

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY TEN

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15

We come to the final judgment. Humankind—men and women, old and young alike—will stand before God. No more hiding, no more running, it all comes to bear at this moment.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

READY or not, here I come!” This call kicks off a round of hide-and-seek—a favorite game for children across the world. The little ones who play this game best know exactly where to run and exactly how to hide.

Yet hide-and-seek isn’t just a game played by children. In fact, humankind historically has played this game at the highest of levels. As children, we run when we accidentally break our sibling’s favorite toy. As adolescents, we hide our failed tests from our parents. As adults, we hide our true character from loved ones, or we run before they can discover our flaws.

People think they can hide or run from their sins to make them and their consequences disappear. It may even work for a while, but eventually “your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). This study’s passage illustrates the ultimate “find” by God in the most cosmic and climactic sense. His books are opened. The thoughts, words, and deeds of those standing before Him are laid bare. Ready or not, they must face their Judge.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The thought of God’s coming judgment may frighten you, but today’s passage reveals that those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will *never* be condemned. Offer a prayer of thanks to your loving heavenly Father. You know that you don’t need to hide. You’re found and you’re welcomed.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We're nearing the climax of Revelation. After years of intense tribulation, Jesus returned to earth as King of Kings to defeat the wicked and cast the beast and false prophet into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20 NASB). Accompanying Jesus were the "armies of heaven" (19:14). Who were they? John identified them earlier as the "called and chosen and faithful" (17:14).

These were the New Testament saints, the followers of Christ who had been raptured before the tribulation (*1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*) and who were rewarded in heaven at the believers' judgment (*1 Corinthians 3:13–15*; *2 Corinthians 5:9–10*). Just as Christ promised (*Matthew 19:28*), they returned with Christ to reign with Him (*Revelation 20:4*).

Reigning alongside the New Testament saints were the martyrs who became followers of Jesus during the tribulation (20:4). These tribulation saints were resurrected at the beginning of the millennium in what John called "the first resurrection" (20:5). John assured them, along with all the resurrected faithful, that they had eternal life with Christ. They were "blessed and holy," John said, and over them "the second death holds no power" (20:6).

But what about the unsaved? What about those who worshiped idols rather than God? Who rebelled against God and rejected His grace? Who turned their backs on Christ's offer of salvation and embraced a lifestyle of self-worship and sin? These lost souls "did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended" (20:5). Their resurrection, however, was not "a resurrection of life" but "a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29 NASB).



Observation: The Great White Throne Judgment

In *Revelation 20:11–15*, the judgments in Revelation reach their long-awaited conclusion. Read these verses slowly and carefully, taking time to observe the details John included from his vision.¹

What did John see at the beginning of this vision in *20:11*?

The image of this great white throne was truly awesome, filling the entire scene. The earth and the sky had melted away in God's purging fire (*2 Peter 3:10*), and nothing remained in the vacuous space. *No one* could hide from the coming judgment.

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Whom did John see standing before God’s holy throne in [Revelation 20:12](#)? By what standard did God judge them?

What essential ideas from [20:12](#) does [20:13](#) repeat?

God keeps a perfect and complete record of every life. Not even the most righteous individual who has ever lived as a lost person earns the favor of God because the only way one can fellowship with an eternal God in heaven is to be as perfect as He is. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to [Revelation 20:14–15](#), what did the “lake of fire” represent in John’s vision? What powers were first thrown into the lake? What people were thrown in next? (Remember, in [20:10](#), the devil, the beast, and the false prophet had already entered this fiery lake.)

We call this the “great white throne judgment.” It’s great because it’s God’s throne—His eternal throne. It’s white because from it emanates justice, purity, and righteousness. As a throne, it represents a place of judgment. It is where God finally conquers sin and death. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

Scripture affirms that followers of Jesus will live with Him forever in the new heaven and the new earth and that nonbelievers will experience eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. Each person’s eternal destiny is recorded in “the books [that] were opened,” John wrote ([Revelation 20:12](#)). What books are these?

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“The Book of Life” contains the names of those of whom Christ said, “I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine” (Revelation 3:5). How does a sinful human being get his or her name etched in the Lamb’s Book of Life? Compare [Revelation 3:5](#) with [3:20–21](#).

The second set is simply called “the books,” and they contain a record of every human’s actions, whether good or bad (20:12). We might call these the Books of Deeds. How are these books used to determine a person’s destiny, according to [20:12, 15](#)?

A person’s deeds won’t earn him or her a spot in the Book of Life. Paul wrote that God “saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness” (Titus 3:5 NASB). He washed away our sins and gave us “new life through the Holy Spirit”—whom God poured out on us “through Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:5–6). We have “confidence that we will inherit eternal life” (3:7) not because of our deeds but because of God’s grace.

Why do you think God will judge the lost according to their deeds? For some help, see Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).²

When you trust Christ, His righteousness is credited to your account. And that is the righteousness God sees when you stand before Him. Those without Christ—no matter how good the deeds, no matter how great the works, no matter how fine the words, no matter how pure the motive—will never measure up to the perfect holiness and righteousness of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: The Original Game of Hide-and-Seek

Humans are great at playing hide-and-seek. We learned it from our original ancestors. According to [Genesis 3:7](#), what did Adam and Eve realize the moment they ate the fruit? What did they do in response?

According to [3:8](#), what did the man and the woman do when they heard God walking in the garden? What reason did the man give for this action in [3:10](#)?

Just like the serpent, Adam and Eve tried to deceive God. What was the *real* reason the man and the woman hid from God? What does this behavior reveal about humanity's response to sin?

Many today choose to follow in our first parents' footsteps, and those who do so will continue to have a fractured relationship with God. But those who step into the light and seek God's mercy through Christ will see Jesus welcoming them into His family.

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Application: Stop Running and Hiding

Revelation 20:11–15 offers a straightforward invitation . . .

It's time to stop running and hiding.

In what ways do you feel tempted to play a game of hide-and-seek with God? What kind of circumstances make you want to run from Him?

One way you can stop running and hiding from God is through the practice of confession. Is there a sin you've allowed to fester in your soul a little too long? Confess that to Him today. Remember, John said that “if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9). Write down a prayer in the space below.

Next, consider confessing this sin to a trusted Christian brother or sister: your spouse, a close friend, a pastor, or a member of your small group. When we confess to other believers, we invite them to join the fight against sin by praying for us and by holding us accountable. Making a public confession is difficult, but not hiding is freeing. In the space below, write down an action plan. Whom will you speak with? When will you do it? What will you say?

Children who play hide-and-seek sometimes shout, “Come out, come out, wherever you are!” God is shouting these words to a lost humanity. His call is for everyone—regardless of where they are on the journey of life, and His voice is warm, tender, and inviting.

Come out from your hiding. Admit your need for a savior. Run to Jesus. And experience abundant life, joy, peace, and hope forevermore.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the reminder that Jesus Christ will one day rid the universe of the powers of sin and death for good. I know that day will be frightening for many, so give me the boldness to invite the lost to come out of their hiding so that they might one day be found in You. May my life always reflect your love, justice, and righteousness. In Jesus' just name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2004, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

