



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Revelation 20:7-15

Summer 2026

"The Last Battle"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning to all of you. It's good to see so many of you back from, 'the four corners of the earth', where you have been vacationing. It's nice to have everybody coming back, and I hope you had a good 4th. We have a lot to be thankful for in this nation for God has blessed us, and we should always remember His grace is the reason why we flourish.

We are coming to the close of our study in the Book of Revelation. We are in chapter 20, and we're going to finish it up with verses 7 through 11. And then two more chapters, which we'll do in about, I think, three lessons. (I'm not sure about that yet.)

This morning, it's chapter 20, verse 7, and following...and the hymn we just sang, *A Mighty Fortress*, is appropriate for this particular text;

⁷When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20: 7-15

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and our time of study in it together.
Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness to us, and we are reminded of that from our text. We're reminded of that which we have been delivered from by Your grace and through the work of Christ; we, who by Your grace, 'have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' (*Rev 7:14*). It's all a work of Your grace, the forgiveness of sins and the righteousness that we possess, the righteousness imputed to us at the moment of faith, and we have escaped what is a terrible end as we have read in our text.

LORD, may we see the sobriety of this passage and take that in, but in so doing may we rejoice in what You've done for us—by Your grace. So we praise You for that, Father.

We ask You to bless us as we study this text together—give us insight, help us to understand it clearly. So we look to You; You are our teacher, the Spirit of God within us is our teacher. May He open up our hearts to understand the things that we'll study.

So we pray You'll bless us spiritually, but LORD bless us materially as well. We pray for those that are sick, who are not here for various reasons. We pray that You would give healing and encouragement. Father, for those who are away, we pray that You give them safety in returning.

And now we pray that You would bless us as we continue our time together—our time of worship and a time of study. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) The last battle fought in the Napoleonic Wars was the most famous, the Battle of Waterloo. Napoleon had already been defeated—he lost his empire and was imprisoned on Elba, a beautiful island off the coast of Tuscany. It was a comfortable exile; he was given freedom of movement, and he was even made 'King of Elba'.

But, 'the Emperor of Europe' couldn't settle for being king of an island. He soon escaped, returned to France, gathered an army of loyal soldiers, and met Wellington on the plains of Waterloo outside Brussels—where he was finally and completely defeated.

He spent his last days a prisoner on Saint Helena in the Atlantic. He called it, 'A small island where there was no escape'...and all the result of his lust for power and glory. He could not change that...but no one can.

Jeremiah, (13:23), said as much when he asked the rhetorical question, 'Can a leopard change its spots?' 'No', so he said, 'Those who are accustomed to doing evil cannot change either.'

That is inability—spiritual inability. It wasn't a popular idea in Jeremiah's day, nor in ours. But if our passage, Revelation 20:7 through 15 proves anything, it is that; 'Neither man nor angel can change.' Apart from God's grace, man will rush headlong to utter defeat and eternal ruin. Apart from God's grace, man will rush to that terrible end that we read about.

Well, we see that from the beginning of our passage. A lot has happened, Christ has returned, defeated Antichrist, and thrown him and his false prophet into the lake of fire. The devil, the old serpent, Satan, will be bound with a chain, thrown into the abyss, locked up—and Christ will reign on the Earth a thousand years. It will be paradise regained, 'a golden age'.

But during that time, the devil will not be idle. Like Napoleon on Elba, he will spend his time plotting a return. The good life didn't change the emperor, and a hard time won't reform the Serpent. Can a leopard change its spots?

Verse 7, "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison...", (and as soon as he is released, he will begin to carry out his plan). In verse 8, John wrote that he "...will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war..." —the last battle.

Gog and Magog are names in the Old Testament. In Ezekiel 38, verse 2, Magog is the land north of Israel from which Gog comes. Gog is a person—a prince. But in later rabbinic writings, Gog and Magog are heathen nations who march against the Messiah. That's what they represent here, 'the faithless on the earth'. Satan will gather them for war to carry out the plan that he spent a millennium in jail plotting and brooding over.

But you wonder, 'How can that be?' How can Satan, who is an intelligent being, think he could defeat the omnipotent God...especially since he was defeated at the cross and he was defeated at the second coming, and then he was thrown into the abyss?

Well, I think the simple answer is 'He doesn't believe the Bible'. He knows it, but like so many brilliant people who know the Bible and don't believe it, he doesn't believe it. I think that's a simple answer. And perhaps Paul gives us some more insight on this in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 13, where he says of "evil men" in the last days, 'They will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.'

Deceivers begin to believe their own lie. That's the penalty...God 'gives them over' to their own deception. Sin distorts perception; people think sin is worth it; people think they can get away with their sin...and Satan will think he can actually defeat God Almighty. He is so blinded by pride and hate, and his desire for glory, for worship, and power, that he will rush to his own destruction...and drag multitudes down with him—because he will “deceive the nations”. John wrote, "...the number of them is like the sand of the seashore." (*vs8b*). And they will go up to make war on God and His people.

That is amazing and instructive. The world will have been reborn. Jesus called the kingdom “the regeneration”. (*Mat 19:28*). Mountains will have shifted, Jerusalem will be elevated, the environment tame to all nature, and the cities of the world are glorious. Mankind will have enjoyed a thousand years of peace and prosperity—and then rebels!

That tells us something about the Millennial Kingdom. It will have a large population. The righteous on earth, when Christ returns and who enter the kingdom will have children...but not all of those in the succeeding generations will be righteous. ‘The regeneration’, the new birth of parents, doesn't guarantee the regeneration of their children—it never does. Only when they respond with personal faith in Christ will they have eternal life. So we're responsible to give them the truth so that they may believe.

Even then, not all believe. We can sow spiritual seed, but we cannot make it germinate—and multitudes in the kingdom will be unbelieving and, therefore, easy prey for the tricks of the evil one—the devil's deception.

It is history repeating itself. What happened at the beginning of human history, when Adam sinned in paradise, will happen at the end of history when mankind rebels for the last time. It tells us a lot about human nature and suggests one reason for the Millennium: It vindicates the righteousness of God and proves the justice of His judgments.

Men are by nature sinners; they are rebels. Now I don't mean that they are all criminals, murderers, and thieves, and as bad as they can possibly be. Men can be very

moral but in rebellion, thinking of themselves righteous in and of their own strength and ability—and they will not, in that condition, submit to God. Men and women all want to be their own masters and go their own way. That's Psalm 2, verse 3, "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"

Now that rebellion took place particularly at the cross, when the Gentiles and the Jews came together to crucify Christ—but it's true of every generation, that's the nature of man. Even after Christ has reigned over them for a thousand years, with wisdom and goodness, they will still rebel at the first opportunity.

Satan won't make them rebel, he will deceive them—but they will follow freely and gladly because 'men love darkness rather than light', (*Jhn 3:19*), and will not have Christ to rule over them. Not even a millennium of glory and prosperity can change that.

This final rebellion will make it plain that the root of sin is not poverty, or faulty, shoddy social conditions, or a bad environment...it is the heart of man, and man can't change it.

George Ladd put it well, I think. "The millennium and the subsequent rebellion of men will prove that men cannot blame their sinfulness on their environment or unfortunate circumstances. In the final judgment, the decrees of God will be shown to be just and righteous."

The rebels, Gog and Magog, all the unfaithful of the earth, will be gathered from "the four corners of the earth" (*vs8*), to make war on the Lord God. They will come up against the city of God, against Jerusalem, and surround it—and the description in verse 9 of these hoards marching on the city prepares us for a great battle...but there isn't one; "...and fire came down from heaven and devoured them." (*vs9b*). "Nothing more is seen of them...", R.H. Charles wrote, "...save only dust of ashes and smell of smoke." ...Gone!

The power of God is so overwhelming that not even a suggestion of battle is given. God doesn't struggle against evil as if 'good and evil' are two equal forces locked in combat. That is 'dualism', that's 'Manichaeism'...And false!

God permits evil, and even uses it for good as He did at the cross in Jerusalem. In Acts chapter 4, verse 28, the church gives this marvelous prayer and speaks of evil men, that they were gathered there against Jesus, (and then they list those who were there, Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles, and peoples of Israel), "...to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

God used evil, the greatest evil, to produce good—the greatest good for us, salvation! Now, that doesn't make evil 'good' ...it's not! And someday in the future, the LORD will destroy it completely...that's comforting. He will put all things right, that's our hope.

And what is demonstrated here is equally comforting, that nothing can shake or threaten the Lord God. He is immovable. His purpose for the world and His people is absolutely secure. Just as the waves break against the Rock of Gibraltar, but it continues to stand and completely unaffected, so it is with the Lord God. Men and angels may rebel, but it cannot touch Him or shake His purpose.

In fact, they only serve His purpose to accomplish His plans. Satan will only serve God's purpose in all of this and meet his inevitable doom. That's described in verse 10. The nations that followed him, Gog and Magog, are all destroyed, "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (ibid.) And with that, the dark chapter on Satan is closed forever.

What a story it was. The lessons to be learned from it, I think, are significant. From the accounts of Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, he, (*the devil*), had a glorious beginning. He was, "Lucifer, son of the morning", (*Isa 14:12 KJV*), 'the morning star'. Ezekiel, (*28:14*), calls him "the anointed cherub". He was in the very presence of God; he was blameless, Ezekiel said, (*28:15*), "until unrighteousness was found in him." His heart "was lifted up in pride because of his beauty", (*28:17*), and he fell; God, "cast him down to the ground". (ibid.).

So from the highest heights, he fell to the lowest depths. A person can have great privilege and opportunity...and they would be filled with pride and fall miserably.

It's a warning for all of us. God is, "opposed to the proud". We would all fall but for the grace of God. Only He can change us, only He can make us what we must be—but we must act on it, of course. James speaks of this in James 4, verses 6 and 7, where he speaks of "resisting the devil"...(the proud spirit), "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE ", (*James 4:6*) ...And so we are to look to Him constantly; humbly look to Him and never forget that we have nothing except what God has given us. Our faith, our abilities, our deeds, our every breath of life is from Him—a gift!

And I think as we understand that, we put our lives in perspective. It is so important that we do that—and we do that by reading the Scriptures and studying them, and worshipping with the saints and fellowshiping with the saints. But we have these warnings.

Well, the rest of the chapter is not about mercy. We've received mercy, and we should see all of this in light of that, but it's not about mercy...it's about **justice**. Something very different....God's pure and inflexible justice, (and what only God's grace can deliver us from).

The scene that rises before John is awesome in its solemnity and grandeur. John wrote in verse 11 that he, "...saw a great white throne...". It is colossal in size because it is the throne of the infinite God. It is white because it's pure...it reflects His holiness. The justice that will be given from that throne is perfect and John sees an amazing thing, "earth and heaven fled away", (*ibid*), from before the LORD.

It's hard to visualize that. In fact, I think it's impossible to visualize it...this language is figurative, it's poetic, and it describes in a figurative way, what I think of when we connect with what Peter explains will happen to the universe when it will, "melt with fervent heat", (*2Pe 3:12*), and cease to be. [Actually, I don't think it ceases to

be...it is transmuted, (transformed), from what it is now, (and in that kingdom)...to what it will be.]

The old order, though, will end so that the new order can begin...and out of the ashes, God will make "a new heaven and a new earth". (*Rev 21:1*).

But here, somewhere in the vastness of space, God holds court. The scene has been called, 'The Great Assize', (the Last Judgment), and it involves all unbelievers. Verses 12 and 13 state that every part of the world will give up the dead, 'from the sea to Hades'. Bodies long since devoured, or dissolved, or decomposed in the grave, will be restored. And John 'saw all the dead', "the great and small, standing before the throne...". (*vs12*). The great aren't 'too important' to be judged, and the small aren't 'too insignificant' to be judged. All are called to court. All unbelievers, from those rebels in the last battle to Cain...all unbelievers will stand before Him. They will be judged according to the strict standard of God's righteousness.

There will be nothing arbitrary about God's judgment. John said, "...books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (*vs12b*). So, the record of each individual will be made known on the evidence of what people have done...their deeds, they will be judged. (Twice that is stated to make certain we understand, 'they will be judged according to their deeds'.) Each life will speak for itself.

Now, are these literal books that will be present and open? Perhaps—but the all-knowing God doesn't need books; and the point is, every detail of a life will be revealed, examined, and shown to fall short of God's standard of perfection.

But there is another book and another possibility: "the book of life". (*vs12b*).

'The books' are about 'works'; this 'book' is about grace, about election and redemption...about who has believed. And John wrote in verse 15 that, "...if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

So...all will get due process. God will take all to court and judge them as they would want to be judged—on the basis of their own actions. And all will be found guilty and condemned. In fact, both books will condemn them. They will be condemned by the books that expose their sins, and they will be condemned by the book that reveals their unbelief. So, just as the Law of Moses required, they would be condemned on the basis of two witnesses.

The end comes: Verse 14, "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

Then, as William G.T. Shedd put it in his book *Endless Punishment*, "Hell without the body becomes hell with the body."

It's something I think impossible for us to visualize, but men have tried. Renaissance artists like Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel painted lurid pictures of hell. Ignatius Loyola, who founded the Society of Jesus, ('the Jesuits'), required as a spiritual exercise that men of his order enter a cell for a month of silence and think about hell. They were to imagine its length, and its breadth, and its depth, and use every sense of the imagination to hear men screaming and burning, and feel their pain.

But even the most fertile imagination cannot picture the reality of this. In fact, it's so horrible and so terrible that many have rejected it.

The early Church Father, Origen, devised 'the doctrine of Restorationism'. It was based on his belief in free will...that people and angels have the ability 'to change their spots', (and he believed that even the devil would be rehabilitated and restored). But also, he believed, because we have free will, that in the future, even after that, the devil will fall again, and men will fall again...and so it will go in an endless cycle for all eternity! (That's the error of free will.)

Later, John Milton suggested a similar idea in *Paradise Lost*: That with time, the torments may become less, and the devil's temper changed into that of the saints.

Others...cults, and more recently evangelicals, have accepted, 'the doctrine of annihilationism' —that the lost will be destroyed, (cease to exist), or suffer for a time and then be annihilated. The basis of that notion is what is called, 'the doctrine of conditional immortality', that the soul is not naturally immortal. Immortality is gained through redemption in Christ, so the unredeemed don't have immortal souls, and are extinguished at death...or after a period of suffering.

But as theologian William G.T. Shedd wrote, "Of all forms of annihilationism, the chief objections to the doctrine of endless punishment are not biblical but speculative. They don't have any Scripture for them, they just base it on some form of reason"

And you could add to that, 'Not just reason but emotion.' One evangelical leader confessed that, 'He found the idea of hell emotionally intolerable.' He said in an interview some years ago that, 'He could not understand how people who believe in endless punishment keep from cracking under the strain.'

Well, I think we can sympathize with that...but feelings don't change the plain statements of Scripture, like verse 10 of chapter 20, "...they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Time without end...emotions are no guide.

Jesus was moved emotionally by the thought of judgment coming on His people. He "wept over" Jerusalem...it's recorded in Luke 19, verse 41. The severity of punishment, (and He understood it clearly), moved Him to tears—but not to a denial of the doctrine. In fact, no one spoke more frequently on the subject of hell in the New Testament than Christ did. The word He used was *geenna*, translated as "hell". He repeatedly warned people about being cast into the fiery hell.

He warned the city of Capernaum, His adopted hometown, that it would descend into Hades. In fact, in Matthew chapter 11, verse 24, He told Capernaum, "...that it will be more tolerable for Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than it will be for you." (Capernaum). They had received far more light than those in Sodom, and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain...**And** what that means is, **there are degrees of punishment.**

Now, there cannot be degrees of punishment if souls are annihilated at death. People can speculate all they want on things they have not seen, but the Bible is revelation—and it teaches very plainly that, ‘hell is real’, and ‘the lake of fire is forever’.

But why is that? Why eternal? Why forever?

It must be forever because of the nature of sin. It is against God...Who is perfect, and infinite, and eternal in His being. And the object of sin, (what is sinned against), determines the measure of guilt.

Again, Shedd explained it this way: "Torturing an animal is a crime. Torturing a man is a greater crime. Why is it a greater crime? Because a man is a greater being than an animal."

Well, sinning against God is infinitely worse than sinning against man. He is infinite, He is eternal, and so the crime that men commit is infinite and eternal...and men do that all day long. So hell is reserved for them and requires infinite, eternal punishment for infinite evil. And Revelation 20:10 reveals that those in "the lake of fire...will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

In fact, that may also be suggested by the name itself, "lake of fire". Have you ever wondered about that...why it's called "the lake"? I've wondered about it.

Dr. Johnson did, and he once gave what he thought might be an explanation for it. He said he didn't know why it was called that but suggested that it might be because, "A lake has no outlet...so it is endless punishment with no exit, no escape." I think that's a good explanation.

In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante imagined that the gates of hell are inscribed with the phrase, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter in." How terrible!...Eternity in the lake of fire without hope, forever. That's a sobering thought. It is "forever and ever".

What will it be like? Well again, it's beyond imagination, but we do know some things; we have some revelation about this.

Those there will have bodies, and they will be resurrected for 'The Great Assize', for 'The Final Judgment', 'The Great White Throne Judgment'. So they will have bodies that are fit for that place, fit to exist forever and ever in that lake. So I assume it will involve physical pain. (It's certainly suggested in the Scriptures that that's the case.)

But maybe the greater pain, (not to diminish the physical in any way), but a greater pain will be the spiritual. People will know the reality of their sin. Now, they become calloused; the more a person sins, the more calloused he or she becomes, the more indifferent to it he or she becomes.

But then there will be no callous; that will be removed, and they will be made fully sensitive to the sins they have committed and know the awfulness of it—and be made to live with the bitterness of the guilt forever.

Isaiah and Jesus spoke of the agony in this way, "Their worm does not die.", it's always present. (*e.g. Mar 9:44*). I don't know what the worm is, but it could be the sorrow of knowing fully what they have done and made to feel forever the full weight of it—and that is hell.

Guilt drives people insane. Judas tried to ease his guilt by taking his life. That's no solution; it only increases the guilt from which there is no escape. It is a terrible destiny to contemplate...a place with no hope and no way out.

But a place every believer in Christ has escaped because God loved us, chose us, and redeemed us by the sacrifice of His Son who died in our place—who took hell in our place.

That is reason for great joy and gratitude, which we will spend eternity reflecting upon and rejoicing in and praising God for.

What we could not do, He did.

He changed us and glorified us.

A leopard can't change its spots, and no man or woman can change their heart, **but God** can and does through regeneration, through the new birth, the gift of faith in Christ, and forgiveness forever.

Paul wrote in Romans 5, (vs6), "While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

We had no ability, no faith, only sin and guilt—and that's what He saved...out of His love for us.

We will spend eternity contemplating it and saying with M'Cheyne,

"When this passing world is done,

When has sunk yon radiant sun,

When I stand with Christ on high,

Looking o'er life's history,

Then, Lord, shall I fully know,

Not till then, how much I owe."

And that is so true. In fact, we'll spend all eternity learning it, and marveling in it, and there will be no end to it.

What about you? Do you know you're helpless, that you cannot change your heart, or remove your guilt, or turn to the Lord? But you must, if you are to be saved.

If you sense the need and feel helpless, cast yourself on His mercy.

Pray Jeremiah's prayer, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (*Jer 31:18*).

He will hear you, and He will be merciful.

Throw yourself on Christ, trust in Him. He will receive you, forgive you, 'snatch you like a brand from the burning', and give eternal life.

May God help you to do that, and help all of us to rejoice in the life He has given us.

(Closing prayer)

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace;

and the love of our Redeemer—the love of the Triune God for us:

The Father, who would choose us out of a fallen race, due to no merit of ourselves,

And the Son who would come and redeem us at the cost of His life, and bearing the punishment of hell itself,

And then the work of the Spirit, who came and drew us to You, opened our eyes, regenerated us, enabled us to understand what has happened, and what's necessary.

Father, apart from Your grace, we would be cast into the lake of fire, where we would be forever and ever, tormented, justly—**But You** redeemed us...and not just us, a multitude beyond number.

Father, we give You praise for that and thank You.

Now,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace.

In Christ's name.

Amen.

(End of Audio)

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