



The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

15

Understanding the Last Great Day

Doctrinal Statement:

Untold millions have lived and died without ever having had knowledge sufficient for salvation. The Last Great Day represents the time when they shall be resurrected and given that chance—not a second chance but a first chance, a chance they will not have had before. Only then will God’s initial plan for mankind be at an end. Thus, this last great holy day of God pictures the greatest period of salvation for mankind—the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15). The culmination of the plan of salvation is marked by the renewal of the whole creation in the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21). Death and destruction are now no more; human history is at an end. The Kingdom of God has become eternal.

What a wonderful name, Jesus Christ! “[T]here is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Many people are offended by the fact that salvation can be obtained only through Jesus Christ. Yet, this is not something the church decided upon; it is the specific teaching of Jesus Himself (John 14:6).

It was God who designated Jesus to be the Savior of the world. No one else can be His equal. God allows us great leeway on many issues, but not on how we are saved from sin and its consequences. To be saved, one *must* accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

But what about those who have never had a chance to hear the gospel or the name of Jesus? Are they lost forever because this saving name never reached them?

Obviously, those who have not heard the way of salvation and the name of Jesus Christ are without hope of salvation, are lost forever, *if there is no future opportunity for salvation*.

The awesome truth is that all mankind from all time will have an opportunity for salvation and the attainment of eternal life in the family of God.

No human being is doomed forever simply because he has never heard of Christ’s name or never really understood God’s purpose and plan. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He intends to give everyone a chance to know and understand His truth and to have the opportunity to be with Him in His glorious Kingdom (1 Timothy 2:4).

While everyone will have an opportunity for salvation, all will not receive this

opportunity at the same time.

Judgment does not always mean passing sentence. In some texts, it implies a *process*, a period of time during which a person’s mind is opened to understand God’s plan, and during which his actions are under daily scrutiny by God in the light of that understanding. God is intimately concerned with His children, and works in their lives to produce the best ultimate results.

The parable of the tares of the field shows that Christians start out as seeds and must grow until the harvest (Matthew 13:36–43). For most people, this judgment process covers a period of many years. It is only at the end of this period that God makes the decision of whether or not that person shall enter His Kingdom at the resurrection.

But judgment involves more than just making a “yes” or “no” decision, more than the simple determination of whether a person will be granted salvation; for, indeed, the overwhelming majority will receive salvation. Judgment also involves the *reward* that God will give to each person who qualifies. There are different positions and responsibilities in God’s family. As Jesus related in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:12–27), the servants who used their pounds profitably were *all* given positions of rulership, but the *level* or *degree* of their position was directly proportional to how much they had accomplished. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30) shows that God rewards each person according to what he has accomplished in relationship to what he had to start with. The servant who started with two talents and made two received the same reward as the servant who started with five and made five.

God’s plan of salvation for mankind is

pictured in His holy days.

God the Father is fair. Because He is fair, He planned for everyone who has ever lived to receive the very same opportunity for salvation many of us are receiving at this time. Just as the weekly cycle is not complete without the seventh-day Sabbath, the plan of God is incomplete without the seventh annual holy day.

In this lesson, we will learn of God's perfect justice and mercy upon all of those who have *never yet* had an opportunity for salvation. We will learn that God's great mercy extends even beyond the Millennium. In order to understand the fulfillment of God's plan, we must understand the last of God's annual holy days, symbolizing the last great judgment day!

The Final Holy Day

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that they were to do the same things He did. "If you know these things," said Jesus, "blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

In the New Testament we find Jesus setting the example for us of observing the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2,8-10).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day event, followed by an eighth day, the "great day of the feast," the last of the seven annual holy days that God ordained.

In the book of Leviticus we are told to observe the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days, and that it is a commanded assembly. On the first of the seven days no work is to be done (Leviticus 23:34-35). Carefully notice that, in verse 36, there is an *eighth day* of worship held immediately after the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. God commands the people to observe this day also, and there is no work to be done on this eighth day (Leviticus 23:36). This eighth day is a festival all on its own and is distinct and separate from the Feast of Tabernacles. It is to be observed as an annual Sabbath (verse 39).

Because this eighth day came on the heels of the Feast of Tabernacles, people who came to keep the feast remained to keep the eighth day also, and it became associated with the feast.

In the New Testament it is called the "great day of the feast." It was on this day that "Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink'" (John 7:37). There must be thirst if there is to be a desire to drink. If the condition is right, the desire will follow. This is the same truth Jesus expressed to the Samaritan woman (John 4:14). Jesus also taught that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness would be satisfied (Matthew 5:6).

Jesus was also speaking of the final resurrection in connection with the "Last Great Day." Compare John 11:23-26 with John 6:39,40,44.

Jesus used the term "living water" to indicate eternal life (John 4:10). Jesus' words, "Come unto me, and drink," alluded to the theme of many scriptures that speak about the Messiah's life providing blessings (Isaiah 12:2-3; 44:3-4; 58:11). By promising the Holy Spirit to all who believe, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, for that was something only the Messiah could do.

In the Old Testament, when God brought into existence the church in the wilderness, He established His holy days and festivals around the three seasons of the year (Exodus 23:14-17). In the "beginning of spring," "early summer," and the "beginning of autumn."

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread arrive in the beginning of spring. The Day of Pentecost occurs in early summer; then, at the beginning of autumn, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, followed immediately by the Last Great Day. All of God's holy days fall during these three annual seasons (Deuteronomy 16:16).

During Solomon's time the

Israelites were keeping the feast of the "eighth day" (1 Kings 8:66; 2 Chronicles 7:8-10).

King Solomon held a feast during the second week of the seventh month in celebration of the dedication of the new temple. Feasting and rejoicing were a part of this celebration for seven days (1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chronicles 7:9), until the end of the fourteenth day of the seventh month. During this time the Israelites observed the Day of Atonement on the tenth of the month. Then they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days. Immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles they observed the last or "eighth day" (2 Chronicles 7:9). It was a solemn assembly held on the twenty-second day of the seventh month. After this eighth day the people went home (2 Chronicles 7:10).

As time passed the Israelites became very lax in keeping God's Sabbaths and His holy days. And, true to God's warning, they were taken into captivity as punishment for their disobedience.

Later, a few of these people were allowed to return to Palestine. Under Ezra and Nehemiah this remnant of the captivity again began to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Nehemiah 8:14-18) and the "eighth day," called the "last day, that great day of the feast" in John 7:37.

Therefore, this day was kept according to the manner that was written in the book of the law, (Leviticus 23:36). Notice it is called a "solemn assembly," meaning a day of restraint or a "closing day," the final holy day.

Review

1. *We will be happy if we know and do the things Jesus did.*
2. *Jesus sets the example of observing God's holy days.*
3. *After the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles there is an eighth day, which is a holy convocation and a solemn assembly.*

4. This eighth day is called the “great day of the feast” in the New Testament.

5. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled.

6. Living water indicates eternal life.

7. The Last Great Day is the final holy day of the year.

Significance of the Last Great Day

John, after mentioning the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 19:11–16), writes about a mighty angel binding Satan and casting him into an abyss, where he will be unable to deceive the nations for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1–3).

The saints, who have been caught up to meet Christ at His return (I Thessalonians 4:13–17), will then be given charge of this earth. They will rule Planet Earth with Christ for one thousand years. This is also known as the Millennium. “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived [again] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4–6).

We now need to understand what happens to the “rest of the dead”—those who died without having received a first chance, without ever having received the knowledge of salvation (Revelation 20:5).

These are not the “dead in Christ”; they are the billions who are not Christ’s, who have never been begotten and converted, who may never have heard the gospel or the name of

Jesus.

It is important to notice that the first part of verse 5 is a parenthetical expression. Enclose “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” in parentheses so that you can easily understand this passage.

The sentence, “This is the first resurrection,” refers to the resurrection of the righteous dead in Christ just before the thousand years. “But,” John makes clear, “the rest of the dead,” those who never had a chance to understand God’s truth, would not come up in a resurrection “until the thousand years were finished.” Therefore, in time order, this resurrection after the Millennium is the *second* resurrection.

Immediately after the thousand years, Satan will be loosed from the restraining prison where he will have been kept during the Millennium. Upon release, he will continue his work of deceit by deceiving the carnal people who, at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ, were not born again into the Kingdom (Revelation 20:7–9).

Their fate is to be devoured by fire from God out of heaven (verse 9).

Previous to the Millennium, the beast and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire. Now, one thousand years later, Satan is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet had been cast earlier (verse 10).

A more correct translation of verse 10 would be to mark out the word *are* and in its place put *were cast*.

Now, Satan the devil is completely gone, unable to ever again be a threat to anyone. The resurrection of the “rest of the dead” who have never had a chance to understand God’s plan of salvation can begin without the interference of Satan.

Revelation 20:11–12 describes a coming resurrection and judgment of the “rest of the dead.” These include the billions from ages past who had never received a chance for salvation.

Verse 12 reads, “And I saw the *dead*, small and great *standing* before God; and books [Greek: *biblos*, books of the Bible] were opened. And another book was opened, which is the *Book of Life*...”

When these billions [“the rest of the dead”] are resurrected, God will open the Scriptures to their understanding. This will be their first real chance to repent, accept Christ as their Savior, and receive God’s Holy Spirit. Only then will their names be written in the *Book of Life*.

No one will escape this final *Great White Throne Judgment* (Revelation 20:11).

It must be remembered that *judgment* is not *condemnation*.

It is at the end of the millennial reign of Christ that this great, *general resurrection* occurs.

In Revelation 20:12, we see standing before God’s throne the dead, including the “rest of the dead” mentioned in Revelation 20:5, plus those who did not receive spiritual bodies during the Millennium, but died. Also included are those who died when the fire from heaven destroyed the armies assembled by Satan (Revelation 20:8–9). The “dead” are the small and great, undoubtedly meaning the unbelievers, the unsaved, and the lost of ages past, regardless of their station in life.

The obedient believers of the Old Testament and the obedient of the church age, along with the martyrs of the tribulation period, are not included because they are not “dead”; they are alive forevermore, having received new spiritual bodies in the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:52–54).

We can safely assume the wicked dead will also receive some sort of body—a body that can suffer death—in this resurrection to judgment, shame, and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29).

Even though the dead stand before God, their judgment is still committed to Jesus. The books will be

opened and they will be judged by what is recorded in the written record of their works.

Their works may include rejection of Christ and following of Satan, but all their works will be included in the records. When believers confess and repent of their sins, their sins will be blotted out. Even the sins believers are unaware of are cleansed, being forgiven (1 John 1:7,10; 2:1). However, this is not true of those whose sins have not been forgiven. Even the secret sins they thought no one knew about will be there on the books (Luke 8:17). Their sentence will be eternal death in the lake of fire.

In reading Revelation 20:13–15 again, we see emphasized that no one will be left out of the process of God’s judgment, even those who died in the sea along with death and “hell” (a grave or hole in the ground).

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15).

In contrast to the overcomers who will share the blessings of eternal life, a list is given of those who will have their part in the lake of fire, which is “the second death.”

First mentioned are the “fearful,” the cowardly, those who timidly are lacking faith. This includes those who allow themselves to be frightened by society into conforming to the world, not trusting in Christ. They are more concerned with personal safety than loyalty to Christ (Mark 8:35–36; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:12–13).

Second are the “unbelieving” who treat the gospel and the promises as something lacking credibility. This speaks of those who have never believed, those who rejected the gospel, and those who, like the dog that returns to its own vomit, have fallen back into the practice of the lusts of the flesh. Those who do such things, making such things a part of their lifestyle, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19–21).

Third are the “abominable,” those who are detestable to God and arouse His wrath. To profess a faith in God and continue to practice evil or anything idolatrous is an abomination in the sight of God.

Fourth are “murderers” who have deliberately, willfully taken human life.

Fifth are “whoremongers,” including those who practice any kind of sexual impurity or sexual immorality.

Sixth are “sorcerers” who use poisons, drugs, and magic potions.

Seventh are “idolaters” who put something else in the place of God.

Eighth are “all liars,” especially including all false prophets, false apostles, and false teachers (2 Peter 2:1).

These eight classes of people mentioned here will not enter the Kingdom of God; they will suffer the “second death” (Revelation 21:8).

Many claim that a person can be immoral, adulterous, homosexual, or practice any of the lusts of the flesh and still be a true child of God. They suppose a loving God would not send anyone to eternal death. They refuse to believe the clear scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:5–7).

Review

1. *Satan will be bound, unable to deceive the nations during the Millennium.*
2. *The saints with Christ will rule during the Millennium.*
3. *All the rest of the dead do not live till after the Millennium.*
4. *The second resurrection occurs after the Millennium.*
5. *Satan is cast into the lake of fire after the Millennium.*
6. *The rest of the dead will have their minds opened to understand the Scriptures.*
7. *The rest of the dead will be judged by the books of the Bible.*
8. *No one will be left out of God’s process of judgment.*
9. *Those whose names are not written*

in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

10. *The fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall be cast into the lake of fire.*

11. *Those who repent will be forgiven and their names will be written in the book of life.*

White Throne Judgment

After describing the final rebellion and punishment of Satan, John tells us that he saw a “great white throne.” Standing before the throne was a great multitude of resurrected dead made up of those who never participated in God’s plan or understood the message of Jesus. Many millions of infants have unknowingly awaited this second resurrection from their graves.

The Scriptures tell us that we must have knowledge of Christ to be saved. Those who have never had the knowledge of Christ and an understanding of salvation have not had a first chance.

God desires that all men be saved (John 3:16). Therefore, we see that out of judgment comes salvation, and that over a process of time (Matthew 25:31–32). Satan will not be around at this time to deceive.

Jesus tells us that Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom also had not received the witness of the gospel (Matthew 11:21–27). But a time of judgment was coming when they would be given the opportunity to understand what He had been preaching to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

Besides these people mentioned, the people of Nineveh and the Queen of the South, Sheba, would hear His good news message (Matthew 12:41–42).

The people of Palestine together with the people and nations of all past ages will come up in a resurrection to mortal life and will be given their first opportunity to understand the gospel (Ezekiel 37:1–10).

These resurrected billions will be

raised in human bodies that breathe air and are made of flesh and bone (Ezekiel 37:5–9).

These resurrected people are promised that they will know the Lord and that He is the one that will put His Spirit within them. He will also put them in their own land and they shall know it is the Lord God who did this for them (Ezekiel 37:13–14). This is the same outpouring of the Spirit that Jesus spoke about on the Last Great Day of the feast (John 7:37–39).

The apostle Paul explained to the Ephesians that until they were called to salvation they were without hope of eternal life. But once they received the Holy Spirit the door to the understanding of the Scriptures was opened to them. The Holy Spirit is the “key” that opens the door to understanding (Ephesians 2:11–12; 3:4–6).

This great multitude sinned because of ignorance of God’s Word, and He is willing to forgive. However, once spiritual understanding is received, all people are then held accountable and must repent for sinning against God (Acts 17:30).

Finally, these billions will, after receiving God’s Spirit, be able to understand God’s truth during this last great judgment period and successfully participate in God’s marvelous plan.

In a prophetic vision, Daniel saw books that were opened. These books are the books of the Bible. This Greek word *biblia* is used in Daniel 7:10 (LXX) and Revelation 20:12. This is the exact word from which we derive our English word “Bible.”

Therefore, the “books” that are opened are the books of the Bible. The Bible is going to be opened to the understanding of these billions of people who have never heard the name of Christ or the message of salvation.

We therefore know assuredly that God planned even before the foundation of the world for all people to have an opportunity for salvation regardless of their personal circum-

stances or position in life (John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus said, “So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16). The people who were born to physical life first, even those before Christ’s First Coming, will be called last in the last great judgment.

We who were born later, after the death and resurrection of Christ, are being given our opportunity as God’s *firstfruits* (James 1:18). Even people during the Millennium will be called to have a part in God’s plan before the vast majority of unsaved mankind who must yet be resurrected from their graves.

Review

1. *John saw a great white throne before which a great multitude stood.*
2. *Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom will be a part of this multitude.*
3. *These billions of people that make up the multitude will be given physical bodies.*
4. *After receiving God’s Spirit, the multitude will be able to understand God’s truth.*
5. *The multitude will be able to accept or reject God’s plan of salvation.*
6. *The books of the Bible will be opened to them and they will understand.*
7. *The people who were born first to physical life will be called last.*
8. *The people who were born to physical life last will be called first.*
9. *Those who are in God’s church today are the firstfruits and are being judged now.*

Jesus and the Saints Judge

The Scriptures make it clear that Jesus Christ will be the Chief Judge in the last great judgment (Revelation 20:11; Daniel 7:9; compared with Psalms 9:7), and the saints will judge with Him (1 Corinthians 6:2).

Peter confirms that Jesus is the Judge of both the living and the dead (Acts 10:40–42). Jesus Himself con-

firmed this fact (John 5:22).

Daniel saw God judging millions of people as they stood before Him (Daniel 7:10).

The first principle of judgment is God’s wrath against the stored up unrepented of and unforgiven sin. The second principle of judgment is “according to deeds.” Eternal life is not obtained by being patient in well doing, but by faith. Salvation then is by faith and judgment is according to works.

Many find it difficult to reconcile a judgment according to works with justification by faith. But as human society provides punishment for the evildoer and rewards for the one who does good, so it is in God’s society. Grace through faith alone saves, but there is a reward in proportion to work. Actually, no man can “work good” in the absolute sense. Jesus asked, “Why do you call Me good?” and explained, “No one is good but One, that is, God” (Luke 18:19).

A third principle is to understand that “there is no partiality with God.” God shows no partiality, human preferences, or favoritism (Revelation 20:12; Daniel 7:10 in the light of Romans 2:6–11; Ecclesiastes 12:13–14; see also 2 Corinthians 5:10).

So, these people are judged by the Word of God, the Bible, in accordance with what they will do after they are resurrected to material, mortal life.

This is the same sort of judgment period the called-out ones, the *ecclesia*, experience today (1 Peter 4:17–18).

After these resurrected ones receive God’s Spirit they will be considered a part of God’s household (Romans 8:14).

The resurrection of these people occurs after the Millennium is over. This is called the second resurrection. Their names will be written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12), and they will be given the Holy Spirit, the seal of God, in their minds. They must act upon the understanding God

has given them and choose to follow in the footsteps of Christ, walking in righteousness, or the way of evil, which is the breaking of God's law.

Those who refuse to live God's way will perish in the lake of fire. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:31–32).

Review

1. *Jesus Christ will be the Chief Judge in the last great judgment.*
2. *Jesus is the Judge of the living and the dead.*
3. *God's wrath is against unrepented sin and unforgiven sin.*
4. *Judgment is according to deeds.*
5. *Eternal life is obtained by faith in Christ Jesus.*
6. *Judgment is according to works.*
7. *There is no respect of persons with God.*
8. *Those who refuse to live God's way will perish in the lake of fire.*
9. *God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would have them come to repentance.*

Final Judgment

Isaiah envisioned for us the final days of the judging of the resurrected billions of people at the end of the Millennium

During much of the world's past history, half of the babies born died within the first year after birth. But, during the judgment period after the Millennium, no babies will die and old people will not die prematurely.

The question comes to mind, How long will they live while being judged?

Only one passage in the prophets reveals the answer: Isaiah 65:17–25. We would expect that period to be like the one thousand years because it is under the government of God, administered by Christ. But this millennial-like prophecy is an immediate prelude to the creation of "new heavens and a new earth" (verse 17).

Verse 20 tells us: "No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled

his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed."

From this scripture we come to understand that though many infants will begin life anew at that time, there will be no more infants born from that time on. Apparently, there will be marriage unions, families, and love, but no more human reproduction. The aged will begin life anew at that time, but they, too, will fulfill their new span of life.

There will be two classes at the conclusion. The "child" and the "sinner." The last part of verse 20 says, "But the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed." They shall be burned up as this old earth melts with "fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10). They shall be ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous (Malachi 4:3).

But who are those spoken of in the expression "the child shall die one hundred years old"? The "child" is in contrast to the "sinner."

Notice what Jesus said: "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Luke 18:17).

The prophecy in Isaiah refers to those who become "as a little child," expressing childlike humility. The "child" is one who is righteous.

How, then do we understand the expression "the child shall die"?

Those who are righteous will no longer have to live in the flesh. They will be given immortality, becoming spirit beings, the eternal sons of God, just as the righteous who are alive when Christ returns at His Second Coming: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

We must understand that at the

return of Christ the living righteous will not sleep in death, yet they shall die! It is "appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). We shall be changed in a *moment!*

The change from mortal to immortal is a death of the cells of the natural body, but it will happen "in a moment," as Paul explained, so one will not even be aware of a loss of consciousness!

We see described in Isaiah 65:20 this kind of momentary death, when one is changed to immortality. This is not the second death, which the sinner who is accursed suffers. So the second resurrection will take place and be finished in one hundred years!

For someone to die at one hundred years of age will be like a baby dying today. Habitual sinners will still be present, but by the time they reach a century in age they will be declared "cursed" (Isaiah 65:20).

These resurrected multitudes are counted among God's elect, are made participants in His plan, and are given candidacy for the Kingdom of God. They will be given one hundred years to show, by their works, their willingness to submit to God's will.

God will be patient, but by the time they reach the age of one hundred they will be declared "cursed." This means death. "Those He declares 'cursed' will be cut off" (Psalms 37:22). And Death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:14).

Review

1. *The resurrected billions will have one hundred years of judgment while living a physical life.*
2. *They must show by their works their willingness to follow Christ.*
3. *By the time they reach one hundred years old they will be declared cursed if they have refused to repent and accept God's provisions for salvation.*
4. *Those declared cursed will be cut off.*
5. *Death and Hades will be cast into*

the lake of fire. This is the second death.

6. *Each person who becomes as a little child, childlike in humility, will be changed into an immortal spiritual being, a son of God.*

Earth Baptized in Fire

Only those who receive eternal life and new spiritual bodies will escape the coming conflagration by fire of the heavens and earth, (Malachi 4:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10,12; Revelation 20:14-15).

The apostle Peter, in his second epistle, reminded his readers to pay attention to the holy prophets and the commandments of all the apostles of the Lord our Savior, warning also of the scoffers that would come.

He compared the covering of the earth by water in which all humanity perished, except for Noah and his family, to the final world-consuming lake of fire (2 Peter 3:1-12).

By God's command, the ungodly perished, and only the righteous were saved alive (Genesis 6:12-13,17-18).

In Peter's message, "beloved" (dearly loved) appears six times. He warned believers not to forget "*this one thing*," that God is very long-suffering. Quoting from Psalms 90:4, he showed how a thousand years to the Eternal God is not a very long time; therefore, we must remain patient (2 Peter 3:9).

Peter is dealing here with the final scene of the "Day of the Lord," when the heavens shall pass away and the earth be burned up. "Elements" is *stochieia* (basic parts, components.) Although the atomic structure of chemical elements was not understood in Peter's day, his language may be understood in the light of these elements of which all matter is constituted. The picture portrayed is one of total destruction of the heavens and earth.

John the Baptist also spoke of a baptism of fire, meaning that just as the world before Noah was "baptized," being submerged in water, so

also the heavens and earth would be cleansed by fire (Matthew 3:11-12).

Thus John warned the people of his day of what would happen to those who reject Jesus Christ, the Passover Lamb.

With this final baptism of the earth in a lake of fire, its defilement by sinful mankind for thousands of years will be cleansed, purged, and changed (Psalms 102:25-28; Isaiah 51:6; Hebrews 1:10-12).

Review

1. *Only those who receive eternal life and spiritual bodies will escape the coming conflagration by fire.*
2. *Peter compared the flood of Noah's time to the final world-consuming lake of fire.*
3. *Remember this one thing, that God is very long-suffering, "patient."*
4. *A day to the Eternal God is like a thousand years to us.*
5. *Just as the earth was cleansed by water, so it shall in the end be cleansed by fire.*

New Heaven and Earth

Now that all God's children are born into His spiritual family, the former troubles will be hidden from God's eyes, because He will create new heavens and a new earth. All the former things will be erased from memory, meaning they will never come to mind (Isaiah 65:17-19).

Because of the purifying of the earth by immersion in the lake of fire, as a type of baptism, the cycle of creation is complete. New heavens and a new earth will appear.

After the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, John sees in vision a new heaven and earth, the first heaven and earth having disappeared (Revelation 21:1,5 compared with 2 Peter 3:13).

Jesus also said the present heaven and earth will pass away (Mark 13:31). This will be a completely different earth, not even the oceans remaining.

John continues on to say he saw the

New Jerusalem, the Holy City descending to earth. This city, according to the apostle Paul, exists in heaven now (Galatians 4:26). It is the city Abraham and all God's people look for, and God Himself is its Architect and Builder (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:10,13,16). It is a prepared place for a prepared people.

New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven to earth and will be the capital of the universe (Revelation 21:2; Isaiah 52:1).

Before the cleansing of the earth in a fiery baptism, God the Father would not come to earth because it was polluted by the sins of mankind. Once it is purified He will come to tabernacle (dwell) with His children (Revelation 21:3).

The New Heaven and New Earth will become the Headquarters of God, and God will be with His people forever (compare Leviticus 26:11-12; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 14:9; Hebrews 8:2; 9:11).

Those who obey the commandments of God and love God, neighbors, and Jesus who has saved them, have the right to enter the city, the New Jerusalem, freely entering through its gates (Revelation 22:14; John 14:15,21; 15:9-14; 1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3). The city is immense in size, approximately fifteen hundred miles in breadth, width, and height, depending on whether using the English furlong of 220 yards or Greek furlong of 607 feet.

There will be rivers of living waters available in the New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 22:1-2).

This time is pictured by the Last Great Day of the fall festival, the final day in God's plan for man's ultimate spiritual re-creation. Luke, writing in the book of Acts, describes this as the "times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). All reborn Christians will receive spiritual refreshment from God at this time (Acts 3:19).

Review

1. *Once all of God's children are born*

into His spiritual family, the former things will not come to mind.

2. *New heavens and a new earth will appear; not even the oceans remain.*

3. *New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven to earth.*

4. *Once the earth is purified by fire, God the Father will come and tabernacle (dwell) with us.*

5. *There will be rivers of living waters available in the New Heaven and New Earth.*

6. *The Last Great Day pictures the final day in God's plan for man's ultimate spiritual recreation.*

7. *Luke describes this time as the restoration of all things.*

Judgment Revisited

According to God's plan, He has divided *judgment* into three great periods of time.

The *first* great period of judgment has its start at the creation of man and continues until Christ's Second Coming. During this period, God has chosen not to call the majority of people, but only a minority, the *elect* (Romans 8:28).

The *elected ones* have had their minds opened to understand God's plan, "the truth," and have been given God's Holy Spirit through Christ.

This elect group composes the *Church* or *House of God* spoken of by Peter, and their judgment period is now. "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). The elect have not been called now because of any righteousness or goodness on their part, but by virtue of God's mercy (Romans 9:15–16). Great responsibility has been placed upon the elect of God because "everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

With the calling to salvation comes great responsibility—the responsibility of seeing to the preaching of the gospel to the world as a witness

(Matthew 24:14; 28:19–20) and of yielding to God in preparing ourselves for even more responsible positions in God's millennial Kingdom (Revelation 5:10).

All those whom God has called, from Adam's time to the present, who accepted the responsibility of supporting the work of God and doing His work faithfully will qualify for God's Kingdom and will come up in the first resurrection at Christ's return. Therefore, the end of this first judgment period takes place at the first resurrection (Revelation 20:5–6).

The *second great judgment* period takes place during the Millennium, the time when the human beings who live on into the new age (from the present age) and those subsequently born as their offspring shall have their opportunity for salvation.

During this thousand years Christ and the saints shall reestablish God's government on earth (Mica 4:1–4), society being reconstructed to conform to God's holy laws. God will pour out His Spirit upon all humanity during this time; their minds will be opened to the gospel, and they will receive their chance for salvation.

The *third judgment* period takes place at the end of the Millennium and is called the *Great White Throne Judgment*. This judgment period is the largest in number because it includes the innumerable multitudes of all humanity who have lived and died in ignorance of God's way.

This spectacular event exemplifies the time when all who have ever lived and died without having had a chance for salvation, having never heard about Jesus Christ and God's plan or never having had their eyes opened to truly understand the gospel, will be resurrected from the dead to physical life (Revelation 20:11). At this time their minds will be opened to a full understanding of God's laws, His truth, and the gospel of Christ Jesus

(Ezekiel 37:12–14).

There will be those who will adamantly refuse God's mercy, rejecting His truth and Jesus Christ, not repenting of their sins. These individuals commit the unpardonable sin and will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

We witness God's great fairness and love for all of mankind through these three judgment periods. His plan of salvation gives ample opportunity for all people to live a full physical life under His laws, and then to qualify to enter His Kingdom, gaining eternal life as full members of His divine family.

Review

1. *The elect are made up of those God calls, from the time of Adam until Christ returns.*

2. *The elect experience judgment from the time they are called.*

3. *These elect make up the House of God, the Church.*

4. *The elect of God were not called because of their righteousness, but because of God's mercy.*

5. *With the calling to salvation comes much responsibility.*

6. *Unto whom much is given, much will be expected.*

7. *The end of this first judgment period comes at the first resurrection.*

8. *The second great judgment period takes place during the Millennium.*

9. *God will pour out of His Spirit upon all humanity during the Millennium and they will receive their opportunity for salvation.*

10. *The third great judgment period takes place at the end of the Millennium and is called the Great White Throne Judgment.*

11. *All who have ever lived without ever receiving a chance for salvation will have their opportunity for salvation at this time.*

15

Understanding the Last Great Day

Test Yourself

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Check your answers with the answers found at the end of the test. This is the *last lesson* of the series, but we will continue offering free booklets and articles as well as taped messages on various biblical subjects—so watch for monthly offers by making sure your name remains on our mailing list.

HOME BIBLE Study Course

True or False Questions

1. Jesus never said happiness comes by obeying Him.
2. We must follow Jesus example unless we see a better way.
3. The Feast of Tabernacles is over after seven days.
4. The eighth day is called “that great day of the feast.”
5. The Last Great Day is not a solemn day at all.
6. If you hunger and thirst for righteousness you will never be filled.
7. The expression “living water” indicates eternal life.
8. The final holy day of the year is the Last Great Day.
9. During the Millennium, Satan will wreak havoc on earth.
10. During the Millennium, the saint will reign with Christ.
11. The rest of the dead will never be heard from again.
12. The second resurrection occurs during the Millennium.
13. Satan is cast into the lake of fire after the Millennium.
14. The rest of the dead will have their minds opened to the Scriptures.
15. The dead will be judged by a secret book of God.
16. Only the wicked will be judged.
17. Those whose names are not written in the book of life will be just fine.
18. The repenters will have their name written in the book of life.
19. John assumed there would be a great multitude at the white throne.
20. God will never forgive anyone of the city of Sodom.
21. The people that make up the multitude will be given bodies like vapor.
22. Once they receive God’s Spirit, the multitude will understand.
23. The multitude will be allowed to make a decision for or against salvation.
24. All the books of the Bible will be opened for just the righteous.
25. The people in God’s church today are the firstfruits, and they are being judged.

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| 26. The people who were born first on earth will be called last. | 34. The elect will be called first. |
| 27. The saints will be the chief judges. | 35. God calls the elect because of their personal righteousness. |
| 28. Jesus is the Judge of the living and the dead. | 36. To whom much is given, much is expected. |
| 29. God's wrath is against unrepented and unforgiven sin. | 37. Being called to salvation brings great responsibility. |
| 30. Judgment is according to deeds. | 38. The end of the first judgment period comes at the first resurrection. |
| 31. God would never cleanse the whole earth by fire. | 39. God will withhold His Spirit during the Millennium. |
| 32. God the Father will come and dwell with men. | 40. The third great judgment period takes place at the end of the Millennium. |
| 33. The elect are judged from the time they are called. | |

Congratulations! You have completed the 15-lesson *Home Bible Study Course*. We encourage you to continue your study through daily Bible reading, by taking advantage of our free literature and tape offers, and by attending Sabbath and festival services when possible. For information on the Church of God International congregation nearest you, write to The Church of God International, P.O. Box 2525, Tyler, TX 75710, or call the home office at (903) 939-2929.

Answers to True or False Questions: Score Yourself: Miss 0-3 = Excellent; Miss 4-6 = Good; Miss 7-9 = Fair

Answers: 1. False; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. False; 6. False; 7. True; 8. True; 9. False; 10. True; 11. False; 12. False; 13. True; 14. True; 15. False; 16. False; 17. False; 18. True; 19. False; 20. False; 21. False; 22. True; 23. True; 24. False; 25. True; 26. True; 27. False; 28. True; 29. True; 30. True; 31. False; 32. True; 33. True; 34. True; 35. False; 36. True; 37. True; 38. True; 39. False; 40. True