**Revelation 20:11-15**

I. The Passage

-A great white throne (v. 11)

This has been the central image of the book (see especially chapter 4)

-Earth and heaven fled from his presence (v. 11)

-The utter holiness, power, splendor, and majesty of the one on the throne

-This makes way for a new earth and heaven (21:1)

-the dead standing before the throne (v. 12)

-Everyone is there

-both great and small (v. 12)

-whatever places hold the dead (sea, death, hades) give up their dead

-The books are opened (v. 12)

-See Daniel 7:9-10

-Whether there are actual books, the idea is that God takes note of everything, nothing that happens that is forgotten, it’s brought to that final day and an assessment of their lives is made

-The book of life (v. 12)

-See Daniel 12:1

-Again whether there is an actual book or not, the idea is that God knows who are his, counts each one, keeps them safe

-People judged based on how they lived their lives (v. 12, 13)

-The lake of fire (v. 13-14

= the second death

-the first death is the death we die in this life. It is temporary, but the second death is eternal

-Various realities/people thrown into the lake of fire

v. 10: devil, beast, false prophet

v. 14: death and hades

v. 15: All those not found written in book of life

II. Processing Hell/the Lake of Fire

A. There is a diversity of images describing hell in Scripture

-Fire, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, separation from God, destruction/perishing

B. There is a diversity of views on exactly what hell is

1. Some focus on the active process of judgment, while some focus on the passive process of God finally leaving people completely to their own devices (“Hell is the trajectory of a soul, living a self-absorbed, self-centered life, going on and on forever.” –Tim Keller)

2. Some focus on the more conscious images of pain and suffering, while some focus on the perishing/destruction images

3. We should allow for some diversity/openness in our views of what hell is precisely like. We just don’t know fully, and Scripture only gives us images.

C. What we should agree on

1. Hell is real, bad, and permanent/final/irreversible/eternal

2. Every New Testament author explicitly teaches the final judgment of the wicked

D. How do we make sense of something as terrible as hell/final judgment

1. God is always just, fair, and good in what he does (Revelation 16:5-7)

a. Hell can never and will never contradict the goodness and justice of God

b. “No one will ever be in hell who shouldn’t be there, and no one in hell will be able to give a valid reason why they shouldn’t be there.” –John Piper

c. God does all things well: both mercy and justice

d. Analogy of life and judgment

1) NOT that we are going through try outs and God decide who makes the team and who doesn’t

2) INSTEAD like we are all in a house lighting fire to the house unaware of the problem, and God is like this firefighter who calls out to all to get out of the house and actually breaks into the house and saves some from the fire of their own making

2. God is so much bigger and better than we are and his perspective is the right one (see Isaiah 55:8-9 and Isaiah 64:8)

a. We have to have the humility to let God be God

b. Our culture values a radical individualism and relativism that thinks the self and it’s sentiments should determine what is real and good and right. But Biblically God and his Word determine what is good and right, and we need to work to conform ourselves to Him rather than vice versa

III. Implications for us today

A. How can we prepare ourselves for that day?

1. A call to faithfulness

-Work out your salvation with fear and trembling

-Live to hear those words, “well done good and faithful servant

2. A call to faith

-Put your faith in Jesus and what he did for you on the cross because that is the only thing that you will be able to point to on that final day

B. How can we prepare those around us for that day?

1. A call to evangelism

2. A call to prayer on other’s behalf

Penn Jillette: "I don't respect people who don't proselytize. If you believe that there is a Heaven and a Hell, and people could be going to Hell ... and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward, ... how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize . . . to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt that a truck was coming at you and you didn't believe it . . . there's a certain point where I tackle you, and this issue is more important than that."

**Discussion Questions**

1. As we walked through this passage on the final judgment, was there anything that was new to you or that deepened your understanding of what that day will be like?

2. Comments were made on Sunday regarding how to come to terms with the challenges posed by the doctrine of hell (see point II.D above). How did those comments strike you? How have you made sense of that doctrine in your own thinking?

3. Consider the question posed on Sunday: What would it look like to live each day of your life with that final day in mind? What things would become more important to you and what things would become less important to you? And is there anything specific you want to change about how you’re living?