



Part 22: All Things New

Our full inheritance is an unspoiled creation living in the Triune God.

THE OFFER IS LIFE (JOHN 10:10)

The book of Revelation uses highly symbolic language to communicate the reality that there are two rulers offering two completely different kingdoms to the peoples of the earth.

Satan, the Dragon, is the one Jesus called “the prince of this world.” Satan’s rule is based on deception, distraction, seduction, and intimidation. His rule is a dead end into what Revelation calls “the lake of fire.”

The rule of King Jesus, on the other hand, is rule based on truth, love, grace, and joy. His rule is a rule of life, and it culminates in the fullest life possible in God.

John sees a vision of where things are headed. Books will be opened. The lives of all people will be evaluated. There is the “book of life” containing the names of those belonging to King Jesus (Revelation 13:8).

THE FINAL ACCOUNTING (OUR LIVES MATTER)

“No text of Scripture poses the fundamental issue of our lives with greater seriousness and urgency than Revelation 20:11- 15, the so-called “Great White Throne Scene.” For the text teaches us that one day each and every one of us is going to stand before that Throne and is going to be asked to give an accounting for our lives.” Darrell Johnson, “Discipleship on the Edge”

At the end of history - of what John calls “the old order of things” - everyone will appear before God’s throne for judgment (see Romans 2:6, 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 9:6).

Key question: Who can stand? If anyone can stand, on what basis?

“Books were opened” signifies that a biography has been written on every person. John is working with the long-held idea that our deeds are recorded in heaven’s ledger books. All our deeds will be considered (Daniel 7:9-10, Luke 12:2-3). People are judged “according to what they have done” (v. 12).

“There is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.” Luke 12:2-3

Q- Does this passage teach salvation by works instead of grace?

There are two answers depending on how you view the question.

In one sense, the answer is no. According to the New Testament, our deeds reveal what we really believe (Romans 2:6, 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 9:6). Deeds are the fruit of faith (Matthew 7:20, Luke 6:46). Every deed emerges from some prior decision of faith. Deeds reveal faith and character. Deeds reveal our true allegiance.

“The answer is that the books, which record our deeds, contain enough evidence of our belonging to Christ that they function as a public confirmation of our faith and our union with Christ. ... there will be recorded there the kind of life in Christ that shows the reality of faith - the reality of regeneration and union with Christ.” John Piper, “What Will the Final Judgment Mean for You?”

In another sense, the answer is yes. The judgment is according to works. The great question is whose works? The book of life belongs to the Lamb (Revelation 13:8). All whose names are written in the book of life belong to the Lamb. The Lamb’s obedience and His power within them produces holiness. Therefore, they are counted as righteous because of His righteousness. Those who have not received the Lamb have only their own works to plead before God.

We see two books: The book of deeds and the book of life. Every thought and deed of everyone is recorded in the book of deeds. For the redeemed, these deeds will be marked through in the red blood of Christ. Across these deeds will be the words “pardoned...forgiven...cancelled.” In the “book of life” will be the names of the redeemed as well as the deeds of the slain lamb (Isaiah 53).

Q: Who can stand in God’s presence on that great day? We will either take our stand on the basis of what we have done, or stand on the basis of what Jesus has done.

OUR INTERMEDIATE INHERITANCE

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:1-3

When a believer dies, his soul leaves his body and goes immediately into the conscious presence of God with rejoicing (2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:23, Luke 23:43, Hebrews 12:23, Revelation 6:9-11, 7:9-10).

We get to be in God’s presence in a place the Bible calls “heaven.” Heaven is another spiritual dimension of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age.

OUR FULL INHERITANCE: THE NEW CREATION IN GOD (REVELATION 21-22)

“We will not sit around looking at one another or at God for eternity but will ... ‘reign with him’ in the endlessly ongoing creative work of God. ... A place in God’s creative order has been reserved for each one of us from the beginnings of cosmic existence. His plan is for us to develop, as apprentices of Jesus, to the point where we can take our place in the ongoing creativity of the universe....” Dallas Willard

“The gospel of Jesus Christ announces that what God did for Jesus at Easter, he will do not only for all those who are in Christ but also for the entire cosmos. It will be an act of new creation, parallel to and derived from the act of new creation when God raised Jesus from the dead.” N.T. Wright, “Surprised by Hope”

WE GROAN NOW WITH HOPE (ROMANS 8:18-39)

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved.” Romans 8:22-24

“But our citizenship is in heaven. A Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that we will be like his glorious body.” Philippians 3:20-21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What questions does the “Great White Throne” scene (Revelation 20:11-15) present to you? See also 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 2:6. Does the quote by John Piper offer any help?
- How does the promise of a new creation with resurrection bodies shape your hope for an eternity with God?
- This series has been called “Unveiled Hope.” How has this series shaped or encouraged your hope? Consider what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 5:1-2, 8:18-25, and 15:13. How do these Scriptures help?
- Is there one big take away for you in this series on the book of Revelation?