Revelation 20 Blessed or Burnt

*20:1 "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time.*

Observations: 20:1-3 John next sees an angel with the key to the abyss/pit and a great chain. He seizes the Dragon/Devil/Deceiver, aka Satan and binds him for a 1000 years, and casts him into the pit, so he won't deceive the nations any more, until the 1000 years are finished. After this, he must be freed for a short time, according to God's plan.

The normal way of reading this progression is as a definite and literal prison sentence. “Until” indicates a definite point in time.

Those who falsely say this is an indefinite period of time,not only have no basis for saying so,

but fail to read the rest of the context which explains why this period of time exists.

*4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.*

*I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as didn’t worship the beast nor his image, and didn’t receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand. They lived, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

*5 The rest of the dead didn’t live until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has a part/portion/allotment in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him one thousand years.*

*7 And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison,*

*8 and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

*9 They went up over the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. Fire came down out of heaven from God, and devoured them.*

*10 The devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet are also. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

OBS: There are over two dozen references to the Devil/Satan's activity in the lives of believers from the Day of Pentecost to the letters to the Churches in Revelation, so he wasn't bound at the Cross as some falsely teach.

Obviously Satan is currently alive and well on planet earth, deceiving the nations and those who write non-contextual (unbiblical) theological commentaries (1 Peter 5:8).

*1Pt 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

*5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

*6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*

*7 casting all your anxiety/cares/distractions on Him, because He cares for you.*

*8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

*9But resist him, firm in your faith* (in God's promises) {1Jn 4:4 overcome cz greater He that is in you. flee temptation-resist devil}

20:7-10 Continuing the specific time sequence, after the 1000 years are over,

Satan will be released from his prison, and will go back to his old tricks of deceiving the nations who have experienced Christ's Millennial rule. Satan will gather the nations for war, (for Gog and Magog, see comments on Ezek 38:2, 16; 39:26).

The deceived nations will be incited to rebel against the Messiah's rule, and surround Jerusalem. Fire will come down from heaven and destroy them.

Then the Devil/Satan will join his buddies the Beast and the False Prophet in the Lake of Fire, for an indeterminate period of time, as in continual torment forever.

There is a clear distinction in this chapter between a 1000 distinct years (which corresponds to the promised Sabbath rest for the people of God -Heb 4:9, mirroring God resting on the seventh day of creation) during which Satan is bound, and the indefinite, everlasting period of the eternal state, during which Satan is in the lake of fire.

There is nothing in the text to indicate otherwise, so those who say this is symbolic (as the imagery and other parts of Revelation are), have the burden of proof to demonstrate that it is symbolic, and then specify what it is symbolic of. (Good luck).

*11 And I saw a great white throne, and him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. There was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and they opened books. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

20:11-15 Next (coordinate *kai*) John sees a Great White Throne, and on it is God, probably in the person of the Son, since all judgment was committed to Him. Christ not only promised a resurrection of the righteous, but also of the unrighteous as did Daniel.

*John 5:27 “He also gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. 28 Don’t marvel at this, for the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs will hear his voice, 29 and will come out; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.”*

*Daniel 12:1 "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands for the children of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written in the Book.*

*2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

*3 Those who are wise shall shine as the brightness of the expanse; and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.*

Then John sees all the previously unresurrected dead standing before the throne.

Holy and righteous people were resurrected in the resurrection of the righteous (20:5-6 above)

These are the not so righteous, who were hanging out in Hades (the grave or Sheol) during the Millennial Kingdom.

[Or who could have died during the Millennium {see Isa 65:20} or in the rebellion of v 9]

(Yes, that would mean the badly behaving miss out on blessing, just like unfaithful Israel missed out on the Promised Land.)

John sees a set of books opened, an then another book opened, which is the Book of Life The Book of Life in the context of Biblical times was a register of those people (citizens) who could participate in the rule (dominion/life) of a city-state (usually by voting) or enjoy citizenship benefits in a kingdom.

*13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. They were judged, each one according to his works.*

*14 Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire.*

*15 If anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire."*

OBS: All believers have their names written in the Book of Life (Ex 32:32), but those who persist in rebellious sin can have they names “blotted out” (Ex 32:31).

This incident of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32 is instructive: Moses wants his name blotted out of God's book on behalf of the sinning Israelites if God won't forgive them. God says those who sin will have their names blotted out (which means they were in the book), and then smites the major sinners (not the entire nation) depriving them of the blessings of the Promised Land (parallel to unfaithful believers missing out on blessings of the Millennial Kingdom -1Cor 10)

In Psalm 69:28 David asks God to blot the names of unrighteous enemies out of the Book of Life because of their persecution of him.

“*Let them be blotted out of the Book of Life, and not be written with the righteous.”*

Note that their names were in the book, but they are behaving unrighteously against the Lord's anointed.

Romans 11 quotes this psalm to refer to the temporary blinding of Israel to the blessings of God, as a consequence of their sin (but goes on to say God still has a plan for them).

In Revelation 3:5 Jesus promised the overcomers that their names would not be blotted out of the Book of Life, but instead He would confess their name before the Father (for glory and blessing -Mt 16:27).

The possibility of having one's name blotted out for unfaithfulness was real, which doesn't mean they would lose their forgiveness, but lose their reward.

The rest of the promises to overcomers in Revelation 2-3 are rewards in the kingdom.

The question remains of: “How does one get their name in the Book of Life?”

The NT uses the term in Philippians 4:3, recording the names of faithful laborers, but doesn't specify how the names got there.

In Luke 19:20, when the seventy disciples returned from casting out demons, Jesus said that they should rejoice that their names are recorded in heaven.

They were just exercising the authority of Christ on earth, and Jesus made the segue into exercising authority in heaven (not that they were forgiven, but that is a part of it).

The key (as is true in many “difficult” passages) is to recognize that “eternal life” is “dominion of The Age” in many instances, received in the NT as a result of belief in the Messiah.

See the discussion on Genesis 3 and Deuteronomy 30:19 for starters (and then examine the context of every usage of the term life in the OT and NT before you reject the conclusion).

The “life” that Jesus came to give consisted of:forgiveness (justification), the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (given by the ascended Messiah and necessary for sanctification), and the blessing of an inheritance in the coming kingdom (glorification -Rm 8:17).

[See Thayer's Lexion on soteria/salvation for the three aspects of salvation.]

The NT is abundantly clear that unrighteous believers lose their inheritance (3Jn 8; Eph 5:5, etc) or their right to rule in the kingdom (Col 3:24-25).

This is precisely parallel to the OT experience as taught explicitly by Paul in 1Corinthians 10.

All the Israelites that came out of Egypt

1) exercised faith (Ex 14:31),

2) were redeemed,

3) had a participation in Christ (although not the New Covenant Holy Spirit),

4) and a planned inheritance in the Promised land.

Most forfeited their right to live in the Promised Land (as the ruling people) by their unfaithfulness to the Lord and His commands (Num 13-14). This is why Deuteronomy puts an emphasis on obeying so the next generation will be blessed (exercise life or dominion) rather than cursed (deprived of life and dominion) as were their parents (Dt 28 and all over the book).

The NT believer is given life in the Messianic Age as a result of their trust in Christ (John 3:16) but can forfeit it as a result of unfaithfulness (1Jn 3:15 see comments there).

This does not mean they are no longer born again, nor were never born again in the first place, nor that their sins where never forgiven, but it does mean that they won't receive the blessings of the righteous.

Most talk of “positional righteousness” as an attempt to explain righteousness and reward by works (as in passages like Romans 2:5-10) is mere talk.

We are given life, forgiven and justified by faith in Christ, but experience abundant life by continued belief (John 20:31).

Unbelief and sin don't undo regeneration, but result in forfeiture of reward. We'll see more of this in the next chapter where the allotted portion or share in blessing of the unfaithful is in the Lake of Fire (they're not in the Lake of Fire, their reward is).

Those who equate Gehenna with the Lake of Fire have simply not studied the passages in the Gospels referring to Gehenna (often incorrectly translated “hell”) with an understanding of context, and with the removal of the glasses of their incorrect and uninformed biases (most fail to take into account the state of the forgiveness of the audience, e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount the audience were Jews who were forgiven on the basis of their participation in the Day of Atonement, as it had been for over a thousand years, and the fact that the Sermon is about being rewarded in the Kingdom, not about getting one's sins covered by the blood of the cross).

Since ignorant biases die hard, may I recommend the use of a concordance, and previous posts in DailyTruthbase where the context of each use of Gehenna is explained?

Back to the Great White Throne judgment, the less-than-righteous dead are resurrected, and judged according to their deeds, showing them to be worthy of death.

However, as a testimony to God's grace, another book was opened, the Book of Life.

After being judged worthy of death, there is no hope or merit which could spare the sinner the Lake of Fire, except if his name was found “having been written”\*in the Book of Life.

*\*(perfect tense, for an activity that happened in the past with continuing results up to the present)*

Even if his name was crossed out, or blotted out, it still had been written there.

The NT/Greek usage of “blot” has a range of meanings, from wipe away a tear, smear, white-wash, plaster over or erase.

It could mean totally eradicate, but as usual, the precise meaning needs to be determined from context.

If a name was written on a scroll, simply crossing it out would be the practice as is seen in NT and OT manuscripts and marginal readings. The OT has similar corresponding usages, although obliterate is more common, the other usages could be appropriate.

The argument is not that the name still remains (it doesn't, in terms of being a righteous citizen) but it had been written there, which is what the text says, and a person who believed is spared the Lake of Fire. God is gracious.

There would be no purpose of having the Book of Life there if no name of those being judged was written in it (although some could argue for having a second witness).

The second witness argument will fall to pieces under the cross examination of the next two passages referring to the Book of Life (21:27; 22:19) as well as the reference to the Tree of Life (see next post).

The next chapters also present unrighteous believers, which according to any other interpretation, would not exist.

So all the dead who weren't resurrected and rewarded in the resurrection of the righteous, are judged according to their deeds which were written in the books, and if their name had not been written in the Book of Life, they joined the unholy trio in the Lake of Fire.

Application: Be righteous, be blessed, and live happily ever after. Do your will rather than God's will, and you will regret it.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, may I be faithful to You in all my ways, doing what finds Your favor and is right in Your sight. Amen.*

Digging Deeper

God in a nutshell: God is the sovereign judge, who will reign with Christ and destroy all of their enemies. God the Father and God the Son are to be worshipped.

Build-a-Jesus: Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, the Messiah, the Word of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will triumph. He will reward those who are faithful to Him, and destroy those who have totally rejected Him.

Us in a nutshell: Believers have the opportunity to be resurrected and blessed, and share in the Messiah's kingdom, or forfeit those blessings in doing the devil's will. Those who trust in Christ will have their names written in the Book of Life, and won't go into the Lake of Fire. Those who are faithful will live happily ever after.

Where to Go for More:

Truthbase.net