

English Transcript

Foundations of the Christian Faith – Course 3

Lesson 7: Last Things: Final Judgment, Eternal Punishment, and the New Heavens and Earth

Welcome back to Foundations of the Christian Faith – Course 3. We have reached our final lesson of this course. We will discuss the End Times doctrine related to the Final Judgment, Eternal Punishment, and the New Heavens and Earth. We will continue on page 55 in your handout.

In the end of all things there will be a great divide between those who are judged to eternal punishment and those who spend eternity in a new heaven and earth in the very presence of God. In this lesson, we will explore both sides of this divide by considering the final judgment, eternal punishment, and the new heaven and earth.

Let us read Hebrews 10:24-25 as we begin this lesson.

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

The Scriptures speak often about the coming Day of the Lord. This is the pouring out of God's wrath on the world in response to sin and rebellion. This will be a dreadful time for those who do not know Christ as Savior. This passage from Hebrews 10 is a warning against apostasy from an end times context and the second coming of Christ. Encouraging takes the form of comfort, warning, and strengthening. There is a sense of urgency to encourage one another as the Day of Lord approaches.

The Scriptures affirm that there will be final judgments of both believers and unbelievers (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). There are many other passages which touch upon this final judgment.

This final judgment begins with the second coming of Christ. At the end of the millennial kingdom, Satan will be released to deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city. Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:10). Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge all the unsaved who have died without Christ at the Great White Throne judgment. The resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection. Upon receiving their eternal judgment, they will be cast into an eternal conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

Scripture makes it clear that Jesus will be the final judge. The apostle Paul describes him as “Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead” (2 Timothy 4:1).

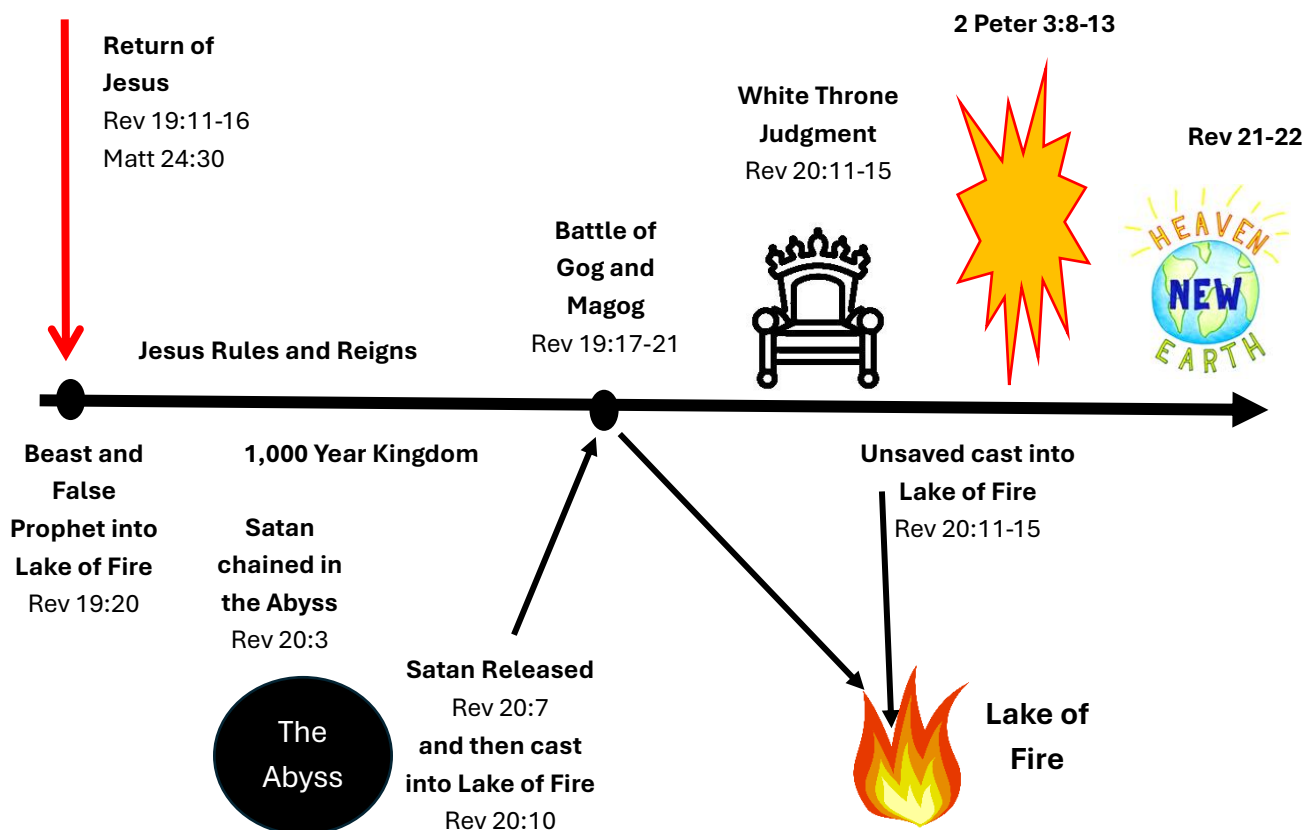
It is clear that unbelievers will be judged (Revelation 20:12). Paul affirms that this judgment will include every person (Romans 2:5-11).

Believers will also appear at the judgment seat of Christ, not for condemnation, but to be judged and rewarded according to their works (2 Cor. 5:10).

The apostle Peter and Jude describe rebellious angels as being kept in a place of gloom pending their judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). From this, we can infer that all rebellious angels will face a similar judgment.

It is an amazing fact that believers will be part of the judgment of the world. Paul argues that believers will help to judge both the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). John describes believers as, “those to whom authority to judge was committed” (Revelation 20:4).

The final judgment demonstrates God’s righteousness and complete victory over evil. God’s final judgment will be completely just and impartial (1 Peter 1:17). Ultimately this judgment will result in great praise for the character and victory of God (Revelation 19:1-2).



If we are honest, there is no human experience in this world that can compare with the reality of hell or the lake of fire. If we try to imagine the worst of all possible suffering, we have not yet stretched our imaginations to reach the dreadful reality of hell.

There is no biblical concept more grim or terror-invoking than the idea of hell. It is so unpopular with us that few would give credence to it at all except that it comes to us from the teaching of Christ Himself.

Almost all the biblical teaching about hell comes from the lips of Jesus. The Bible describes hell as a place of outer darkness, a lake of fire, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of eternal separation from the blessings of God, a prison, a place of eternal torment where the worm does not turn or die.

Matthew 8:11-12

¹¹ I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Mark 9:42-48

⁴² "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

Jude 5-7

⁵ Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

If these are mere symbols for hell, we must conclude that the reality must be even worse than the symbols suggest. The purpose of symbols is to point to something beyond what the symbol contains.

The idea that hell is a symbol for separation from God. For the unrepentant person, this may not appear to be threatening. The ungodly want nothing to do with God. In reality, the torment in hell will be the continual presence of God in the form of the fullness of His divine wrath. The unsaved will know God as an all-consuming fire.

One thing we must understand about hell is that there will be no cruelty there. It is impossible for God to be cruel. Cruelty involves inflicting a punishment that is more severe or harsh than the crime. Cruelty in a sense is unjust. The Judge of all the earth will surely do what is right. No innocent person will ever suffer at His hand.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of hell is its eternity. The Bible clearly teaches that the punishment in hell is eternal. The same word is used for both eternal life and eternal death. Being created in the image and likeness of God, we are eternal beings. We have a beginning, but we have no end. We will all live eternally either in the presence of God or separated from God in the place of eternal torment.

The eternal punishment of hell is an eternity before the righteous, ever-burning wrath of God, a suffering torment from which there is no escape or relief. Understanding this is crucial to our drive to appreciate the work of Christ and to preach the gospel

There are several moral applications we can make as we consider this coming final judgment.

The Final Judgment satisfies our God given desire for justice

Since we are created in the image of God, we long for justice (Matthew 5:6). The final judgment assures us that records are being kept and that nothing has escaped God's notice. Perfect justice will reign.

The Final Judgment enables us to forgive others

When we recall that God will reward or punish according to people's actions (Romans 12:19), it becomes easier for us to forgive and not take revenge. We trust that God will be just because that is part of His nature (1 Peter 2:22-23). We also understand the judgment Jesus endured in order to forgive all who repent of our sin. Knowing this great cost on Jesus' part, should make it easier for us to forgive the much lesser evils done against us.

The Final Judgment provides a motive for evangelism

Peter indicates the Lord's return is delayed, in part, because of God's patience and desire for people to repent (2 Peter 3:8-9).

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

If our hearts reflect God's heart, we should have the same motivation and urgency about evangelism.

The final topic for our discussion is The New Heavens and Earth

After the final judgment, we will live in perfect intimacy with God in the paradise of a new earth and heaven (Revelation 21:1-7).

What is Heaven?

The place where God currently dwells is known as heaven (1 Peter 3:22). Scripture teaches that it is a literal place (John 14:3). Scientists agree that other dimensions exist of which we are not aware. Even within our own dimension, there are things we cannot perceive such as electricity and radio waves. Our inability to perceive the dwelling place of God is not surprising.

What are the New Heavens and Earth?

The Bible affirms that there will be a new (or renewed) heaven and earth and that we will continue to exist as believers in this new creation (Revelation 21:1-7). The present heavens and earth will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth where only the righteous will dwell. This will be a place in which all sin is absent. All things will be under the rule of Christ (Hebrews 2:8). We will inherit this renewed world and will have a role as rulers there as God originally intended for us from the beginning in the Garden of Eden.

When we think of heaven we can first think of what will be absent from heaven. Some of these things are tears, sorrow, death, pain, darkness, ungodly people, sin, temples, the sun and moon, and the curse from Adam's sin.

What will be present in the eternal heaven, the renewed earth are the following: The saints, the river of the water of life, healing fruit, the Lamb of God, worship, the Wedding supper of the Lamb and His Bride, the unveiled face of God and the Sun of Righteousness.

Heaven is where Christ is. It is eternal bliss of communion with the God-man

What kind of bodies will we have?

Revelation 21:4 says that “the former things have passed away,” this includes our current bodies. He says, “behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). This also includes our bodies. Our resurrection or “glorified” bodies will be at home in the new environment. We will never die and will be capable of seeing God himself face to face (Revelation 21:3).

Magnificence of the New Creation

Revelation 21 and 22 describe the new heaven and earth as a beautiful place. The Holy City of New Jerusalem is there. (Revelation 21:2). The entire new creation will be physically beautiful. Most importantly, is the beauty of the relationships we will enjoy with God and one another. Listen as I read from Revelation 21:1-4 and 22:1-4.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 22:1-4

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This will make it a true paradise. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God, the Father and then the triune God will reign forever.

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷ For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. ²⁸ When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

This doctrine should motivate us to store up treasures in heaven

When we consider the fact that this creation is temporary and that it will be replaced by a new heaven and earth, this provides a natural motivation to avoid placing our hope in anything in this life. Jesus speaks very directly on this subject, encouraging us to invest our resources in such a way as to bring about a reward in heaven.

2 Peter 3:11-13

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust[a] destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

What do we do until then?

I read these words of application by Dr. David Jeremiah from his book *The Great Disappearance*. These are fitting words to bring this lesson to a close.

Walk Submissively

The apostle John takes great pain to emphasize that we are responsible to keep the sayings of the book of Revelation. One of the most important themes in this book is obedience. It is because of the disobedience of mankind that God will judge the world, and His people are charged repeatedly to distance themselves from the world's rebellion by "keeping the words" of the book. We are to walk submissively according the God's Word.

Worship Triumphantly

We grab hold of the truth of God's Word and give it back in worship to God. We praise His name triumphantly. With exuberance and conviction. Revelation makes it clear that praise and worship are the vital means of our response to all the God is and does.

Witness Urgently

Evangelism will one day cease, but not yet. One major purpose of Revelation is to remind sinners that eternal judgment is coming and to stimulate believers to share the Good News of redemption in Jesus' name. It is our duty to preach the Gospel, so people may hear and believe the Good News about Jesus and receive a new nature and a new character.

Work Fervently

We have only a little time to work for the advancement of the Gospel, and we must use the time wisely. We must work and work hard. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Watch Expectantly

We do not know when the Lord is coming back to earth. But we do know His arrival is closer today than it was yesterday. He could come at any time to take His Church to His Fathers' house. There will be no time to prepare. That is why we must always be ready.

The apostle John concludes his writing of the things that will take place later with these words in Revelation 22:16-21.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

And Peter writes these words of hope in 1 Peter 1:3-9

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

And he continues with this call to action in verses 13-23

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.

Lesson Summary

Judgment day is coming, followed by an eternal state either in the new heavens and new earth or in the lake of fire. The difference is in the preaching and response to the gospel. Teaching this doctrine should motivate us to invest our time and other resources in what is eternal. It should grant us great reassurance that God will restore all things to perfection in the end. It should make the need for evangelism plain to us and create a sense of urgency about the gospel.

You should now have a good handle of the essential doctrine of the bible based on the three courses you have completed.

In Course 1, we discussed the doctrine of the Bible, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

In Course 2, we discussed the doctrine of Man, Sin and Salvation.

And in this course, we discussed the doctrine of Angels, both holy and fallen angels. We also discussed the doctrine of the Church and Last Things or End Times.

I look forward to your completing all twelve of our core GTN courses.