

Father. You can stand inside the New Jerusalem on that day when all of humanity confronts each other face-to-face. If you have placed your life in the hands of Jesus, you need never experience the unspeakable horror of those on the outside of the city who realize they are lost forever. By giving your trust to Christ as Saviour, you can be assured that, when the record of your life appears in the judgment, Jesus will say, "I died for that person, the record of my perfect life belongs to My beloved one!"

*Dear Father: How thankful I am that You are not only fair, but loving and merciful! How thankful I am for Jesus and all that He has done and is doing for me every day! How thankful I am that He died to save me so that I can be inside the Holy City and be saved forever! Yes, Father, I plan to be there inside that city. Keep me faithful, I pray. In Jesus name, Amen.*

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Design by Kurt Reichenbach

Litho in USA by Pacific Press

# DISCOVER

## IS GOD FAIR?

# A

boy in the inner city is killed by stray gang bullets as he does homework at the kitchen table.

A young mother in the suburbs finds that her child has contracted AIDS from a contaminated blood transfusion.

The tragedies go on and on in our world. Inexplicable and heartrending. And we long so much for an answer to it all.

A PERMANENT answer.

As author Alister McGrath asked, “Where is God in a world of meaningless suffering and death? God may be in heaven—but is He here?”—*The Mystery of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), p. 107.)

We’ve heard assurances that God is fair and just. The Psalmist tells us:

**“The LORD loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His unfailing love.”—Psalm 33:5.** (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

But if that is true, how is He going to make the world come out right? How is He going to bring an end to suffering and tragedy? We know He can give us strength and courage to make it through the tough times, but we don’t want the tough times to last forever. We want an ultimate solution. We want to see the bright light at the end of the tunnel.

In this guide you’ll discover how God will bring sin and suffering to an end. And when He does, every being in the universe will testify that God is just. The 20th chapter of Revelation shows us how and when all this takes place.

## 1. THE ONE THOUSAND YEARS UNVEILED

Revelation 20 zeros in on a 1,000-year period that follows the Second Coming of Christ. The events surrounding this “millennium” mark the final act in the conflict between Christ and Satan that has been going on since sin entered the universe.

This cosmic drama began in heaven when

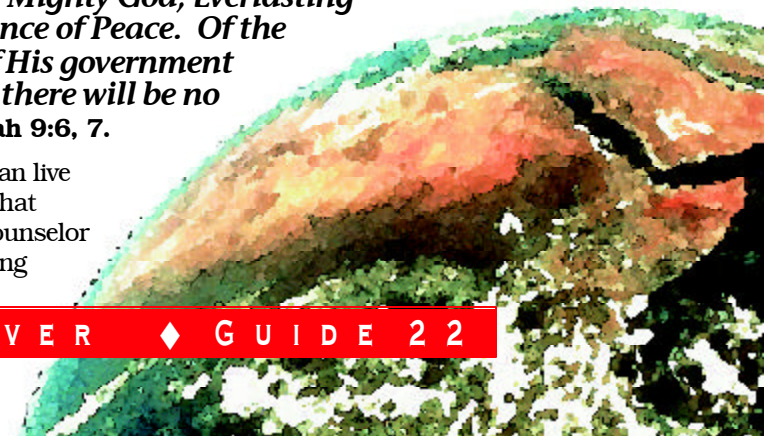
***City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. . . . I am making everything new!’”—Revelation 21:1-5.***

Restored to its original beauty, the earth becomes the home of redeemed humanity through endless ages. Freed from selfishness, sickness, and suffering, we have a whole universe to explore, wonderful relationships to develop, and an eternity in which to sit at Jesus’ feet to listen, learn and love. (For a full description of that new world, you may wish to again read guide 9.)

The curtain falls on the ancient drama of sin, and rises on the glory of a new world of limitless possibilities. Of Jesus, the Ruler of that coming world, we read:

***“And the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.”—Isaiah 9:6, 7.***

You can live forever with that Wonderful Counselor and Everlasting



***the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***—

**Revelation 20:9, 10, 14, 15.**

In the final judgment the fires of the eternal God will destroy sin and those who stubbornly cling to it. Satan and all the lost perish in this “second death,” an eternal death from which there is no awakening. Their course of rebellion has left the wicked unfit for real happiness, and they are destroyed with the devil and his angels. The heavenly fire completely cleanses the earth of the ravages of sin; God has a clean universe at last, never again to be scarred by evil. The epic struggle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan, is finally over, and Christ reigns.

Where do you plan to be in that day? Have you decided to be with Christ inside the city and saved forever? Or will you be outside the city without Christ and lost forever? No matter what life has brought to you, if you place your life in the hands of Jesus now, you can be inside the city with Christ and the redeemed. If you have not done so, give your heart to Jesus now, and He will surround you with His love and forgiveness. This is your opportunity. This is your day of salvation.

## 8. THE EARTH CLEANSED AND MADE NEW

From the ashes of this final, cleansing holocaust, God will create a new world:

***“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . I saw the Holy***

Lucifer became jealous of Christ, started a war with the unfallen angels, was expelled, and fled to our world. The drama continued on earth in the Garden of Eden, then down through the centuries until it reached its first climax when the devil impelled human beings to crucify Christ. (You may wish to review this sad story in guide 3.) The drama will reach its final climax at the close of the 1,000-year period when our sinful world is cleansed and placed under Christ's control.

Revelation 20 shows us that two resurrections serve as boundaries for the 1,000-year period.

Who does God raise from the dead in the first resurrection that takes place at the beginning of the 1,000 years?

***“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”***—

**Revelation 20:6.**

The “blessed and holy,” those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, come up in the “first resurrection.” If they are to “reign with” Christ during the 1,000 years, obviously they must return to life at the beginning of the 1,000 years.

Who are raised in the second resurrection at the close of the thousand-year period?

***“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.”***—

**Revelation 20:5.**

The “rest of the dead” can refer only to the wicked dead, for the righteous, those saved through their faith in Christ, are brought back to life at the

beginning of the 1,000 years.

So the 1,000-year period is marked off by two resurrections: the resurrection of the righteous at its beginning, and the resurrection of the wicked at its close.

## 2. RESURRECTED AT CHRIST'S COMING

The first resurrection, that of the righteous, takes place at the second coming of Christ.

***“For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE first. After that, WE WHO ARE STILL ALIVE and are left WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM in the clouds TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”—1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.***

When Jesus comes to this earth again, He raises “the dead in Christ” and takes them, along with the righteous who are alive, to heaven (John 14:1-3). At that time He transforms all the righteous and they become immortal—no longer subject to disease, old age, or death (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

What happens to the wicked people still alive when Jesus comes? Because they still cling to sin and haven't accepted Christ, they can't exist in God's presence; they are destroyed “by the brightness” at the return of Christ (Luke 17:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8). (You may wish to review in guide 8 the events surrounding Jesus' return.)

fully revealed, and God's character stands vindicated.

***“All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”—Revelation 15:4.***

***“Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: ‘To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!’”—Revelation 5:13.***

Not only the saved, but also evil angels and Satan himself will confess that Satan's way has been wrong and that God's ways are just and true. All see that evil and selfishness has led only to unhappiness and discontent—that such a life is not worth continuing.

## 7. SIN MEETS ITS FINAL END

Even though Satan and the vast throng of wicked people admit that God's way is right, their hearts are not changed, their characters remain evil. And after judgment is pronounced, the wicked themselves move to meet their tragic fate:

***“They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city He loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. . . . Then death and Hades were thrown into***

human flesh, lived a sinless life amid our struggles and temptations, made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross, and served as our Priest in heaven. Finally, when Christ sorrowfully steps forward and passes sentence on those who've persisted to the end in rejecting His grace, every being in the universe will acknowledge the justice and necessity of this final act of divine judgment.

***“We will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”—Romans 14:10-11.***

***“He [Christ Jesus] humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that AT THE NAME OF JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Philippians 2:8-11.***

Ever since sin began, the devil has been slandering God’s character, accusing Him of being unfair. But now all the questions are answered, all the perplexities resolved. At the end, not even Satan himself, the great accuser, will have a word to say in his own defense. Now every being in the universe acknowledges that, even in judgment, especially in judgment, Jesus, the Lamb of God, is worthy of our love and worship. A great chorus declares: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain” (Revelation 5:12).

The whole plan and purpose of God is now

### 3. SATAN CHAINED TO EARTH FOR ONE THOUSAND YEARS

When the 1,000 years begin, the righteous have all gone to heaven and the wicked are all dead. What will happen on this world during the 1,000 years?

***“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.”—Revelation 20:1-3.***

At Jesus’ coming Satan is bound and will remain in chains during the 1,000 years. Where is Satan imprisoned? In the “Abyss,” the English equivalent of a Greek word that is translated from a Hebrew



word which means “very deep” or “bottomless.” The word used for “Abyss” appears in the Septuagint (the Greek Version of the Old Testament which was translated from Hebrew in pre-Christian times). In Genesis 1:2 the Septuagint uses the word “Abyss” to describe the earth in its undeveloped state before the days of creation began. It seems clear then that our earth is the Abyss where God imprisons Satan.

Scripture describes Satan as bound by “a great chain.” Is this a literal chain? No, the context makes clear that it is symbolic—sort of a chain of circumstances. The phrase brings to mind an expression we use when we can’t do someone a favor: “I’d like to help you, *but my hands are tied.*”

Satan would like very much to continue deceiving and oppressing individuals during the 1,000 years, but his hands are bound by a chain of circumstances. He can find no righteous people to tempt during this period, because they are all in heaven. And he can’t find any wicked to lead, because they are all dead, asleep in the dust of the earth. Satan simply wanders about the desolate, ruined earth without any people under his control. Circumstances “keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended” (Revelation 20:3).

Here we find Satan in the last act of his age-long struggle against God. His evil character remains unchanged. He and his angels are confined to our empty world. Unable to deceive or tempt anyone, he roams an empty world, forced to ponder all the heartaches and tragedy he has caused through the centuries.

“We’re outside in the dark!” The wicked catch a glimpse of the real horror of being lost—lost forever.

## 6. THE FINAL JUDGMENT SCENE

Here, for the first and last time, all the human race meets together face-to-face. Jesus leads the redeemed children of God who are inside the city, and Satan heads the throngs of the wicked who are just outside the walls. At this critical moment, God carries out the final stage of judgment and the wicked receive their day in court.

***“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. . . . And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”—Revelation 20:11-13.***

As the wicked stand before the throne of justice, their whole life opens before them. From the records contained in heaven, Jesus, the righteous Judge, formally unfolds the full story of His dealings with fallen men and women, and fallen angels.

The entire universe looks on with intense interest. Standing before the throne of God, Jesus gives everyone a comprehensive view of His redemptive work. He reveals that He has indeed come to seek and save the lost. He entered our world in

*Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth . . . to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city He loves.”— Revelation 20:7-9.*

When the righteous descend to earth in the Holy City and the wicked are resurrected, “Satan will be released.” He again has the wicked to lead and the righteous as his target. Not wasting a moment, He immediately begins to organize the wicked into a vast army.

This seems a perfect opportunity to Satan. The Holy City is not fortified, its inhabitants are not armed. Deciding to take it by force and plunder its riches, he convinces his followers that, because they outnumber the righteous, victory is certain.

Satan can plot strategy with military geniuses from all periods of earth's history. Generals who've conquered empires can organize his armies. Scientists can try to create new weapons of mass destruction. This second resurrection reveals a sad reality: in death the characters of the wicked have experienced no change. They come from the grave with the same ambitions, the same selfish desires.

Finally, Satan gives the command to march against the city. The vast multitude moves with military precision to claim this glittering metropolis from outer space as their capital. Satan and the wicked lay siege to the New Jerusalem; this is their last chance to sabotage Jesus' plan to rescue humanity forever from the curse of sin. But as they take up positions around the New Jerusalem, a horrible truth begins to sink into their hearts: “We're on the outside!

#### 4. THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE THE WICKED

The thousand year period is also a time of judgment. But remember that the judgment consists of four main stages:

1. The pre-advent *judgment* of the righteous before Christ's second coming.
2. The *reward* of the righteous at the second coming.
3. The *judging* of the wicked during the 1,000 years.
4. The *reward* of Satan and the wicked at the end of that period. (You may wish to review guide 13 that deals with stages 1 and 2 of the judgment, the investigation and reward of the righteous.) We will now look at stages 3 and 4, the investigation and reward of the wicked.

We've already seen that the righteous dead come from their graves at the second coming of Christ and, with the righteous who have never died, leave this earth and are taken to God's heavenly paradise with Jesus and the holy angels. Those redeemed by Christ find their home in heaven during the 1,000 years.

What will the righteous be doing in heaven during this 1,000-year period?

**“Do you not know that THE SAINTS [the saved] WILL JUDGE THE WORLD? . . . Do you not know that we will JUDGE ANGELS?”—1 Corinthians 6:2-3.**

Second Coming of Christ Righteous Taken to Heaven Wicked Slain	Righteous in Heaven Judging the Wicked Wicked Are Dead on This Desolate Earth	New Jerusalem Descends to Earth With Christ & the Righteous Wicked March on New Jerusalem Wicked Judged & Destroyed by Fire—A New Earth
Righteous Dead Raised FIRST RESURRECTION	Satan Bound to a Desolate Earth with No One to Tempt THE MILLENNIUM—1000 YEARS	Wicked Dead Raised SECOND RESURRECTION

***“I SAW THRONES ON WHICH WERE SEATED THOSE WHO HAD BEEN GIVEN AUTHORITY TO JUDGE. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. . . . THEY CAME TO LIFE AND REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS.”—Revelation 20:4.***

During the 1,000 years, the righteous will review the cases of wicked human beings and fallen angels, including their leader, Satan. How fitting for the martyrs, the overcomers, and the battle-scarred adherents of the gospel to examine and understand God’s judgment of the wicked.

God has graciously given redeemed human beings the chance to evaluate His dealings with the wicked. We know what it’s like to struggle in a sinful world; we’ve rubbed shoulders with these people day after day. We may have a lot of questions, like: “Why isn’t my neighbor here? He seemed like such a good person.” Or, “Why didn’t my aunt make it?” All our questions will be answered in this phase of the judgment. When we go over the records and judge the dead “according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Revelation 20:12), we will see for ourselves that in all His dealings with human beings, God has been just and fair with everyone.

A seminary professor once surprised his students with the question, “Did you know that there will be tears shed in heaven?” The students weren’t so sure about that. But the professor explained that the righteous will judge their lost friends and loved ones during the 1,000 years in heaven. It will be a sad experience; we’ll understand just how individuals turned away from God’s heroic attempts to save them. We’ll see how the Holy Spirit offered people

chance after chance to yield to God. The fairness of each sentence will become plain. There will be a time of grieving. But we can have the assurance that, after coming to terms with these tragedies, God “will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4).

## 5. SATAN UNCHAINED WHEN THE ONE THOUSAND YEARS END

At the close of the 1,000 years the curtain lifts on the final act in the judgment drama.

***“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”—Revelation 21:2.***

This wonderful city, whose streets of gold and pearly gates have echoed with our exultant shouts of praise, has been our home for a thousand years. Now the Holy City—with Christ and all the people He’s redeemed inside—descends from heaven to our world.

What happens to the wicked at that time?

***“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.”—Revelation 20:5.***

The “rest of the dead” must refer to the wicked dead, because the righteous dead came to life in the first resurrection at the beginning of the 1,000 years. So it is the wicked who are resurrected in the second resurrection at the close of the 1,000 years.

What does Satan do at the close of the 1,000 years?

***“When the thousand years are over,***