

# Lesson 48

Last week we read verses 7-10, and we discussed the mysterious Gog of Magog. We looked back to Ezekiel 38 where he first appeared in the Bible, and what we discovered was that Gog of Magog figuratively represents any enemy of God's people but no enemy in particular. The people in Ezekiel's day, as the people in John's day, were wondering whether some future enemy might prevail against them. God's promise in each case was the same — God would protect and sustain his faithful people no matter who is opposed to them. That promise is shown in verses 7-10 by the symbol of a great army gathered by Satan against God's people.

In verse 9, this great army of Satan surrounds the beloved city. What is this city? There can be only one answer to that question — this beloved city is the church! The only other city we have seen in this book is Rome, and Rome is no more. This beloved city is the new Jerusalem that we will see later in this book. This city is the church, and Satan has it surrounded from all sides. Again, don't we see some similarities here with our own situation today?

The "camp of the saints" in verse 9 is an interesting phrase. The word "camp" in Greek is a military term that is used six times in Acts to describe the barracks or headquarters of Roman soldiers. It is used twice in Hebrews to describe the camp of Israel. The "camp of the saints" in verse 9 is the barracks of God's faithful army. It is also describing the church. You mean verse 9 contains two different symbols describing the same thing? Yes, and does that surprise us? God has shown us the church from many different perspectives in this book, including the two in this one verse. A big problem with the early church was that they were not seeing the church for what it is — the dwelling place of God and the body of his Son! **I think the one central purpose of this book was to show God's people what the church is really like!** And the most beautiful descriptions are yet to come!

So how does this all turn out? Are we about to read all about the fierce battle? Not really. It all comes to a very quick and certain end. Fire comes down from heaven and destroys the army of Satan, and then Satan himself is cast into a lake of fire and brimstone — suffering the same fate as the beast and the false prophet verse 10 tells us.

Is this the end of the world? **Possibly, but not necessarily.** What do I mean by that answer?

First, we should note that this description is full of symbols. The thousand years in verse 7 is a symbol. The prison in verse 7 is a symbol. Gog and Magog in verse 8 are symbols. The camp of the saints in verse 9 is a symbol. The beloved city in verse 9 is a symbol. The lake of fire in verse 10 is a symbol. And, importantly, the beast and the false prophet in verse 10 are symbols. The beast is not a person, and the false prophet is not a person. They are both symbols for Rome, with the beast representing the **royal** side of Rome, and the false prophet representing the **religious** side of Rome. Together they depict Rome as a false royal priesthood.

So back to our earlier question and answer: Is this the end of the world? **Possibly, but not necessarily.**

Why is this **possibly** the end of the world? Wouldn't that violate our time frame? No, it would not. The focus here is still on the defeat of first century Rome by the first century church. That defeat was a **spiritual** defeat, as evidenced by the historical fact that Rome was physically very much alive and kicking at the end of the first century. What we are seeing in verses 7-10 is **another spiritual defeat** — the spiritual defeat of any other force on earth that would ever set itself against the Lord's church. They will suffer the same fate as Rome did, and Satan will fare no better with them than he did with Rome.

And here is the key question: **what does it mean to suffer a spiritual defeat?** What it means is that you are lost eternally. If a spiritual **victory** means you are **saved** eternally after remaining faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10), then a spiritual **defeat** must mean that you are **lost** eternally. And that is what we are seeing here — the **spiritual defeat** of any and all who are opposed to God, the devil included. So, yes, this could be the end of the world here, and that would not violate our time frame. What we are seeing here is a promise to the first century church who must have been worried about the next great enemy, whoever that turned out to be. And, of course, we today can also take comfort in that promise. God still loves and cares for his church today two thousand years after this book was written.

But why is this **not necessarily** the end of the world? How could this language be anything else? Anytime we find ourselves asking that question, warning bells should sound! We have seen language of judgment used all throughout this book and all throughout the Bible that is not describing the end of the

world. Yes, the last great day will be a day of judgment, but that is not the only judgment described in the Bible. The judgment of Jerusalem described in Matthew 24 up through verse 34 comes to mind, as do the Old Testament judgments of Babylon, Egypt, Edom, and Tyre.

If this language is not describing the end of the world, then what is it describing? That's simple — it is describing the complete and utter defeat of Satan as to Rome and as to any other force Satan has used or will ever use against the church. **There is no weapon that can ever defeat the blood of Christ, the word of Christ, and a faithful life (Revelation 12:11)!** The kingdom of Christ can never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:14). We have a kingdom that cannot be moved (Hebrews 12:28). Why? **Because our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29).** And what do we see here? We see our God as a consuming fire casting Rome and Satan into the lake of fire.

Satan's defeat is complete and absolute. Why? Because Satan has just been told that no matter what he ever does he will never be able to defeat the church. Not one of his future attacks will ever be successful. **Satan's failure with regard to Rome will be the story of his life.** Satan's defeat is total and complete not just with regard to Rome but with regard to any army Satan may ever use to battle the church no matter how large or powerful that army may be. **Satan cannot overcome the church!** How is that situation depicted? By showing Satan being cast into a lake of fire and brimstone — a complete and utter defeat — a defeat from which no one can ever come back. Don't you think that is a message that early church needed to hear? I do, and it's the same message the Jews needed to hear in Ezekiel 38. It's the message of Romans 8:31 — “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

So back to our earlier question and answer: **Is this the end of the world?** My answer was possibly, but not necessarily — and I think that is where we should leave it as far as the text goes. But my **opinion** is that we are **not** seeing the end of the world here. I think we are seeing a vivid symbol for the complete defeat of Satan in all of his attacks against the Lord's church (past, present, and future). But if you think this is the end of the world, I'm not going to complain one bit — you very well may be right. But even then **the focus remains on the first century** because what we are seeing here is a promise to the first century church that Satan will never be able to defeat God's faithful people just as he was unable to defeat them using Rome, and a promise to the first century church that all of God's enemies will suffer a spiritual defeat just

as Rome has suffered. What that means is that our first century time frame is still firmly in place.

With these thoughts in mind, let's now look at the great judgment scene in verses 11-15 that closes out this chapter.

### **Revelation 20:11-15**

**11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Now that **must** be describing the end of the world, right? I'll cut to the chase — my answer is the same as before: **possibly, but not necessarily**. Why? Let's look at the text. There are at least three ways to view this great judgment scene.

First, we can view this great judgment scene as completely focused on first century Rome, with this judgment describing a **first century judgment** that is not the end of the world.

Second, we can view this great judgment scene as completely focused on first century Rome, with this judgment describing **the final judgment** of first century Rome that we know will happen at the end of the world.

Third, we can view this great judgment scene as including **Rome and all other enemies of God** that came or will come after Rome, with this judgment describing their **final judgment** at the end of the world.

Let's look at each of these possibilities, and I'll tell you the one I prefer.

**Let's start with the first of these three views:** We can view this great judgment scene as completely focused on first century Rome, with this judgment describing a first century judgment.

But wait, you say, this scene involves a great judgment scene before which the dead, small and great, stand before God. This scene involves books being opened, one of which is the book of life. This scene involves the dead being judged out of those books according to their works. This scene involves the death of death itself, and the casting of those opposed to God into a lake of fire.

**How can those be first century events?**

The answer is that those things are not **literally** first century events. They are **literally** events that will occur at the end of the world. **But since when did we start interpreting the visions in this book literally?** We should interpret verses 11-15 just as we have all of the other verses in this vision — we should look for the symbols and the figures.

**And here is the key to understanding these verses as a first century event:** These verses may be using the **future** literal judgment at the end of the world as a figure for the first century judgment of Rome just as the **past** literal judgment of Egypt and the **past** literal judgment of Babylon have been used for that same purpose many times earlier in this book. So, yes, the past judgment of Egypt was literal, the past judgment of Babylon was literal, and the future judgment of the world is literal — but all three of those literal events are being used in this book as symbols for the judgment of Rome. In fact, so much so, that Rome is referred to as Babylon in this book!

So does that mean we can't learn anything about the final judgment of the world from these verses? No, not at all. Under this view we can still learn a great deal about the final judgment of the world from these verses, just as we have learned things about the past judgments of Babylon and Egypt from the earlier descriptions in this book. When God uses a past (or future) event as a symbol for some other event, God is teaching us something about **both** of

those events. So if God uses the final judgment of the world as a symbol to depict the first century judgment of Rome, then God is teaching us something about both of those judgments.

Do we see something like this anywhere else in the Bible? Yes. In fact, we have seen this same event described elsewhere in the Bible. Daniel told us all about it.

***Daniel 7:9-11** — I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: **his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.** A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: **the judgment was set, and the books were opened.** I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: **I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.***

The fourth beast in Daniel 7 was the Roman empire, and those verses from Daniel 7 are describing what precedes the destruction of that fourth beast. **Don't they sound familiar?** A great throne? A great judgment? Books being opened? Burning flame? **We know that Daniel 7 is describing a first century event.** In Daniel 7:14 we see Jesus being given an eternal kingdom — that happened in the first century (Acts 2). At the end of time, Jesus will not be given the eternal kingdom but will instead deliver the eternal kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24). Daniel 7 is describing a first century event, and Daniel 7 uses the same language that we see here in verses 11-15.

And how about these verses from Matthew 24.

***Matthew 24:30-31** — And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

That sure sounds like the final judgment, right? In fact, it uses images taken from events that we know will apply to the end of the world such as Jesus coming in the clouds and the sound of a trumpet. But are those verses in Matthew 24 describing the end of the world? No. How do we know? Because we can read verse 34: “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” Verses 30-31 in Matthew 24 are describing the end of Jerusalem in AD 70, but they are doing so using vivid imagery about the end of the world. In short, the message was that this judgment would be so bad that you will think it is the end of the world!

We may be seeing the same thing here in verses 11-15. We may be seeing imagery taken from the end of the world being used to describe the end of Rome.

What are the advantages of this view? A big advantage is that it keeps us firmly placed within our context and our time frame. The very first verse of Revelation told us that the book was going to describe “things which must shortly come to pass,” and under this view verses 11-15 are describing a first century judgment. Another big advantage of this view is that it fits well with how the Bible described the judgement of Rome in Daniel 7, and it fits well with how this book itself has used other literal judgments as imagery to describe the judgment of Rome.

Are there any disadvantages? Some might say that one disadvantage to viewing verses 11-15 as a first century judgment is that it would mean we would have to toss out about 10,000 sermons that have suggested otherwise! But is that really a disadvantage? If this really is a first century event, then does it matter how many sermons have taught otherwise?

But, to address that potential disadvantage, as we said a moment ago, when God uses one event to depict another event, God is teaching us something about both of those events. So, yes, I think that even under this first view, we can learn something about the end of the world from these verses. So perhaps many of those sermons don't need to be tossed out at all; perhaps they just need to be clarified.

But is there a way in which we can view verses 11-15 as actually describing the end of the world? Yes, and that brings us to the second of the three possible view of these verses that we listed earlier: **we can view this great judgment scene as completely focused on first century Rome, with this judgment describing the final judgment of first century Rome that we know will happen at the end of the world.**

This view is very similar to the first view, but, at least on the surface, it seems to move our time frame from the first century to the end of the world. **But does it really?** Let's look more closely at that issue.

What are we saying with this second view? What we are saying is that the focus is still on first century Rome, and in particular the **spiritual judgment** of first century Rome, **but verses 11-15 are giving us a flash forward in time so that we can see what that spiritual judgment really means.** And what does it mean? It means that those persecuting Romans will be lost eternally, cast away from the presence of God into hell.

So does this view violate our first century time frame? Not at all. **When does all of this happen?** Careful — that's a trick question! The actual casting away will happen at the end of time, but the works in verse 12 that caused that casting away to happen for the first century Romans — those works happened in the first century. And the spiritual judgment? That also happened in the first century at the moment when each of those persecuting Romans died. From that moment onward each of them knew their eternal fate. The explanation, the sentencing, and the bending of the knee yet await, but each person who has died already knows his or her eternal destiny and so, at least in that sense, has been judged.

What we are saying is this: The focus remains on first century Rome and on the conflict between Rome and the church, but part of the description of the spiritual judgment of first century Rome involves a flash forward in time to show what is in store for them at the end of all time.

But there is a potential problem with the second view. If verses 11-15 are a flash forward to a literal event, then what happened to our rule that we interpret this language figuratively? First, that is not exactly the rule we have been following. The rule is that we interpret the language figuratively unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise, and the final judgment of the world might be seen by some as a pretty compelling reason to do otherwise! But second, even if this language is describing the final literal judgment of the world, don't we still see some figures? Earth and heaven fleeing away in verse 11? The books in verse 12 — do we think they are literal paper and ink? Death and hell being cast into a lake of fire? I think we are still seeing some symbols in this language even if it is describing the literal end of the world.

So where are we? So far, we have looked at two views. In each view, the focus is firmly on the first century conflict between Rome and the church, which is the same focus this book has had throughout. In the first view, we are seeing

the first century judgment of Rome described using figures taken from the final judgment at the of the world. In the second view, we are again seeing the judgment of Rome, but we are seeing what will happen to Rome at the end of the world when they receive their final judgment for the evil works they did here on earth.

In my opinion, either of those two views could be the correct view. What is my preference? Let's hold off on that until we examine the third view.

First, why do we need to consider a third view? We need to consider a third view because of a potential problem with the first two views, and it is the same potential problem for each. What is that potential problem? In short, it is this: **What about Gog and Magog? What about the loosening of Satan for a little season?** Should we broaden our focus at least a bit to include those events in this great judgment scene? The third view we will consider will do just that.

Here again is the third view: **We can view this great judgment scene as including Rome and all other enemies of God that came or will come after Rome, with this judgment describing their final judgment at the end of the world.**

This view has some appeal, but it does stretch the time frame quite a bit. Suddenly we are not looking just at first century Rome, but we are looking at every other enemy of God that has arisen or will arise after first century Rome. Yes, Gog and Magog give us a basis for doing that, but the description of Gog and Magog need to be read in light of the other verses in this book, including these two that we will get to at the end of the book:

***Revelation 22:6** — These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*

***Revelation 22:10** — Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

I have a hard time fitting a judgement of twenty-first century North Korea into the time frame of those two verses.

But didn't Gog and Magog already violate our time frame? No. Gog and Magog were introduced to make a simple point about Satan's defeat. I don't think that they were intended to make us stretch our time frame to include thousands of years of history and counting. They appear in Revelation 20 for the same reason they appear in Ezekiel 38 — to promise God's people that God will pro-

tect them no matter what comes. Gog and Magog are a vivid illustration of Romans 8:31 — “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Even while Gog and Magog are being described, the focus remains firmly on the first century conflict between Rome and the church. Gog and Magog were introduced to make a simple point — Satan failed with Rome, and Satan will continue to fail no matter what else he tries. In fact, Satan would fail so completely that his failure is described as being cast into a lake of fire in verse 10, the same thing we saw happen to Rome in Revelation 19:20 and the same thing we will see happen to death and hell in verse 14.

So what is my opinion about these three views? I favor the **first view**, but I think a good case can be made for the second view as well. I am not a fan of the third view because I think it violates our time frame and moves away from our context. The second view is very appealing, and in my opinion it comes in very close to the first view, but the time frame and particularly the parallel description from Daniel 7 make me favor the first view — that these verses are describing the first century judgment of Rome by God using vivid imagery taken from the final judgement at the end of the world, just as this book has elsewhere borrowed language from other judgments by God to describe the judgment of Rome by God.

Now that we have looked at these three ways of interpreting verses 11-15, let's do the interpretation — let's take a closer look at the text of verses 11-15.

Verse 12 confirms what we already know — the great white throne in verse 11 is the throne of God. God is the righteous judge who knows everything — that is the message of verse 11. Rome may have thought no one knew what they were doing, but Rome was wrong. Rome may have thought that there was no one who could do anything about what they were doing, but Rome was wrong. Every move Rome made was being watched very closely by the righteous judge of the universe.

Most people behave better when they are being watched. In fact, most people behave better when they think there is a chance they are being watched. And cameras seem to be everywhere these days. It seems that every day on the news we see some criminal going about his criminal activities in full view of some hidden camera. How would we act if we were being watched every second of our lives? That's an easy question to answer — we would act just like we already act. Why? **Because as Christians we already know that we are being watched every second of our lives!** And not just us, but everybody! God knows everything we do and everything we think. We are never alone!

And that truth is both a promise and a warning. It is a promise because God is always with us. “The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5)! But it is also a warning — we cannot hide from God (Genesis 3:8). The same righteous judge who was watching everything that Rome did is watching everything that we do!

What does it mean in verse 11 that “the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them?” This description will help us understand a verse in the next chapter.

***Revelation 21:1** — And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

The phrase “a new heaven and a new earth” is an idiom for a new environment, and that verse is telling us there will be new environment for the church. We’ll have more to say about what that means when we get to that verse in Chapter 21. But if there is a new environment, something must have happened to the old environment — and that is what verse 11 is telling us.

Is this change of environment the great change of environment that will occur at the end of the world? I don’t think so. Why? Because of the parallel passage in Daniel 2.

***Daniel 2:31-35** — Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that **a stone was cut out without hands**, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; **and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them:** and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

That stone cut out without hands is the church — that’s what Daniel 2:44-45 tells us. And the feet of iron and clay in Daniel 2 is Rome — we saw that when we studied Daniel. Rome was the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2, following Baby-

lon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. **So what does Daniel tells us would happen when the church was victorious over Rome?** Daniel 2:35 — “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, **that no place was found for them.**” That’s exactly what we see here in verse 11 — “and there was found no place for them”! Verse 11 is talking about the new environment that came about after the church prevailed over Rome, which is the same thing Daniel was talking about in Daniel 2 using the same language we see here in verse 11. **Verse 11 is anchored in the first century. Why? Because Daniel 2 is the anchor!**

We need to be careful if we argue that these verses are describing the end of the world. Careful about what? Careful that we don’t also drag Daniel 2 to the end of the world. We know that the kingdom of Christ was established in Acts 2 as prophesied in Isaiah 2, Daniel 2, and Joel 2 — but many falsely teach that the kingdom of Christ will not be established until the end of the world. There is a rope tied from Daniel 2 to Revelation 20 — we need to be careful we don’t tug on that rope to the point that we suggest that Daniel 2 is a yet future event. It is not. The kingdom of Christ existed in the first century, and it exists today. It was established in Acts 2.

And if verse 11 is anchored in the first century, then what does that say about verses 12-15? Yes, those verses sound like the final judgment, and yes countless sermons have applied those verses to the final judgment. But is that the test we should be applying here? Daniel 2 happened in the first century, and verse 11 is lifted right out of Daniel 2. Shouldn’t that be enough to make us take a closer look at verses 11-15, not to mention our context and our time frame?

Yes, as we have said, we can learn something about the end of the world from these verses. Why? Because that final judgment (a literal event yet to occur) is being used as a symbol for the judgment of Rome, just as the plagues of Egypt (a literal event that has already occurred) has been used for that same purpose. So yes we can learn something about the final judgment from these verses, but I believe that the coming final judgment of the world is being used here to figuratively describe the **first century** judgment of Rome.

Is there any textual support in these verses for that view? Yes. Look at verse 14. **“This is the second death.”** We have seen that before. We saw that back in verses 4-6. And what was the focus back in those verses? “The souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received

his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.” **Those are the Christians killed by Rome.** Those are the Christians who were killed because they refused to worship Caesar. Verse 14 gives us a **link** back to the beginning of the chapter. Verse 6 told us who would **not** be affected by the second death. Verse 14 tells who would be affected by the second death. That makes two groups — and they are the same two groups we have seen over and over in this book: those on the side of Christ versus those on the side of Caesar.

Everything in this beautiful book fits together. Everything in this beautiful book reinforces the theme of the book: Christ or Caesar. Everything in this beautiful book fits with what Daniel prophesied six hundred years earlier. Things start to break down only when we take our scissors to the text, slicing out a verse here and a verse there to make a point that is divorced from the time frame and the context of the book.

But what about **the lake of fire** in verse 14? What does it mean to be cast into a lake of fire? Who is cast into this lake of fire? Again, let’s look at the text.

**Revelation 19:20** — *And the **beast** was taken, and with him the **false prophet** that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

**Revelation 20:10** — *And the **devil** that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

**Revelation 20:14-15** — *And **death and hell** were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

**Revelation 21:7-8** — *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the **fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

So who is cast into the lake of fire? We should really ask who **or what** is cast into the lake of fire because not everything cast into it is a person. The **beast and the false prophet** are cast in — they are the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, which together represent Rome as a false royal priesthood. The **devil** is cast into the lake of fire. **Death and hell** are cast into the lake of fire. And **those who fail to overcome** are cast into the lake of fire. What do they all have in common — Rome, Satan, death, hell, and those who fail to overcome? **They were all completely defeated!** Their common denominator is **defeat!** That is what it means to be cast into a lake of fire — it means to suffer a great defeat.

And aren't those categories enough for us to know that what we are seeing in these verses is **figurative**? The two beasts are cast into the lake of fire, as are death and hell. That cannot be understood literally. We are seeing symbols here. Casting death into a lake of fire means that death has been defeated. Casting the two beasts into the lake of fire means that Rome has been defeated. If the beasts are figurative (as we know they are), then casting the beasts into a lake of fire must also be figurative.

And another thing — **who is judged here**? Is it everyone as at the end of all time? I don't think so. The ones being judged here are the ones brought back to life in verse 13. Who are they? They are the "rest of the dead" from verse 5 — "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." **God's people were raised back in verse 4; they are not among the number being raised in verse 13.** This group in verse 13 did not share in the victory with Christ; that is, they did not live again "until the thousand years were finished" as verse 5 tells us. The people judged here are the people who died in opposition to Christ and in the service of Rome. These are the ones who were killed by the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls.

These verses show the great contrast between those who stood with Christ and those who stood with Rome. Those who stood with Christ experience a complete and total victory symbolized by a thousand year reign with Christ. Those who stood with Rome experience a complete and total defeat symbolized by death in a lake of fire. We are looking at the same two groups that this book has been focused on for twenty chapters.