



Dante Alighieri (right) the Roman poet wrote The Divine Comedy

Newscast Media HOUSTON, Texas—As Christians across the world celebrate some of the most important days in the history of mankind, we will take a close look at Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Resurrection Sunday and also the second coming of Christ.

In this series, we will also confront the subject of heaven and hell and discuss whether those places really exist or if they are simply figures of speech.

The topic that theologians refer to as the "rapture" or "snatching away" will not be discussed, since it is a very lengthy and complicated topic that deals more with doctrinal beliefs of an event that merely causes division amongst Christians.

The scriptures say that Good Friday was the day Jesus died, while Resurrection Sunday was the day He arose from the dead. The question we have to answer is, where did Christ go after he died? Before we answer this question, let's look at the three different kinds of death:

(i) Physical death, is where the body is separated from the spirit and is pronounced clinically dead.

(ii) Spiritual death means the spirit is separated from communion with God, even though the person may still be alive physically.

(iii) The second death, is eternal separation of the spirit from God with no chance of redemption, into a permanent state of damnation after the final judgment.

When Christ died on Good Friday, He went to the "lower parts of the earth" also known in Hebrew as Sheol. We refer to it as Hades. Ephesians 4:9 *"Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?"*

We also know that He promised the thief on the cross that He would be with the him in paradise that day, which means at the time, paradise and Hades were located beneath the earth and were separated by a gulf. The twenty-third chapter of Luke, beginning with the forty-second to forty-third verse says: *"Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.'" 43 And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'*

We believe, this is the same place formerly known as "Abraham's Bosom" and when Christ ascended to heaven, He took those who had died and believed Him, to heaven. This means that beneath the earth, the only places that remain are Hades (that many refer to as hell) and the lake of fire. So, what happened to paradise thereafter?

According to Paul, paradise was moved up to heaven. 2 Corinthians 12:3-4 *"And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is*

not lawful for a man to utter (KJV).

Hades, that many refer to as hell, is actually a temporary holding place filled with torment, for those who died as unbelievers and are awaiting the final judgment. The final destination (the lake of fire) is still empty, and the first occupants will be the false prophet and the beast, that come during the great tribulation. This is according to Revelation. The beast is the **anti-Christ** who represents a **political leader**, while the **false prophet** represents a **religious leader**.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), gives the readers of his day a mental picture of what hell is like in his *Divine Comedy*. Dante was a prose writer and moral philosopher, who was born in Florence and eclipsed Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro, 70-19 B.C.) in stature. In Dante's inferno, the poet has a dream, and in this dream he is lost in a forest, where the wild animals will not let him descend a hill. He is met by Virgil, the Roman poet, who gives Dante a personal tour guide of hell. In this vision or dream, hell is divided into sections, and the punishment varies according to the sins one has committed. What is most amazing is that the most severe punishment and judgment is reserved for traitors—people who betray the trust of others. The lowest and worst level of hell is the ninth circle. *Dante's Inferno* reveals the following in part:

"The poets, following the sound of a loud horn, are led by it to the ninth circle, in which there are four rounds, one enclosed within the other and containing as many sorts of traitors...The discourses of the third round, called Ptolomea wherein are those punished who betrayed others under the semblance (pretense) of kindness...In the fourth and last round of the ninth circle, those who betrayed their benefactors... And in their midst is Lucifer..." —Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno*, Canto XXXI—XXXIV.



The Triumph of the Name of Jesus Christ by Giovanni Battista Gaulli, 1685

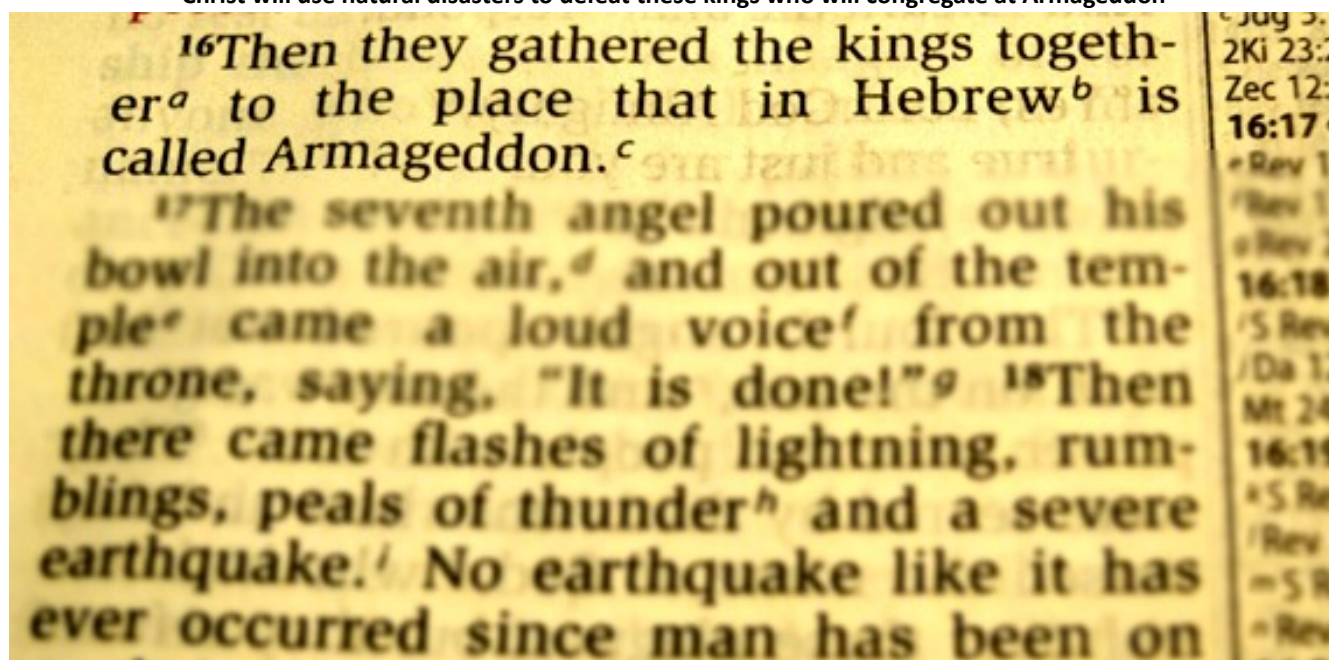
One very controversial aspect of scripture is the return of Christ. This return is also referred to as the second coming, in which Jesus returns with His followers to rule. When Christ came into this world as Son of man and Son of God, He came as a lamb to serve, however, when He returns He will come as king (or the lion) to reign. (Jesus was the flesh, Christ was God.)

Satan knows his days are numbered and has stepped up demonic activity in this world. Everything in the visible realm is as a result of something that happens in the spiritual realm. For example, when you hear of wars or rumors of wars, the entity behind such activity is the principality responsible for war. Because Satan cannot be in more than one place at the same time, he has to use his generals (demonic spirits) to do his bidding. A principality is a prince of the air, that has demonic jurisdiction over a certain geographic area. These principalities are high up in rank, and they use demons to corrupt

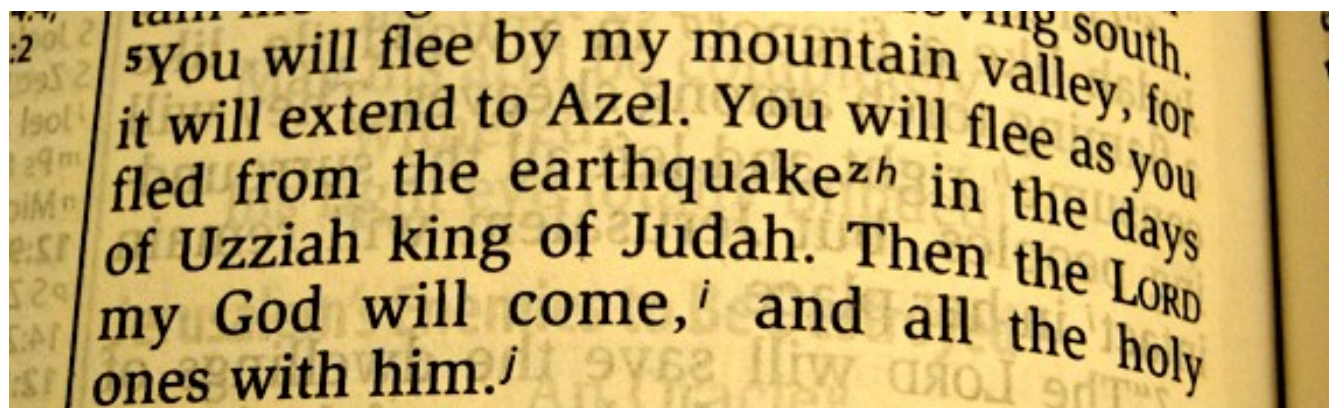
the minds and thoughts of humans.

Before Christ returns there will be two assaults directly from heaven upon armies and rulers of this world who foolishly believe they can attack heaven with their man-made weapons that were constructed by finite minds. After Christ's return, there will be a third and final assault. The **first assault** is mentioned in the book of Rev 16:16: *"Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon..."*

Christ will use natural disasters to defeat these kings who will congregate at Armageddon



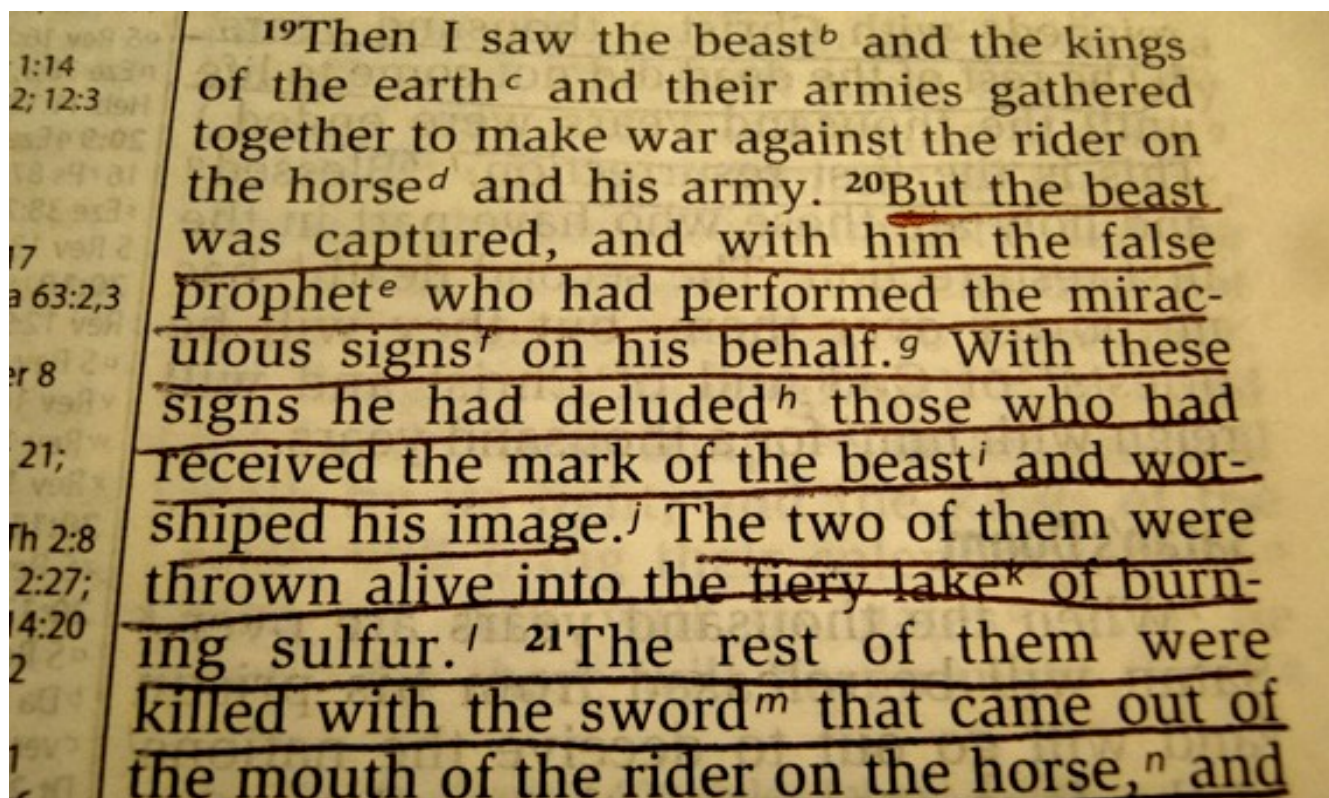
The **second assault** happens when Christ returns with his bride (the church). This will happen after the wedding feast of the lamb takes place in heaven between Christ and His bride. It is up to the reader to determine how the bride got to heaven in the first place, in order to return at the end of the tribulation to fight the anti-Christ and the false prophet, who are defeated during this assault. The prophet Zechariah tells us that the Lord God will come with his holy ones (Zechariah 14:5), as shown below:



Zechariah 14:5 mentions the Lord God returning with all the holy ones. This is the second coming of Christ after the wedding supper of the Lamb.

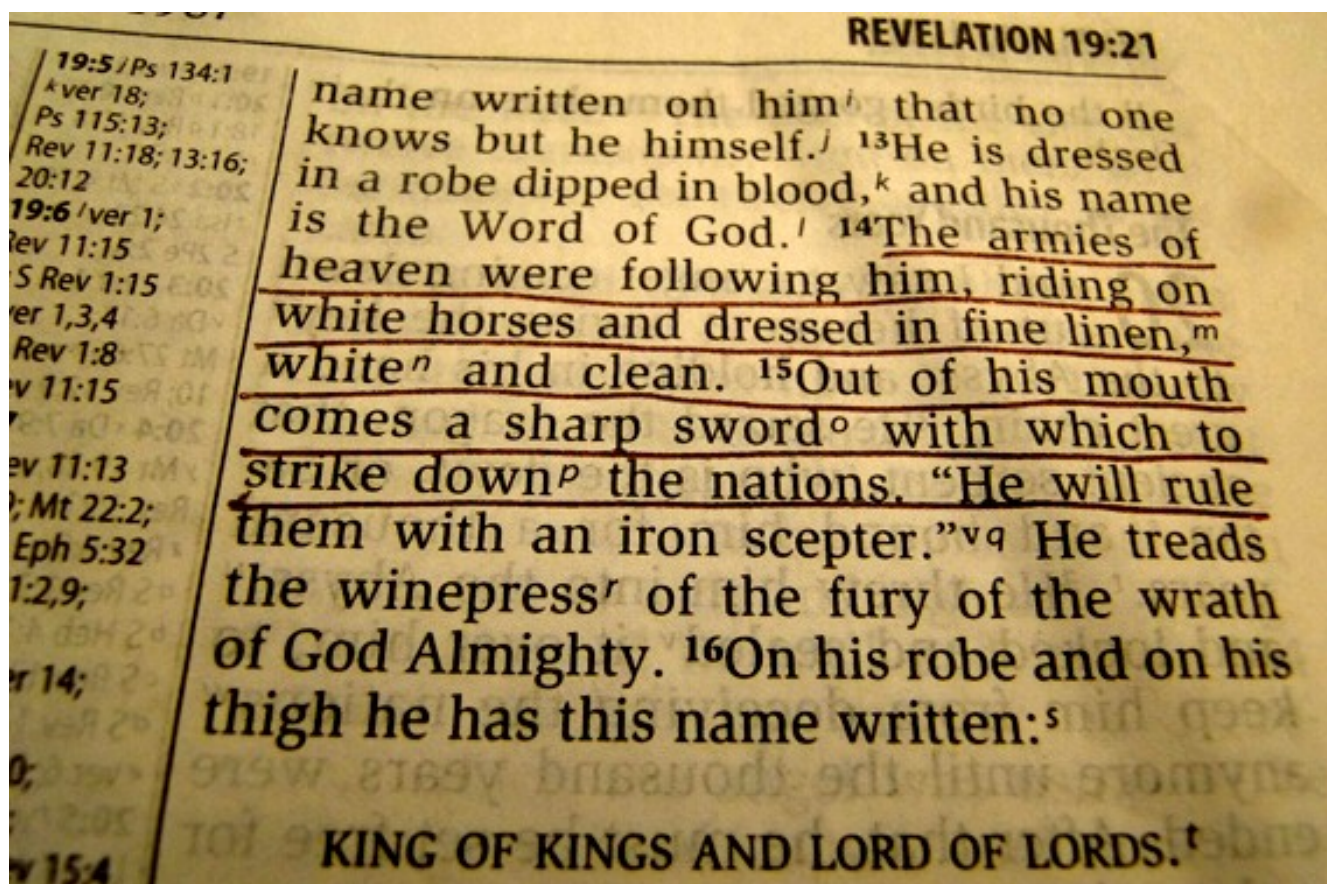
Revelation chapter 19 verse 20 tells us what happens during the second assault:

“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...The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur...”



According to this verse, the beast (political leader) and the false prophet (religious leader) will be thrown directly into the lake of fire, not hell. **Think of the lake of fire as hell on steroids.** These two will be the first occupants. What we call hell is actually Hades, the lake of fire is called "Gehenna" in Greek. This is the second assault.

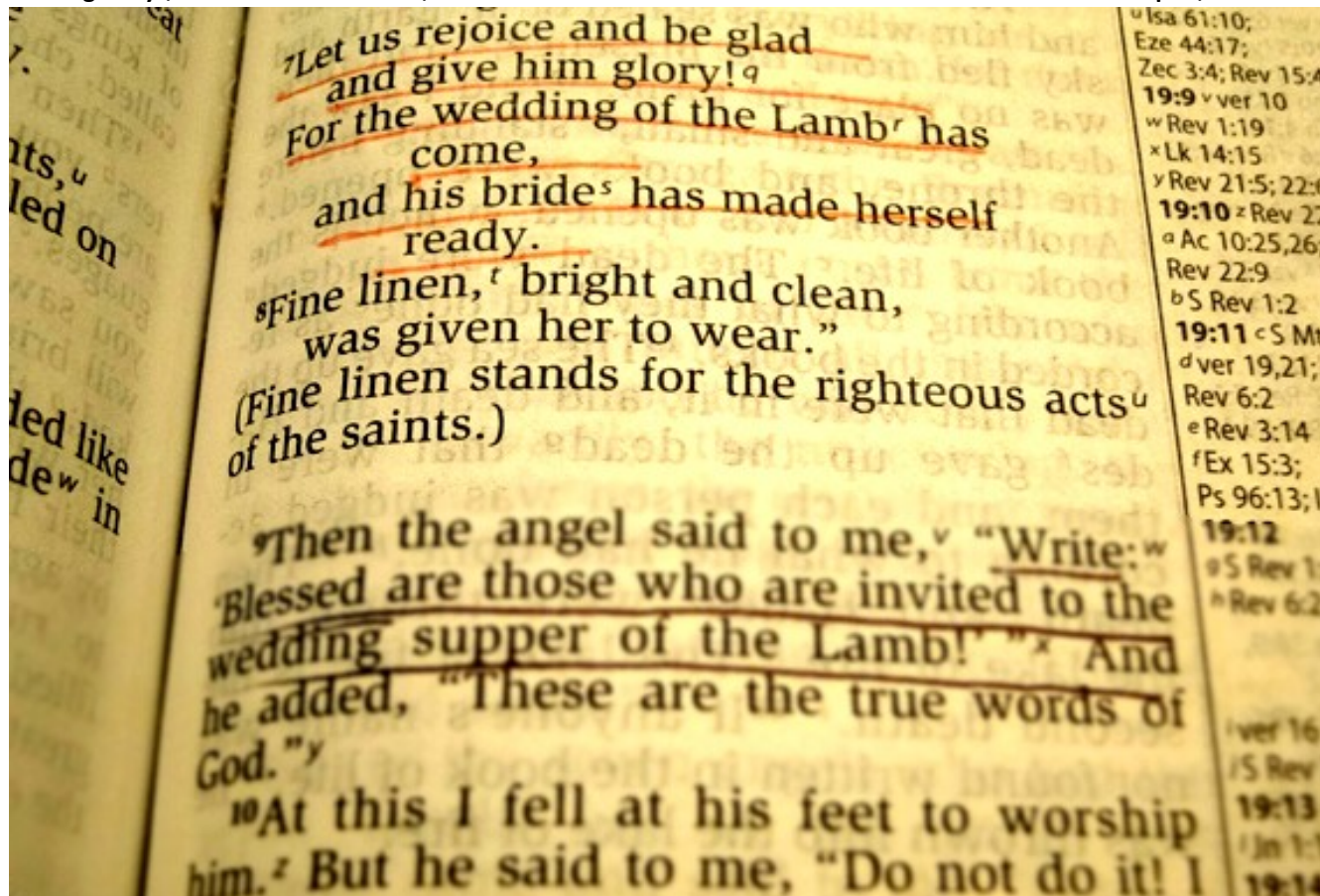
It is important to note that no resurrection will occur during the second coming of Christ as indicated in verses 14 to 15. This event is chronicled below and it is a known date that the kings and rulers of this world will be aware of since the previous verses say they "will be gathered together to make war on the rider of the horse". In verse 14 below it says, "The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean."



Take a very close look at the words **fine linen, white and clean**. It must be noted that "**the armies of heaven**" do not refer to angels. As the prophet Zechariah prophesied, these are the saints (holy ones) who come back with Christ. This event is preceded by the wedding supper of the Lamb in heaven with Christ and His bride, the church.

As proof that it will be the bride (the church) returning with Christ at the second coming, and **not angels**, the bible clarifies what the words **fine linen**, mean:

The angel says, "These are true words," which means that somehow the bride will be in heaven at a banquet, while all



hell is breaking loose on earth. After the heavenly festivities are over, that same bride (church) will then return with Christ to defeat the beast and false prophet.

Verse eight above clarifies that "fine linen" means **the righteous acts of the saints** or believers in Christ, **not angels**. Therefore, at the second coming in chapter 19:14 the armies dressed in fine linen are Christians returning with Christ after attending the wedding supper of the Lamb mentioned above in verse seven. **Once again, it is up to the reader to determine how the bride (church) made it to heaven,** thereafter attended the wedding supper of the lamb (verse 7), and at the second coming of Christ returned as armies (verse 14) to defeat the anti-Christ and the false prophet who were here on earth during the great tribulation (verse 20).



Frescoes of Sant'Ignazio in Rome painted by Fra Andrea Pozzo 1694

The third and final assault happens after the second coming of Christ has taken place in chapter 20. In the previous chapter 19, there is no mention of a resurrection taking place, or angels gathering people, this is because the false prophet, the beast and all the wicked people who took the mark of the beast during the tribulation had been killed, and the only survivors were those who accepted Christ and did not take the mark of the beast. Hence, at the second coming there is no need for angels to separate the tare (evil) from the wheat (righteous) because the remaining people on earth are all righteous. These people missed the wedding supper of the Lamb, because at this point, it has already taken place in heaven.

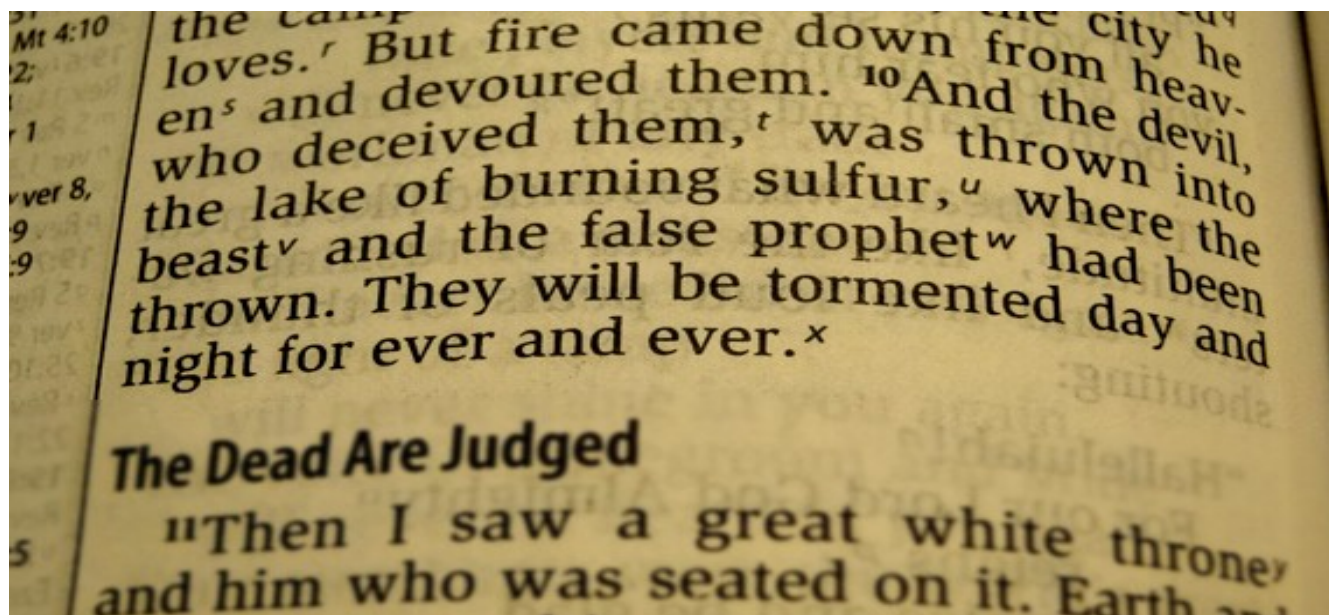
At the end of chapter 19, this is the group that stays, since they will be needed to repopulate the earth during the 1000 years. Remember, the bride that came with Christ from heaven will have a transformed body and will be like angels that cannot reproduce.

Those who are here on earth and missed the wedding supper of the Lamb, will still have their earthly bodies and will reproduce to form several other nations. As such, they will not be taken up to heaven, because someone is going to have to refill the earth with more earthlings after the wicked have been killed off in the second coming.

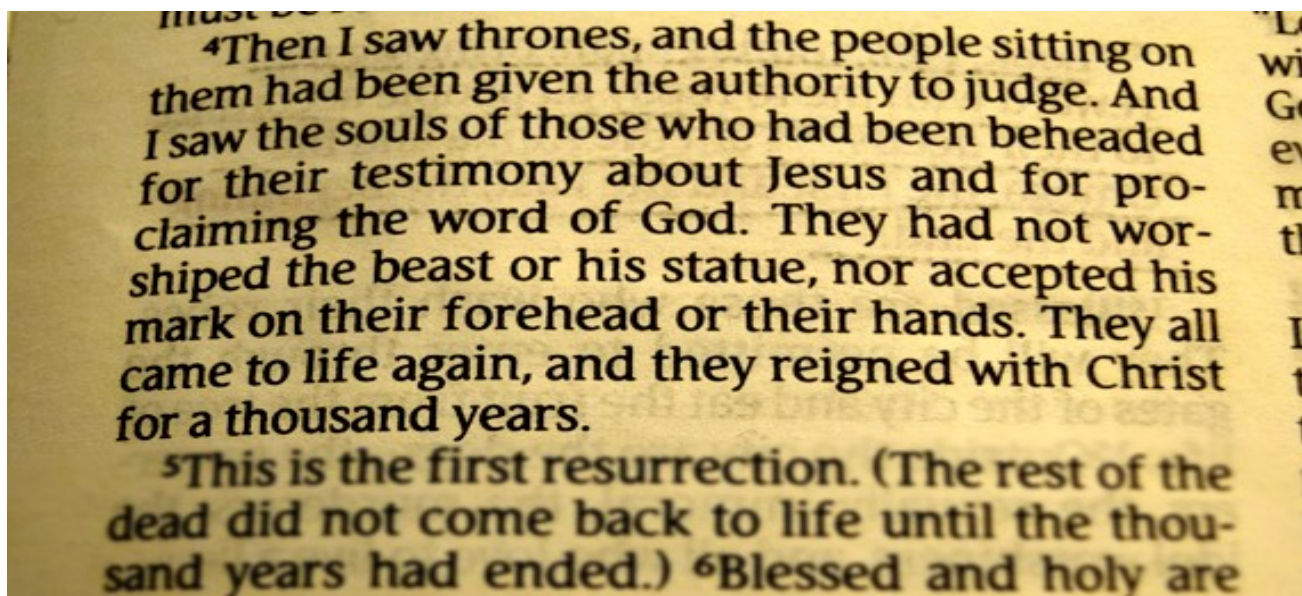
If they were to be taken up to heaven, their bodies too would be transformed like angels, and they would not be able to reproduce, therefore the entire earth would be empty with nobody to replace the population. Christ was asked about whether people would marry in heaven and in Matthew 22:30 he answered, *"At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven."* ***This means that when people go to heaven, whether is by resurrection or any other means (e.g. being snatched away like Elijah or Enoch), once they make it into heaven, their bodies become like angels and cannot marry or reproduce.**

It would therefore make no sense for those who missed the wedding supper of the Lamb to be taken into heaven, leaving the earth empty, yet as we will see, after the second coming, nations were formed. **Where did these nations come from?**

In the next twentieth chapter, after satan has been chained for 1000 years, he is let loose for a little while to deceive "**the nations**". These nations are as a result of repopulation of the earth, by those who accepted Christ during the tribulation. The third and final assault happens when satan himself is cast into the lake of burning sulfur where he joins the beast and false prophet. At this point the great white throne judgment takes place and death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire together with those who rejected Jesus Christ. We saw previously that Hades is a temporary holding place of torment for non-believers. At the end of the age, that whole pit called Hades or hell, is cast into yet **another** larger pit called the lake of fire which is called the second death, because the souls experience eternal damnation.



Some may be wondering what role the angels will play and whether they will resurrect anyone at the second coming. There is a serious problem with this logic. If there is a resurrection at the second coming, why would angels be necessary to do that since when people are resurrected they are able to travel in air at will just like angels?



This particular resurrection was the first resurrection **of its kind**. It takes place after the second coming of Christ and after the wedding supper of the Lamb. There were other resurrections before this as indicated in **Matt 27:51-54**: "*Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*"

The resurrection that is talked about in chapter 20 verse 4 happens **after** the second coming, and is for those who were beheaded, not the ones who were alive. Once they are resurrected at the end of the tribulation they rule for 1000 years with Christ.

As for angels gathering people, it is not done to resurrect or snatch them away. **Matthew 13:30** states: *"Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to my reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and then bind them in bundles and burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn."* (**KJV**)

Verse 49 then states: *"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."*

It is obvious there will be two gatherings; one for tares (unbelievers) and the other for the wheat (believers). The gathering is not a resurrection, it is a separation of the goats from the sheep. As we saw in chapter 19 verse 21, once the separation takes place and the false prophet and beast are thrown in the lake of fire, **"the rest of them (the tares) were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider of the horse."**

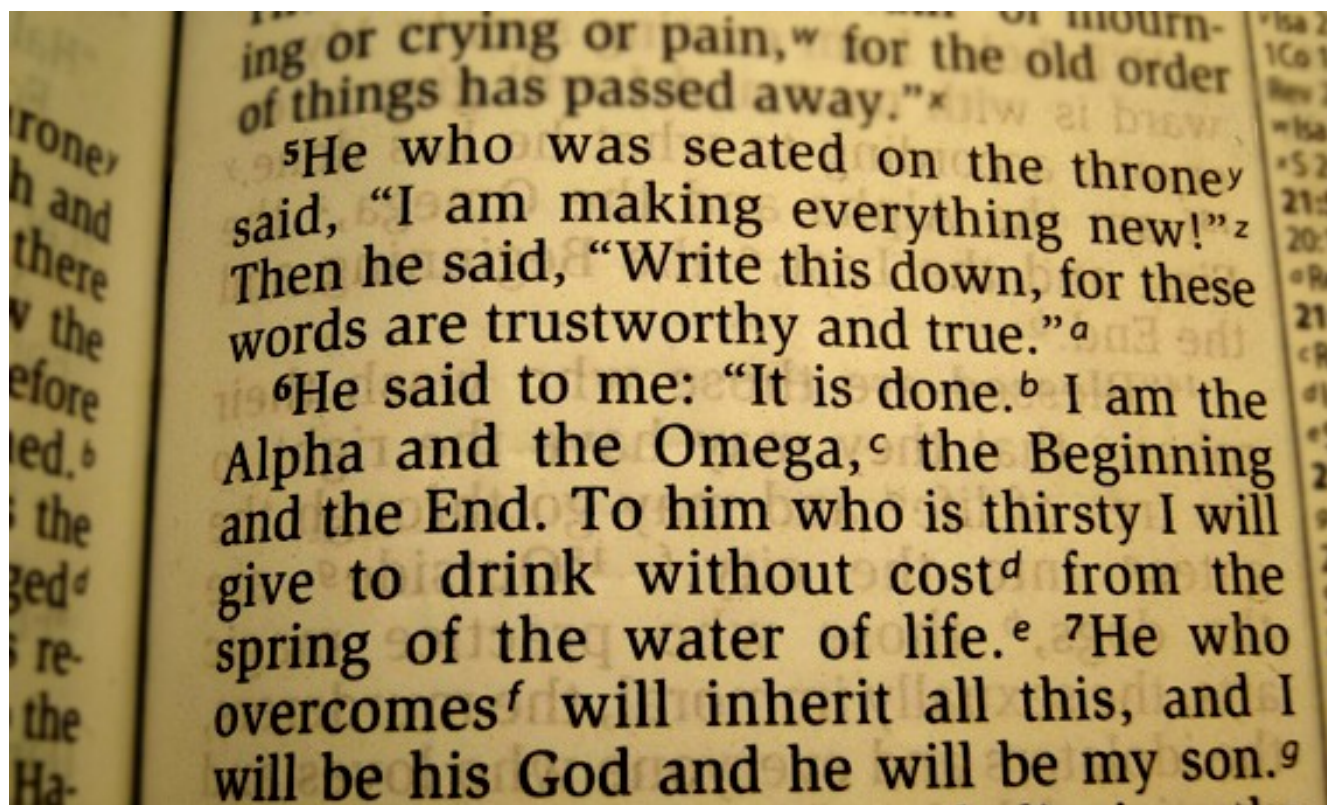
Now **Matthew 13:30** begins to make sense. *"Let them both grow together until the harvest"* means, let those who haven't accepted the mark of the beast co-exist with those who have.

"And in the time of harvest I will say to my reapers, Gather ye together first the tares," means, at the second coming those who have accepted the mark of the beast will be the first to be gathered and killed. (*Rev 19:21*)

"But gather the wheat into my barn," means, the righteous who accepted Christ during the tribulation and overcame, are the wheat. The barn is the eternal kingdom of God with everlasting life. The believers will inherit God's kingdom as His sons.

"So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. (Matt 13:49) means, this same procedure of separating the wicked from the just, the goats from the sheep, the tare from the wheat, will also play

itself out at the great white throne judgment, where those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life will be separated from those who accepted Christ. Each group will be led to its appropriate final destination.



To summarize this series we can assert that when Jesus returns to earth at the second coming, He will be returning from a wedding, with his bride (his followers). The bride will be clothed in fine linen, and will be part of the heavenly army that returns with Christ at the second coming. Both the beast and false prophet will be defeated at the second coming, which is the second assault, and will be thrown into the lake of fire. The first assault is the battle of Armageddon or Megiddo that happens earlier.

Satan will then be chained for one thousand years. Since the wicked will have been eaten by the birds in the air after being killed, the righteous will repopulate the earth for a millennium. Those whose heads were cut off during the tribulation will rise and reign with Christ. After the millennium, the sea shall give up its dead and all people, great and

small will appear before God to be judged. At this point satan will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the third assault. Those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life will follow satan into eternal damnation.

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and believes He is the Son of God who was resurrected from the dead, then repents of the sins he or she has committed, that person's name is immediately written in the Lamb's book of life. In order for a person's sins to be forgiven, that person has to also forgive other people who wronged him or her. Such an individual never goes through the great white throne judgment because when Christ died on the cross, judgment fell upon Him (Jesus), in our place. Romans 8:1 says, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

The only judgment Christians face is the judgment seat of Christ—not to judge the sins of a believer, but to reward believers for the way they lived their lives and the fruits of their lives. Those who squander their skills, gifts and abilities will receive lesser rewards than those who maximize them.

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