

The Lake of Fire

I want you to hear a song called “Viva la Vida” by a band named Coldplay. The lyrics are on the back of your note sheet. This song was the most downloaded song on iTunes in 2008, and the album sold 6.8 million copies worldwide, number one in 2008. It was song of the year at the Grammy Awards in 2009.

Kathy: Will Campbell will give you link for the song on YouTube.

The song’s title means “Long Live Life” and was inspired by a painting in the home of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. She got in a lot of trouble for having wild views and leading a wild life. The big painting in her home seemed to be her way of saying, “no matter what people think, I will live however I want.”

Many have speculated what the song means. Some have said it seems to be about a Roman ruler like Pilate or Tiberius, lamenting that Christianity is rising while their status was falling. Others see part of it referring to Louis XVI, dethroned by the masses during the French Revolution and later beheaded after living in exile. Certainly artwork on the album from the French Revolution would support that.

Several of the lines are very memorable: “Now in the morning I sweep alone, the streets I used to own.” Also: I discovered that my castles stand, upon pillars of salt and pillars of sand,” which has clear allusions to the Bible.

But I shared this song with you because of what the lead singer said about the line “For some reason I can’t explain, I know Saint Peter won’t call my name.” When Chris Martin was asked about that line by Q magazine, here’s what he said:

It’s about...You’re not on the list. I was a naughty boy. It’s always fascinated me that idea of finishing your life and then being analyzed on it. And that runs through most religions. That’s why people blow up buildings. Because they think they’re going to get lots of virgins...That’s the most frightening thing you could possibly say to somebody. Eternal damnation. I know about this stuff because I studied it. I was into it all. I know it. It’s still mildly terrifying to me. And this is serious.” –Chris Martin

Today’s passage is about the sobering reality that for those whose names are not written in the Book of Life because they have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, there awaits eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

Chris Martin is right when he says this is serious stuff. Notice he says it still mildly terrifies him. On the one hand, he seems to have rejected the idea of eternal damnation in favor of living life however he wants to now, like Frida Kahlo.

But inside he is still unsettled, because he knows that if he is wrong, he will lose everything when he is judged by a Holy God.

Friend, with all the love I have in my heart I want you to know that you have one big choice in life to make that determines your eternal destiny. That choice will determine whether you spend eternity with God, or eternity in the Lake of Fire. Your choice determines whether you stand before God one day being evaluated according to your own deeds, or on the basis of your trust in the deed done for you by Jesus Christ!

Read Revelation 20:7-15 PRAY!

V. 7-10 The Final Judgment of the Devil – The Lake of Fire

Last week we saw that Revelation chapter twenty speaks of a thousand year reign of Christ on earth with His saints after the tribulation and His Second Coming.

Many have wondered about this time called the millennium.

Why doesn't God just take us directly to the New Heavens and the New Earth?

Well, that's one of those speculative questions we have a hard time answering. But I want to show you something intriguing about how the Bible lays all of this out for us in perfect symmetry.

Kathy: Show "The Perfect Symmetry of the Bible D."

In the first two chapters of the Bible and the last two chapters there is no death and access to the Tree of Life!

Kathy: Show "The Perfect Symmetry of the Bible C."

Genesis 5 gives us the ages people lived before the great flood. Presumably earth conditions were radically different then! On average they lived 800-900 years and were still having children when they were 150 years old!

The prophets and Revelation 20 describe a time when earth conditions will allow people to live very long lives on a near perfect earth.

In both cases people live a long time but still die.

Kathy: Show “The Perfect Symmetry of the Bible B.”

Genesis 6-11 reveals the judgment of the great flood. After this judgment earth’s conditions changed so much that Genesis 6:3 said it will be rare for anyone to live longer than 120 years old and Psalm 90:10 says the average lifespan will be between 70 and 80 years old. Genesis 11 shows judgment at the Tower of Babel.

Rev. 6-19 is all about the judgments during the time of the Tribulation. What started at the tower of Babel is finished when Babylon falls.

Do you see how much happens at the beginning of Genesis and the end of Revelation? These events cover thousands of years, but are given in just a few chapters!

Kathy: Show “The Perfect Symmetry of the Bible.”

When you add in the 2,000 plus years of Israel before Christ and the 2,000 plus years of the Church after Christ, you really see the perfect symmetry of the Bible!

The Bible has the tree of life at the beginning and the end, and the most perfect tree of life in the middle, the Cross that Jesus died for sinners on!

Now look again at verse seven. After those 1,000 years of the millennium are completed, Satan will be released for a short time.

He will go out and deceive the nations, and actually convince people to come up against Jesus and the holy city of Jerusalem.

One of the great unanswered questions of the Bible is: “Who are the people who join with Satan to attack Jerusalem at the end of the millennium?”

Verse eight tells us their number is like the sand of the sea.

Well, even though the Bible doesn’t tell us explicitly we can deduce the answer.

The Bible makes clear that during the millennium there will be outward obedience to the teachings of Christ. When any problem starts to emerge, passages like Isaiah 2 seem to indicate Jesus will settle them quickly.

Now we said there will be people who make it through the great tribulation without worshipping the beast who will enter into the millennium. They will have children who have children who have children. I calculate that a thousand years is time for more than 40 generations to be born, with potentially billions on the earth.

Apparently there will be many people born during the millennium that obey Christ outwardly because they have to but have not received Him inwardly through the new birth. Amazingly, despite living on a near perfect world with Christ present, when the millennium is over they will join Satan against Jesus.

God ain't got no grandkids! Each generation must choose Jesus for themselves!

I hope this is a little encouragement for those of you who love Jesus and tried to raise your kids right but they still are not right with Jesus.

Stop beating yourself up wondering what you could have done different. Just pray for them and love them. It's not that you did anything wrong, but that they have not yet done what is right – make Christ Lord and Savior of their own life.

The army of these that rebel against Christ is cryptically called Gog and Magog. Back in Ezekiel 38-39 Gog and Magog refers to a battle that takes place during the end times. But a close look at the context indicates that battle will probably happen sometime before the tribulation begins. If that's the case, Gog and Magog here would be like referring to Napoean's Waterloo or Custard's Little Big Horn. In other words, their efforts are doomed to fail big time!

Look at verse nine. It shows us the sad end of this army of rebellion. Fire came down from Heaven and consumed them! After His Second Coming Christ will never allow harm to come to Jerusalem again!

And then there is the wonderful verse ten, showing us Satan's final judgment!

The Devil is thrown into the Lake of Fire, just as his two human agents of the tribulation, the beast and the false prophet had been a thousand years earlier.

Verse ten clearly tells us the Lake of Fire is a place where people and demons, including the Devil, will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Interestingly, these verses don't show Satan as the ruler of the Lake of Fire, but just one of the ones confined there.

V. 11-15 The Final Judgment of those who did not receive Christ – The Lake of Fire

Throughout the Bible God has told us about this final judgment referred to in verse eleven as happening at the Great White Throne.

So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Oh this people has committed a great sin; they have made for themselves a god of gold. Now if you would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book You have written.” The Lord replied to Moses: “Whoever has sinned against Me I will erase from My book. Now go, lead the people to the place I have told you about; see, My angel goes before you. But on the day I settle accounts, I will hold them accountable for their sin.” -Exodus 32:31-34

Notice that last phrase: the day I settle accounts, I will hold them accountable for their sin.

This will be in contrast to those whose names are written in the Book of Life, referred to by that name 9 times in the Bible.

In verse 11 John sees this Great White Throne, and then he sees earth and heaven flee from God’s presence.

Perhaps the Great White Throne is beyond space. When that moment happens, it looks like all those who have died without receiving Christ will have their spirits released from Hades and they will be before the Judge at this Great White Throne. It is possible all the saints living with Christ on earth will also be there to the side, but this judgment is not for them.

After this time is over, old earth won’t exist as we have known it. The next chapter tells us there will then be a new heaven and a new earth that saints will live on.

Verse twelve is key to understanding what happens at the great white throne.

It tells us there were many books opened before the throne. And then it tells us there was another book opened: the book of life.

The end of verse twelve lets us know the dead were judged according to their works. That’s what the books contained: the works people did on earth.

Verse fifteen lets us know that no matter how great anyone’s works were in that book, they were not good enough to go to Heaven based on their works.

Folks, everyone on earth will be judged according to two kinds of works: Either Christ's work for them on the cross done in pure righteousness, or their own works tainted by sin!

Almost all of the world's religions speak of some types of scales. And they basically say that if you do more good things than bad things, you'll be all right.

I'm not recommending it, but there is a TV show that shows this. My Name is Earl basically is about a guy who lists out all the bad things he has ever done and then sets out to make them right, so that he will satisfy the demands of karma.

One thing suicide bombers usually have in common is thinking they have done so many bad things in life that they could never get into Allah's paradise. They then embrace the promise that if they go on Jihad for Allah it will secure an instant place for them in Paradise with 70 virgins. The original promise like that was made by Mohammed when he was recruiting fighters for one of his battles.

The Problem with being judged according to our own works is we fail to understand the true desperation of our situation before God. As sinners before a holy God, whose standard is perfection, we could never do enough good works to make up for our lostness before a Holy God.

That's the bad news!

The Good News is that Jesus Christ came to earth to personally do something about the position sinners were in. He bore our sins on the Cross, literally dying in our place. When we receive Him, we are forgiven of our sins, we have our names written in the Book of Life, and Christ's perfect righteousness counts as our own on judgment day!

"God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." -2 Cor. 5:21

"But to the One who does not work, but believes on Him who declares righteous the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness." -Romans 4:5

The saddest thing about the Great White Throne Judgment is that no one had to experience it. All could have followed the revelation they had been given, which would have led them to embrace Christ as their Savior and be written in the Book of Life.

The great preacher Adrian Rogers said this about this moment:

“I will not stand before the great white throne, and I will tell you why. I settled out of court.”-Adrian Rogers

I hope you have settled out of court also. When you receive Christ as your Savior, you won't have to worry about the Great White Throne Judgment.

Now back in chapter eleven we did hear of believers receiving rewards before Jesus. I Cor. 3 speaks of another time when believers will stand before Jesus and receive rewards for the things they did for Jesus on earth. So what we do does matter down here. But we will only be in Heaven because of what Jesus did for us!

Now look at verse thirteen. It tells us these unbelievers will be judged according to their works. The Bible teaches there will be degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire. No one will be glad they are there, but those who had greater revelation from God and failed to obey it will suffer more.

In Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus said Sodom and Gomorrah's judgment will be less than Capernaum because in rejecting Him they were rejecting more information than Sodom had when it rejected God. Oh how bad is it going to be for Americans who have been taught so much but have spurned Christ and acted so wickedly?

Verse fourteen makes clear that this will be the end of death as we have known it and also the need for Hades, the temporary domain of the unsaved dead, will no longer be necessary. From now on, it's just the Lake of Fire for those who didn't receive Jesus.

Look at verse fifteen again. Anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the Lake of Fire. We already saw in verse ten this includes a torment for demons and people that goes on forever and ever.

There are many who teach that the unsaved dead will simply be annihilated and cease to exist. This is based on taking the word “perish” from John 3:16 to mean annihilation, and from teaching that when Jesus referred to Gehenna he meant the place outside Jerusalem where the fire kept burning, but the trash thrown into it merely ceased to exist, while the fire kept burning.

But verses like verse ten clearly show the Lake of Fire involves a forever torment for those who reject Christ!

This is in keeping with the nature of a soul.

A soul, once created, goes on forever. Apart from Jesus' work everyone would have had to go to the Lake of Fire because of sin and their inability to produce the perfect righteousness required for Heaven. Because of Jesus' work, people can go to Heaven instead if they receive Him and let His righteousness count for them before the Great White Throne. Those are the only options.

Because a soul once created is eternal, the only other option would have been to create another place where sinful souls could go and continue to spurn Jesus without experiencing torment. That itself would be an affront to a Holy God.

So the only option for those that won't repent is the Lake of Fire. A place nobody had to go because of the work of Jesus.

Now I would much rather have spent this time talking to you about the other things that happen when you receive Christ:

Forgiveness of sin, a new joy, peace, and sense of purpose, the indwelling Holy Spirit, life forever with Jesus in a place free of sin.

But this is the final truth: If you don't turn to Jesus your eternal home will be the Lake of Fire. Why not turn to Jesus now before it's too late?

Sinner's Prayer!