

## **THE END OF THE EARTH**

### **Revelation 19:11–20:15**

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Revelation 19:11-20:15 (NIV)

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.’

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

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And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The

dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

**I. One of the most vivid memories of my childhood was as a 6-year-old standing on a street in China watching in 1947 as two Japanese generals in an armored car were being driven to execution by a firing squad.**

As a child I had not really known the horrors of World War II and perhaps, therefore, not knowing the horrors, had it been left up to my emotions at that particular moment on that street, I would have let the generals off. Only those who have really known the tyranny and the oppression of the enemy can insist that the punishment was just.

Perhaps some may be like that 6-year-old child when it comes to looking at the parade toward judgment.

The easy doctrine of universalism. The statement that says in the end everybody will be saved is the kind of a statement on the lips of a child with the moral knowledge of a 6-year-old. The Lord is not a lately arrived 6-year-old. His conflict with Satan predates the earth. His witness of evil done against His name and against His people embraces millenniums of time. When He acts in judgment it is with righteous cause and with justice. “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25, NIV).

As Christians we find ourselves in this strange paradoxical situation that in the present moment we are called to follow Jesus to weep over the prospect of judgment. Jesus, when He perceived the judgment that was to come on Jerusalem and in the world, shed great tears. There is yet

another side to time, however, when there is vindication of what God has done and the saints of God have had their tears wiped away.

As we approach this Scripture today, we are clearly coming to the end of the Revelation. In this end of the earth, which is being described in Revelation 19 and 20, there are four definite phases that follow, I feel, in chronological order. The setting for chapter 19 where we read today, the backdrop of it is the bowls of God's wrath. And more specifically the fall of the end time situation of Babylon, and the fall of the Antichrist. Christ's coming is pictured in chapter 19:11 and 16 through the figure of a rider on a white horse. This one compared to other Scripture is clear to be the second coming of Christ. In Luke 21, Jesus talks about Jerusalem being surrounded by armies and there being distress among nations and then the end would come and they would see the sign of the Son of man. Revelation 16:12–16 talks about the nations being gathered at Armageddon and here appears to be the context of that. When there is war against the rider and against His people then there is the coming of the Lord.

**II. There is, though, another kind of thing going on in the Book of Revelation literally and that is the contrast of two riders on white horses.**

Indeed, Revelation is book of contrasts. The contrast, for example, between earth and heaven, the contrast between the suffering of the saints and the seeming triumph of the wicked, the conflict between Babylon—the city of man—and Jerusalem, the city of God. There is also this contrast that goes on between the rider on the white horse pictured in Revelation 6 and the rider on the white horse in Revelation 19. They're not the same riders, not the same horses.

The beginning of the white horse rider of Revelation 6 initiated the final period of end-time travail. Following that rider came war and famine and death. That rider which initiated all the plagues, which are in Revelation, is really the rider that is at the beginning of the time of distress.

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Whereas the rider on the white horse, who is to be identified as the Lord, in Revelation 19 is coming at the end of the distress, a reminder to Christians to remember the one who starts something out is not necessarily the one who is going to finish at all.

The power of the first rider in Revelation 6 is vastly inferior to second rider. The power of the Antichrist figure, which comes out in Revelation 6, is that he has bowl. But the rider in Revelation 19 has a sword. The rider in Revelation 6 simply has one crown on his head. But the rider in Revelation 19 has many crowns or diadems. When you wear more than one crown you are king of more than one country, king of more than one people, and this is the idea associated with Jesus Christ. He has more than one crown because He's king of more than one country.

The first rider simply goes out to conquer. He has a quest for ruling. But the rider in Revelation 19 has the power to rule, the iron scepter with which to rule the nations.

The rider of Revelation 6 has no name. His identity is a mystery. It's known by a number: 666.

The number expresses his humanity. But the rider in Revelation 19 is known. He's known in several ways. He's known on his own as Faithful and True. That is, He can be depended upon in contrast to the Antichrist, the fancy fake. He is faithful and true in contrast of the phoniness of the person who claimed to be from God. He is known as the Word of God. He is known to himself with a name that cannot be known, a beautiful description of the personality of Jesus Christ which says that as much as we want to plumb the depths and mystery of His being there is a sense in which His individuality is never fully fathomed by His people. Just as no one ever fully knows me or no one ever fully knows you except yourself, so no one ever fully knows Jesus except himself. All attempts to bring the Son of God into our ability to define and know must stop short. Only the Son of God can understand the mystery of His own being. He has a name or identity, which only He himself knows.

That name is written on His thigh that all may see it and acknowledge it. His name is vastly superior and identified as contrasted to the first rider.

The first rider in Revelation 6 brought with him all the trauma of the end time—war, famine and death were riders that followed in his train. But behind the rider of Revelation 19 comes the armies of heaven and with them justice and righteousness. The first rider in Revelation 6, time is limited. He has only a period of forty-two months or three and a half years to really exercise his authority. In other parts in Revelation 18 he's identified as only having power for an hour or a day. But the rider in Revelation 19 has an eternal kingdom. The first rider is the beast. The second rider is the Lamb.

We are called upon to recognize that when Christ comes again His coming will be with power and great authority, a distinct contrast to His first coming.

### **III. The next scene that unfolds at the end of the earth is the great supper in Revelation 19:17–21.**

What is happening in this passage of Scripture is that John, under inspiration of the Spirit, is picking up language that is used in Ezekiel 39 to describe the end of the age or the end of the earth.

Since he is using the language of Ezekiel, it might be well for us to take a moment to look in Ezekiel about God's attitude toward judgment and God's attitude toward this supper. God speaking in Ezekiel 18:23 says, "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked declares the Sovereign LORD? Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" And again in Ezekiel 18:32 "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone says the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live." Ezekiel 33:11 further says "Say to them, 'As surely as I live declares the Sovereign

LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked. But rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn from your evil ways.””

So as you open the passage of Scripture to this rather grotesque scene of the great supper of God, it follows on the backdrop of God’s desire not to judge the wicked and that He takes no pleasure in the scene at all.

To go back for a moment to my illustration about watching the generals go to execution. It is as though, looking at the current rebellion against God in human life, that on the way to judgment we find that in the carriages of life the doors are simply locked from the inside and they can be opened. There is no one that keeps us in the carriage of judgment other than ourselves.

There is a deliberate contrast going on in the Scripture with what happened in Revelation 19 where earlier the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb was recorded. In effect, one is invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb where at the banquet table of God people sit and dine and enjoy the festal gathering of God being reunited to His people whom He has loved with an everlasting love. All those that are not invited to the banquet to dine become food at another banquet.

I don’t think that, given the language of Revelation, we need to press the literalism of the words that are being employed. I think we ought to stick with the symbol that is involved or the contrast between the two suppers. One involves life and health and joy and the other involves desecration and despair and ruin.

There’s one other thing that I think is going on in this great supper and that is the ease of Christ’s conquest. That’s meant to give a deliberate word of hope to saints in the first century and in the twentieth century or any century who look at the power of evil in the world and see it so strong and their own efforts as so frail. Revelation is saying any time God chooses to act He can act.

The armies of heaven that come with the Lord are useless in terms of warfare for they don’t have

any weapons. All they are is dressed for battle. And in that they're not all that dressed for battle. I do not presume that fine linen is a good dress for battle. I think it would rather easily leak bullets if they were shot in that direction.

It is only the rider himself that has the weapon. That simply is expressed as the sword in His mouth, again not a literal kind of thing. We're not to look at Jesus as literally having a sword in His mouth. But the expression of that "His power is in His word," and even as in the creation He spoke and the worlds were created. So in the end all He needs to do is speak and the activity is accomplished.

He can put the clamps on Satan and his henchmen—the antichrist and the false prophet—any time He chooses. He has so chosen to relegate that to the very end and easily they are dispatched and the end is initiated.

We are called to recognize the greater power of our God. John has, through two figures in chapter 19, pointed us toward the end. The rider coming, the return of Christ, and the judgment at Armageddon of the armies gathered against God's people.

**IV. The third section relating to the end of the earth in this passage of Scripture today has to do with the millennium, chapter 20:1–10.**

"Millennium" is a Latin term coming from a combination of two Latin words meaning a thousand years. "A thousand years" is mentioned six times in these ten verses. Christians over the centuries have had essentially three interpretations of these passages.

The premillennial viewpoint is simply that the return of Christ is scheduled before the thousand years of time. There will be a literal thousand years of peace, and the rule of Christ physically on earth. At the end, Satan will be loosed for a short period of time. The postmillennial point of view is that Christ is coming after the millennium, a thousand years of peace. The amillennial

view simply takes the position that there is no literal millennium. The thousand years speak of an ideal age in which Christ is ruling and reigning in human hearts.

I have a position on this, but let's recognize that Christians have differed on this matter.

**A.** The premillennial view goes something like this. When Christ returns in His second coming, Satan is bound. He's cast into the pit. And he's kept there for a thousand years. At Jesus' coming there is the first resurrection for the saints, those have been martyred as well as confessing saints. The text here would allow for both beheaded saints and confessing saints.

There is subdivision within that that the rapture position would hold that there's already been a prior resurrection at the rapture, the second coming of Christ described in Revelation 19 and 20. We've talked about that other times. But His resurrection, definitely the first resurrection, involves God's people whether they are saints of all the ages or just tribulation saints. We'll let Christ decide that for himself.

The saints reign with Christ for a thousand years, a literal reign on earth. Perhaps here we're to see Christ reigning from Jerusalem, as he's promised His apostles that they would one day sit with Him on the twelve thrones of Israel judging the tribes and judging the earth, here we are to see a kingdom on earth.

This kingdom ends with a final short release of Satan who briefly rebels, deceives again the earth and then is thrown into destruction. The reason for this brief end-time rebellion is to do what Romans 3:19 says. That in the end every mouth will be silenced and the whole world will be held accountable to God. That is to say there are people now living who say the reason why people do bad things is because of their environment or because of their family background or because they really didn't have a chance in life. They were held down without knowledge or the economy held them down or whatever. This premillennial position looking at Scripture this way

is saying “For a thousand years there will be justice and peace on earth. There will be prosperity. The lion shall lay down with the lamb. Snakes and their bites won’t hurt.” It will be an age in which the poison and evil has been lifted out of the world. After a thousand years of incredible peace during which people have lived as the early period of Scripture, long periods of time, at the end of that period of time, the nature of sin and humanity is such that given the activity of a deceiver people will still rather worship the lie than worship God. And God will prove just in His dealings. The real reason why we sin against God is not because somehow we’ve been handicapped by our environment or by our family or by not enough knowledge or not enough money or the like. It is the sinful nature, the heart of man is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. After a golden age persons will still walk away from God and listen to the tempter.

This basically is the view to which I subscribe, to which I see Scripture warranting.

**B.** There have been others though who have seen the millennium in different terms. This is called the postmillennial view. Augustine made this popular in the early fifth century. He saw the Roman Empire collapsing and the church taking its place. He saw that the thousand years were to be years in which the church of Jesus Christ would extend its sway on earth and would bring in the golden era of justice after which time the Lord himself would come. This is the official position of the Roman Catholics. It is the position of many liberal Protestant theologians who say by our own efforts the church can usher in the kingdom of God. Some optimistic evangelicals have held this view as well. They see Revelation 20 in these terms: The limitation of the devil corresponds to the growth and the influence of the church. As the church grows, more and more of Satan must go into the abyss. So rather than being a sharp departing into the abyss, it’s more gradual in nature.

The first resurrection is not a literal resurrection of the body. It's simply a revival of the genuine spirit of the martyrs of the church. The millennium now is or may be yet to come. But however it comes it's describing the idea that the church will ultimately triumph on earth. Rather than being a remnant few, it will extend its influence over the earth.

Before the end a brief rebellion will occur and then Christ's final coming with the final resurrection.

The limitations of this viewpoint, I think, are rather simple. It's an overly optimistic view of the church. I don't think there's anything in the history of the church to warrant this viewpoint in terms of the church having this kind of influence, the redeemed on earth.

Also, if one adopts this viewpoint, you lose entirely the sense of nearness of Christ's coming that is proclaimed again and again in the Book of Revelation. "I am coming soon," Revelation 3:11 proclaims. And the book closes with an admonition to be watchful for the soon coming of the Lord. This view would completely negate the idea of a watchful sort of attitude. It does have this advantage: It could keep a Christian away from saying "The world is going to collapse anyway so there's nothing I can do about it. I might as well go hide in the corner." This says the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, if it expands its witness, can have a great influence on the earth. That is something, whether we hold the postmillennial view or not, we ought to strive for. We ought to be concerned about the salvation of all.

C. The amillennial view simply looks at Revelation 20 and says it's doing what often happens in the Book of Revelation. It's not to be tied in chronologically with Revelation 19. It skips back over the whole expanse of time as Revelation 12 did. What it's basically saying is this: The "thousand years" is not a literal term but a symbolic term. It's symbolic term in contrast with "one hour," which in Revelation 18 is used four times to describe Babylon. The rule and sway of

man to describe the Antichrist compared to the rule and people of God is a piddling amount of time.

Satan is bound in the death and resurrection of Christ. That's when he was thrown into the abyss. Jesus says in Mathew 12:29, "How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house." Jesus says this in reference to his casting out of demons. And Jesus says in Luke 10:18, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven," when the seventy came back and reported that even the demons were subject to the name of Christ. Satan therefore is already bound by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and cannot hurt God's saints.

The first resurrection, therefore, which is talked about, is the resurrection of spiritual life of those who come to faith in Christ, or it may even be the spiritual reign of those who have gone on before us and died. They are now spiritually reigning with Christ. They've been raised into the heavenlies. Or it may describe simply spiritual rebirth.

Paul says in Ephesians that Christ has made us live even when we were dead in transgressions. God raised us up in Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms. This isn't literal language. No one is yet literally seated in heaven. But what is being said is we have already inwardly been raised to this position.

The thousand years, therefore, and the amillennial view represent the period of time between Christ's first coming and His second. There are some limits to this viewpoint. I think it's an unrealistic viewpoint on Satan's recent activities. True, Jesus says that He has bound the strong man. But there is Scripture that continually speaks of Satan being very alive and being the prince of the power of the air and about our struggling with the principalities and power and wickedness in heavenly places. The terms in Revelation 20 speak, for example, of Satan really being locked

up. There's a key to the abyss. He's bound with chains. He is in a pit, which is secure in itself, and the seal is put on the pit, which suggests no tampering. In my own experience I haven't found Satan to be all that bound yet. There is a sense in which he is but another sense in which he's very alive.

There is also perhaps, an inconsistency in looking at language in the amillennial position. To say in verse 4 "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years," simply represents spiritual rebirth. But in verse 5 when it says "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended." Notice the phrases—"come to life" is used in both places. What the amillennial's position is saying is "come to life" when it's used the first time means spiritually coming to life and when it's used the second time it means physical resurrection. This may make a little mincemeat, I think, out of the English language to take a phrase when it occurs so close together and say it means two different things and the text itself doesn't explain it.

#### **V. Back to the premillennial position.**

Christ is going to set up a thousand-year reign on earth following His second return to the earth, an exciting time. I would like to suggest some caution to those of us who hold this view because this is the view, which today has probably the most prophetic books out on the market and most people who are Christians subscribe to. *The Late Great Planet Earth* being a chief example, and I think a bad example, of the premillennial point of view for several reasons.

I'd like to sound these cautions about the premillennial viewpoint. They're sounded in a book called *Armageddon Now*. The author reviews all the premillennial attempts in the twentieth century to wed the headlines to the Bible. He raises these kinds of concerns. He asks when we look at the premillennial position if current events and Bible prophecy always match.

Premillennialists have had the disposition to always match current events with Bible texts. At

least even prominent premillennialists have interpreted every crisis of this century as the forerunner of Armageddon. They have seen the rise of the Roman Empire of the last days in the rise of the League of Nations, the expansion of Mussolini's Italy, and others. The track record of premillennialists of trying to wed prophecy to current headline events from a historian's point of view have not been all that good. That's not to say that somebody isn't going to hit it right sometime. But it's to say with a word of caution. I say that now because there are those in the church world today who are saying Christ is definitely coming by 1981. They've got it figured. I want to sound a word of warning. If that event doesn't happen, what it is going to potentially produce is a generation of believers who have been taught that as truth. When it doesn't come to pass they'll begin to not only doubt that but essential elements of the Christian faith, like the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the whole thing in their minds will be called into disrepute. And an age of skeptics in believers could be produced by this kind of careless wedding of current events with biblical prophecy. I'd suggest that historically they have not had a good track record of their prophecies coming to pass.

Another problem with the premillennial viewpoint has been that sometimes the holding of a prophetic viewpoint requires a denial of Christian justice. For example, fatal determinism can take place. Sometimes as Christians we don't know how to pray. The sense that everything is prophecy and everything is fated so there's nothing I can do.

As Christians when we support for example, the nation of Israel, we shouldn't be blind to the needs of people like the Palestinians and the Arabs who themselves need to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed, and who have been uprooted off their land. We should not deny justice in order to have a particular view established.

We're concerned as we look at prophecy as we see things we believe coming to pass that they do not become cover for wrong to be committed.

I think that we premillennialists have to keep in mind whether our motivation in preaching about end-time things is results or truth. Premillennialists who have been wrong in their guesses have frequently excused their miscalculations and mistakes and prophetic interpretation on the ground that it's a useful evangelistic tool. Often it's a tool of terror to scare people into making a decision for Christ. In the battle for souls we need to be concerned not just for the end but for the means we use to arrive at the end. Jesus, for example, in reference to His second coming always appealed to believers from a standpoint of hope rather than a standpoint of fear and fright. The Second Coming is only a fright and fear to those who have not embraced the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our concern must not be simply what results are produced but is truth really being adhered to. As Christians something never becomes right if we go about it in a wrong manner. The end never justifies the means. It would be easy for me to have guests in the pulpit who could draw the big crowd, to say here's what happening today and here's the text in the Bible it fits, but I must, in my own spirit, be checked by this. While I feel we need to be alert to the signs of the time it's not been given to us to say this is the way it's got to be.

We need to kind of back off and look at the coming of Christ from the more existential standpoint: This is the end of the age as it relates to me. When I talk about the last generation and the end of the earth, I'm talking about it as it relates to me, for the end of the age has come upon me in my lifetime. I will see Christ either by death or by His coming. He's either coming into my world or I'm going into His. This could be my last day, my last moment. So the end of the age and the nearness of Christ's coming can be held no matter what prophetic position you belong to. You always ought to be ready for the return of Christ. But as Christians we ought to concentrate

on those areas where truth is solid and not give ourselves to this endless kind of speculation of events that produces an unsettling among Christians. And an inability to get on in living the lives God has called us to. We become end-time panicked sort of people and we become so frightened about what is going to happen next on the horizon of the landscape of human history that we may not live productively for God in the roles He has assigned to and called us to now.

**VI. The last part of the section of the end of the earth—the Great White Throne judgment.**

This is the scene of final judgment of earth. Verse 11 really calls us to consider the things that endure. The heavens and the earth are passing away. Scriptures say they'll melt with a fervent heat (2 Peter 3:12). But the word of the Lord will abide forever. Earth and sky flee from Christ's presence. There is no more place for them. What a graphic description of the eternity of our Lord Jesus Christ compared to the material or the created order.

Revelation 20:12 is saying to every person who lives on earth, you are important because the dead small and great stand before God. Everyone is there. No one can get by God on the ground that his life was unimportant. Revelation is so clear. All the dead must appear, even the dead in the sea. And for ancients not to be buried was to suffer great disgrace. But the Scripture is telling us the Lord has powers over the deep. Powers over the molecular structure of the beings he has created so that he can with his great power rematerialize all the atoms that constituted an individual's existence. Even when those atoms have been incinerated or when they have been put in the depths of the sea or whether they've been put in the ground. He has power over them, so great is the power of God. He could speak the worlds into existence with His word and He can re-collect and rematerialize the atoms that have comprised our existence so that each of us can personally stand before Him in the Great White Throne judgment.

As I understand Revelation 20, all the believers are with Christ in the first resurrection, and the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20 is really for all of those who have not enjoyed the first resurrection and who have not come to Christ. I say this because of what happens in verses 12–13: The dead are judged according to what is recorded in the books. There are two books that are there: the Book of Life and a book of works. It's as though the Scripture is saying if a person does not want their name recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, the term used earlier in Revelation, which can only be done through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ upon confession of our faith, and the willingness to accept Christ's death for us on the cross. It's the only way our names can be written in the Book of Life. But if we choose to try to stand before God by means of our own efforts, our own personality, our own human goodness when we come before the judgment of God, the one of the books that will be consulted will be the Book of Life—is your name there? If it is not, then look at the book of works. Every man's works will be tried and it will be shown that anyone who has tried to stand on his own works cannot truly stand before God. That's the message of Revelation 20. That if you try to stand before God on the basis of your own merit, you don't have a prayer and your choice in verses 14 and 15 is for eternity.

So the chapter ends on this very sobering note of judgment coming.

As Revelation continues in chapter 21 and 22 we see the scenes switch and the people of God being gathered into an eternal city. That is where the Lord wants each of us, to be with Him forever and ever.

### **Closing Prayer**

As I think, Lord, of Your ministry on earth and how You called people to Yourself it was on the basis of Your great strength as the Son of man and the Son of God. You called them to You on

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the basis of Your great love for them. Your cross, Your sacrificial giving which would even involve taking a towel and washing others' feet. You do not call persons to You on the basis of fright. You are not reserved about announcing Your future judgment on the earth. But You are careful even in the means which You employ to draw persons to Yourself and that the knowledge of judgment was the last thing to be used if all other attempts of love have been used and the person still has not yielded to Your call of love then in the end You must announce the judgment as the final hurdle which one must jump over before they pursue their own destiny of an eternity without You. I thank You that You have called us to follow You. That You are still saying today what You said to those first disciples, "Follow Me." When we follow You we'll be true to You in this life and we will one day share the eternal ages with You for Your call is a timeless call. It's an eternal call. It's a call that is present with us even now and we praise You that You are yet speaking to us saying "Follow Me." Help us to follow You.