus was raised from the tomb, thus bruising the head of the Serpent – as we were told would happen in Genesis 3:15. The moment our redemption was assured, Satan’s influence was immediately weakened. The purpose of casting the Dragon into this abyss was not punitive – that comes later in this chapter – it was preventative. With Jesus’ resurrection came new restrictions on Satan. His power was henceforth limited. So, he is now restrained (limited motion) as well as confined (limited access) in his quest to deceive and conquer the world. This brings about the question, when was he not restrained or confined?

He certainly wasn’t restricted in the Old Testament. The Bible has shown us Satan’s nature from the very beginning. He met Eve face to face and convinced her she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. He was walking about to and fro in Job’s time, and was allowed to wreak all sorts of havoc in Job’s life, causing him great personal distress and pain. Have you ever wondered how, in the relatively short period of time from the Creation to the Flood, the entire world was ***given over to evil continuously*** except for Noah? It is because Satan could do as he pleased in those days, although he was limited by God in Job’s case!

Interestingly though, there is no record of demon possession in the Bible until shortly after the birth of Christ. In fact, as further evidence that it was not present in the Old Testament – there is not even an equivalent word for “*demon*” in any of the Semitic languages used to write it! In the New Testament, however, the Greek term commonly used word to designate spirits hostile to God and man is “*daimonion*” or “*daimon*,” and it occurs 5 times. The Greek term “*daimonizomai*” that is translated “***unclean spirits***” occurs another 14 times in the New Testament. These “unclean spirits” are thought to be co-angels with Satan and all of them fell

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

from their high estate early in their existence. A consequence of that falling is to be destined for the everlasting flames of Hell. But before they fell, for a short span of time, they were permitted to roam about the earth, as we see in several passages in the gospels. They were also allowed to inhabit unclean animals.

But now, with the power of Jesus' resurrection behind us, Satan can no longer harm us like that or physically persecute us in any way. You're familiar with Satan's exploits in the Old Testament, and here I've given you documentation of the existence of demons, devils and demon possessions in the New Testament leading up to Jesus' resurrection. That miraculous event didn't silence Satan, but it did limit his reach. I am not implying that Satan is powerless! We know he is still deceiving people because Peter calls him our adversary and warns us that ***"the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may destroy!"*** Of course he isn't literally walking around as in Old Testament time. But his two beasts are certainly active: enticing, tempting and seducing, all in his name. Their bait is false promises that sound so good that people willingly walk away from Christ toward something that really doesn't even exist.

But, is his binding/banishment to the abyss temporary, ***"until the thousand years should be fulfilled"***? (Verse 3) Remember, neither the word "thousand" nor the word "year" is literal. We are to understand instead that he will remain confined ***"until God releases him."*** In fact, the last phrase in verse 3 tells us that when the decision is made, ***"he must be loosed a little season."***

Ever since Jesus demonstrated his power over death (and Satan) by resurrecting from the dead, the Devil's box of tricks reserved for the godly has lost some of its power. Not so with the ungodly. They face him unprotected. We who are connected to the Cross have been given armor to wear that will shield us from evil. We are His people and He watches over us! Jesus is called the Great Shepherd, and His sheep know his voice. Satan can still make a grab for us, make no mistake about that, but if we're truly listening for our Shepherd's voice, when we hear it we can walk toward it, away from the danger of temptation – leaving Satan empty-handed... confined...bound.

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

Now, let's discuss the second concept of these verses: The special reference to Christians and the position they hold in the world... Verses 4 – 6 re-printed:

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

What we read here is NOT taking place after the end of the world. (*That will occur between verses 10 and 11*). Neither do these verses show us the final judgment (*That will occur in verses 11 - 15*). What we DO see described here are three specific groups of people that have lived (or are living) on this earth.

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them...”

This is group 1, describing the position Christians hold (or held) while dwelling on earth. Their “*sitting upon thrones and reigning with Christ*” simply means that they, as faithful followers of Jesus, live “above” the world’s standards. By their exemplary conduct, the world is judged and condemned. The purpose, I believe, as Spence says, “...*is to portray the glory of the Christian calling, and the certainty of the Christian’s hope.*” The apostle Paul, in Eph. 1:2, says Christians are “*blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*” which seems to mesh well with what was said in Revelation 5:10 “... *and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*”

“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

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

thousand years.” This is group 2, easily identified as the martyrs who refused to forsake their faith in Christ even on threat of death. It is said of them they *“lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”* As we have already determined, that “thousand years” has nothing to do with actual time, but everything to do with “quality” of time. They lost their lives for their faith and as a result are presently enjoying their reward – eternity in paradise. Some of these may have been “under the altar” as the fifth seal was opened in chapter 6. Remember what is said in Rev 3:21, *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne...”*

“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.” This is group 3, comprised of those faithful Old Testament worshippers of God who lived before Christ’s death and resurrection. Obviously, they could not be said to have “lived” like those described in the first two groups, because they never knew Christ. But by Christ’s redeeming work, which encompasses ALL who have lived faithfully to God (or to Christ from the first century on), these righteous take their place alongside the other two groups.

Remember this from the throne scene in chapter 4: *“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”* In this portion of the vision, I believe John may be seeing the righteous ones represented by these three groups

This segment ends with the phrase *“This is the first resurrection...”* As a consequence of Christ’s redeeming work (His resurrection) all three of these groups – all the faithful of all time – get to enjoy the benefits of it. There are those who say that the “first resurrection” is spiritual, and a second will be a “bodily resurrection” – a re-uniting of our soul to our body. I don’t believe that is what will happen, but I do believe we’ll be given a new body capable of existing in heaven where this present one could not. Nowhere does John mention a second resurrection, but he certainly does mention a “second death!” The fact of the matter is that the *“first resurrection”* is Jesus’ (which we have taken part in by our obedience consummated in baptism).

Verse 6 seems to build on that idea: *“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.”* Again, don’t let the “thousand years”

language produce a timeline in your head. This just means that everyone who has lived faithfully – BC/AD, Old Law/New Law – will live eternally with Jesus, not experiencing the “second death,” which is also eternal.

Now on to the next segment, verses 7 – 10:

The Defeat of Satan

VERSES 7 – 10

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

Prior to verse 7 Satan is still in the abyss, and bound by the chain. The prison from which he is to be **“loosed”** is, of course, this bottomless pit. The end of the world is at hand and Verse 8 tells us why he is being released – for the purpose of **“deceiving the nations”** throughout the **“four quarters”** (north, south, east, west) of the earth. In other words, he will make a concerted effort to get his army together for his final futile attempt to defeat God.

The term **“nations”** used here in verse 8 are represented as **“Gog and Magog”** – which we already know are symbols for the unrighteous and ungodly of the world – probably from the same source (Ezekiel) that we mentioned earlier. So **“nations”** is not being used in the widest sense of the word to mean **“everyone,”** but rather he is focused on those identified as the unrighteous and ungodly, to join him in this battle of Armageddon. He must be a good recruiter. The size of his army is said to be **“as the sand of the sea,”** – innumerable.

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

As we already know, the war of Armageddon is being waged now, even as we speak. There is no description of the actual battle, because it is an ongoing spiritual war not fought with swords or guns. We're engaged in it every waking minute of our lives, like it or not. Anyone who says he's not "taking sides" has indeed made his decision. He has stepped across the line to fight with Satan. There are no conscientious objectors. There will be no peace talks resulting in an armistice. This is a battle to the death – the second death.

This war, which has raged since the establishment of the Church, will come to an end in Chapter 20: 9, where the text records the end of Armageddon. At first, it appears as if Satan and his followers have the upper hand, ***"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints..."*** Satan's army, *"vast as the sands of the sea,"* has the camp of the faithful surrounded and is on the verge of overthrowing God's warriors. But the faithful can count on something Satan's misguided soldiers cannot – their Commander has assured the faithful of victory and He keeps His promises! ***"...Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."*** No, literal fire will not rain down from heaven on that day. What we are to take from this verse is that the **"fire"** we need to turn Satan's temptations to ashes is already in our possession. The Holy Scriptures contain every piece of information and all the tools we need to ultimately win the war with Satan. It is just up to each of us to use it.

One last thing about the war of Armageddon: Unlike physical wars where the strength of the entire battalion is judged collectively, this war is fought on an individual basis. Each and every soldier is responsible for his own actions and his victory is determined by them. God is watching! Even if we say we've aligned ourselves with the Lord's army, He knows whether we are valiantly fighting or just going through the motions, and He will reward each of us fairly based on how we fought the battle.

And that only leaves "that old Dragon?" To say "he lost" is certainly an understatement. ***"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."*** He has been cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone – the same lake in which his two beasts were cast – and they ***"will be tormented day and night forever."***

With Satan's army being defeated and his joining his two beasts in the lake of fire, Armageddon has ended, and so has the world, having ended with the outcome of Armageddon! All that is left is judgment and the unveiling of the heavenly home of the faithful... and the next thing we see is the Judgment before God's throne beginning in Verse 11...

Judgment before the Great White Throne

Verses 11 - 15

“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. 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. 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. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

“A great white throne...” I'm reasonably certain the throne John is seeing is the same one from chapter 4 in what is commonly called The Throne Scene. Here, in this short but solemn piece of scripture, he speaks of its color – representing purity and divinity – and calls it “Great” for the One who sits upon it, but the end has come! The destruction of the world is complete. The dramatic details of what happened “in the blink of an eye,” are not discussed in lengthy paragraphs here; John simply and eloquently says, *“the earth and heaven fled away”* from God's face. In Isaiah 34:4, the prophet described it this way: *“And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.”* The earth and the heavens are gone because *“there is no place found for them.”* They have been dissolved into nothingness...

Anyone who thinks physical death is the ultimate end has not read verse 12: *“I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God and the books were opened...”* This sentence should give everyone pause.

“...and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.” This is not the first time we’ve seen this “**Book of Life**” mentioned. Let’s look at the three previous occasions:

- Rev 3:5 in which our Savior says, *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*
- Rev 13:8 where it is said, *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*
- Rev 17:8 when the angel is speaking to John and says, *“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”*

So, it’s a book of names, but what more do we know? The first scripture tells us the names written in this book are of faithful people that “**overcame**” and are “**clothed in white raiment.**” Jesus also says of these individuals, that He will “**confess their name**” before His Father and His angels. The Dragon’s goal was to lead us to sin.. Those who “**overcame**” must be those who did not give in to his temptations. They either resisted or repented when they were weak. In the other 2 references, we see that anyone who “**dwells on the earth**” or worships the Dragon will NOT find his name written in the Book.

Did you notice that John said he saw “**books**” (plural) being opened? The consensus of almost every commentator I have read is that these books (plural) contain the record of all human deeds. In fact, the most popular belief is that there is one book for each person that has ever

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Ron Roberts

Lesson Twenty Two

lived on the earth. (More on this below.) Most people imagine a courtroom scene, and the deeds in the book are exhibit A in the final trial before the Judge of all mankind.

So, does this judgment scene shown in verse 12 include every single person that has lived on the earth? You may be surprised to hear that my answer is “no.” How can that be? Well, let’s think about it. Do you remember the martyrs under the altar in chapter 6? Haven’t they already been judged? They are in heaven under the altar, so they’ve already been deemed righteous otherwise they would have never been allowed to cross the threshold of heaven.

What about those 24 elders seen in chapter 7, or the “great multitude” of the same chapter? And then there are all the innocent children that died before they were accountable for their lives; there is no mention of them, but we were told in Matthew 18:3 ***“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”***

As a matter of fact, read verse 13 again: ***“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it...”*** Why do the judged ones come from the sea? It must mean something other than the oceans of the world. Think back to chapter 13 and our initial encounter with the first beast as he rose out of... the sea! This body of water is known to represent the ungodly, who are separated from God and therefore spiritually dead. We also see in this verse that ***“death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.”*** The Greek word rendered “judged” in these two verses is **“kree'-no,”** which Strong’s Greek dictionary defines as: *“...decide (mentally or judicially); ...to try, condemn, punish: - avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence.”* Do any of these verbs suggest a positive outcome for the person on trial? The fact is, they have something quite striking in common: they all imply a guilty verdict.

By way of comparison, let’s look at Matthew 5:21 when our Savior said, ***“...whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”*** In this verse the Greek word is **“kree'-sis”** defined as *“against, accusation, condemnation, damnation.”* It seems pretty obvious that those subjected to this **“kree'-sis”** were guilty as charged, as those above. And since the result of the

judgment was “*death and hell were cast into the lake of fire,*” we must conclude that the unrighteous are the ones standing before God in these verses.

So, when will the righteous be judged? The answer is “They won’t be.” Read what the apostle Paul told the church in Thessalonica...then read it again. “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*” (1 Thess. 4:16 – 18)

Should we envision an enormous storage facility in heaven in which God keeps all His ledgers of mankind’s deeds, a ready reference to flip through in case He needs to remind Himself of who’s done what? Of course not! The “books” mentioned in these verses are another symbol representing God’s memory, which is flawless. He knows everything there is to know about each one of us. He is aware of everything we do, say, and think. He knows our hearts. Romans 2 tells us that “*God will judge the secrets of man.*” And from Matthew 6 we know, “*thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*”

These verses complete the series of visions that commenced in chapter 12. There is to be no more talk of Satan or of death – they’ve been rendered powerless in defeat. As the beautiful words of I Corinthians 15: 55 state: “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*” Obviously, we’ve saved the best for last: a glimpse of heaven. Stay tuned.