

- Sixth vision

<sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne, and the One who was sitting on it. The earth and the sky ran away from his presence, and there was found no place for them. This is now the sixth vision within Revelation 19:11 to 21:8. It is a vision of the time of final judgement.

### 1. Everyone is present at this judgement

- Martyr-church also present

1. **Everyone is present at this judgement.** The white throne speaks of God's purity and royal power. It is a time for justice to be done. <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead people, the great and the small, standing before the throne. The martyr-church of Revelation 20:4–6 has already been given resurrection-reward but they are present also to have their reward confirmed and publicized.

### 2. It is a day when everything that has ever happened is revealed

- The book contains a list of those saved and listed for reward

2. **It is a day when everything that has ever happened is revealed.** Then books were opened, and another book was also opened which is the book of life. The books are the records. John never knew anything about films or TV. If he had, he might have said a 'film' is made of our entire lives. The book of life is the list of those saved-**and**-listed-for-heavenly-reward. All the saved are in this book except those whose works are 'wood, grass or straw'<sup>11</sup> – for they have nothing destined for reward and their names get removed from the reward-list. An account is found of everything that has ever been done by anyone.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:12

### 3. Everyone is evaluated by what they did

- Even those lost at sea will be brought back for judgement

3. **Everyone is evaluated by what they did.** And the dead people were judged by the things which were written in the books, according to their works. No one is able to escape. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead people that were in it. And death and Hades gave up the dead people that were in them. And they were all judged, every person according to their works. Even people who had died in circumstances where their bodies were lost at sea will be brought back to give an account of what they did during their lives.

### 4. Death is abolished

4. **Death is abolished.** <sup>14</sup>Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. From this point on no one will go through the 'first' death. The place of the dead – Hades – no longer need exist because everyone is brought out of it.

### 5. The lake of fire is now to do its work

- The second death is the next-world's phase of punishment – removal from God's presence

5. **The lake of fire is now to do its work.** It has been in existence already but before it has been empty (although in a previous **vision** it destroyed 'Babylon'). It was prepared for the devil and his angels. It is a place of punishment and final extermination. Death itself is now abolished. *This is the second death.* The first death is 'the wages of sin' in **this** world, and involves removal from this world. The second death is the next-world's phase of punishment and involves eventual removal from the presence of God altogether. The lake of fire is the holy fire of God which exterminates all wickedness and evil.

**6. All who are not to be rewarded are thrown into the lake of fire**

- ‘Superstructure’ – godliness, ministry and maturity
- Shabby materials destroyed by the fire of God’s holiness
- Loss of reward – temporary shame
- Some Christians will be saved through judgement

**Conclusion – A vision of the day when sin is evaluated for what it is and finally disgraced and destroyed out of God’s universe**

**6. All who are not to be rewarded are thrown into the lake of fire.** One might ask: are any Christians taken there? Revelation 2:11 has spoken of the possibility of some Christians being ‘hurt by’ the second death. There are places in the Bible where it is suggested that even a Christian may be saved ‘through’ fire. In the gospels **disciples** are warned against hellfire. The ‘superstructure’ of the church consists of the life of godliness, the life of ministry and achievement for God, the life of progressing towards all-round maturity<sup>□1</sup>. It is possible for the ‘superstructure’ of the Christian life to contain poor and shabby materials, wood, hay, straw. The fire of God’s holiness, the fire of God’s extermination of rubbish, will touch such rubbish. God’s holy fire will not be judging our saving faith; it will be judging our **works** of faith. Many Christians will receive a reward on that day. But some Christians will suffer loss in the judgement day. Paul says: ‘If any person’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but the person himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.’ Loss of reward will involve at least temporary shame. Some people will shrink in shame at Jesus’ coming<sup>□2</sup>. There is such a thing as loss of reward for the person who is truly saved<sup>□3</sup>. *This is the second death, the lake of fire.* <sup>15</sup>*And if any person was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* John does not go into details and he is not writing a book to encourage backslidden Christians! One might want to ask: are any Christians taken there? All Christians are eventually secure. No Christian will go to eternal hell. But some will be touched by the anger of God. Yet they will be saved ‘through fire’. They will not (like the martyrs of 20:4–6) be rescued from judgement altogether, but they will be saved **through** it.

John’s main point is not to discuss who does and does not go through the lake of fire, or who is finally destroyed by it. It is to give us a vision of the day when sin is evaluated for what it is and finally disgraced and destroyed out of God’s universe. The old world disappears altogether. The earth and the sky ran away from his presence, and there was found no place for them<sup>□1</sup>. Of course John has not yet finished. There is another vision yet to come in this section: the marriage supper of the Lamb!<sup>□2</sup> The abolition of evil is God’s way of getting ready for the day of great celebration.

□1 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

□2 1 John 2:28  
□3 see 2 John 8

□1 20:11  
□2 21:1-8



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