

The Great White Throne (Message # 45)

Revelation 20: 11-15

In the course of our study of Revelation we have witnessed the awesome power of God as His fury and wrath is poured out upon sinful unbelievers in the Tribulation. The horrors of that dreadful time are beyond comprehension, but as dreadful as the suffering will be, the events that we've studied thus far cannot compare to the misery that waits those who face the Day of Judgment.

Tonight we have come to the passage that reveals the final court-room setting. This is a scene reserved for the lost, those who denied the saving grace of God. It is here that all who have died in sin, apart from God, will be judged and sentenced by the Lord Himself. As I've said many times, when grace and mercy are refused, judgment is all that remains.

I rejoice that I will miss this dreadful time, but countless millions will stand before God accountable for their sins. This passage ought to burden our hearts for those who have never been saved. All who reject Christ have a date with destiny in the courtroom of Almighty God. I want to preach on: [The Great White Throne](#), and as I do, consider what the lost will face as they stand before God. Death is not the end for any of us. The soul shall exist forever, either in eternal joy or eternal condemnation. This life serves as a time of preparation for eternity! Let's look in on: [The Great White Throne](#).

I. A Sovereign Display (11) – In a few choice words, John records the setting for this heavenly judgment scene. Notice:

A. The Description of this Throne (11a) – John uses a couple of adjectives to describe the throne that he saw. I'm sure that he had never experienced anything like this. This is a somber scene. It is here that judgment will be passed upon the lost and unbelieving.

- This is a [great](#) throne. There are none like it in the entire universe. It is a throne of absolute power and authority. The rulings rendered here will be final. There will be no appeal to a higher court. This is the throne of God!
- Also John describes it as a [white](#) throne revealing the purity and righteousness of this throne. It is here that true justice is proclaimed. There are no bribes or shady deals taking place around this throne. God will judge in righteousness and absolute fairness to all. There will be no double standard or leniency for prominent or powerful people. All will be judged according to God's holy standard!

B. The Deity of this Throne (11b) – We know that the throne is occupied by someone, but there is no revelation to whom that Person is. This is clearly the throne of God. He alone is worthy to examine and pass judgment. This is the throne of deity, the throne of our Lord.

- The Bible is clear about who will occupy this throne. Until I spent some time in study, I always imagined God the Father occupying the great white throne, but it will be Jesus, His only begotten Son, the One who died for sinful men who will sit upon this throne. He gave His life for all who would believe and He will judge those who denied Him. [Jn.5:22, 27](#); [Acts 17:31](#). Those who chose to reject the shed blood of Christ will stand before Him and give an account of their rejection. I had much rather come to Him in repentance than judgment!

C. The Discernment of this Throne (11c) – Can you imagine the dread that will fill the hearts of those who are summoned to appear before the Lord? I believe that the iniquities of life will run through their minds. They will remember all of the wickedness they've committed. They will hope that Jesus doesn't remember all the horrid deeds that they've done. They will hope that somehow their lives will be hidden from the Judge upon the throne. Their hopes will be in vain.

- There will be no place to hide from the all seeing eye of Christ. There will be no escape from the searching gaze of the Lord. Every sinful act that they have committed will be remembered against them. Mercy was rejected and now judgment has come! Jesus offered salvation and forgiveness for their sin, but now they will give an account for each of their sins as Jesus knows the life they've lived.

I. A Sovereign Display (11)

II. A Summons Delivered (12-13) – The sovereign Lord will summons all who rejected Him to appear before the great white throne. There will be no escape, no skipping bond, or failing to appear. All will be present. Notice:

A. The Assembly of the Accused (12a, 13a) – There is one striking similarity to each of these defendants; they are all [dead](#). They have all died a physical death, but more devastating than that, they are all spiritually dead. These denied Christ and slipped through the gates of death apart from Him, lost in their sin. There will be no second chances. There will be no opportunity for rehabilitation. They are eternally dead in trespasses and sin!

- What a dreadful picture of the state of these rebellious souls. All the dead are here. There is not a one of them missing. The sea has given up all those who died while upon her waters. The watery graves of sinful sailors will give up their dead. The graves of the earth will give up the dead that are in them. The souls of the condemned will reunite with their sinful bodies in judgment.

- But consider who will be there. All the dead, **small and great** will stand before God. There will be no clemency for the prominent. There will be no reprieve for the elite and wealthy. From the greatest to the least, all will face God. The powerful men of this earth will stand alongside the poor and impoverished. God will be no respecter of persons on this day either. They have all denied Christ and they will all face Him in judgment. No doubt there will be those who lived a moral life, but never accepted Christ. They will stand among the vilest of sinners. The fact is all are lost and condemned.

B. The Accuracy of the Evidence (12b) – As the trial begins, Christ will read the charges. The evidence will be presented according to what is recorded in the **books**. So what are these books? What do they contain? I believe that we can say with certainty there will be at least three books that are opened that day.

1) The Bible – men will stand before Christ and be judged according to the Word of God. **Jn.12:48 – He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.** Every sinner will stand accountable for the truth of God's Word that was presented to them. Their lives will be measured according to God's holy standard recorded in His Word. Many have rejected it, mocked it, and hated it, but one day they will be judged by it!

2) Book of Works – we find in these verses that men are judged according to their works. The deeds that men have done are recorded in heaven. God is keeping a record of all our lives. The dead will be judged according to the deeds they have done. For this reason I believe there will be degrees of punishment in hell.

3) Book of Life – God is keeping a book of life. I believe that all who were born were written in this book. It is a book of remembrance of life. For those who die in sin, their names are removed from the book of life. **Ps.69:28; Rev.3:5.** Those who reject Christ are blotted out of the book of life.

- The evidence that is presented will be irrefutable. Those who stand before God will be judged according to the life they have lived. There will be no one to blame but themselves.

- Can you imagine the horror when they find their name is not recorded in the book of life? I believe many will cry out on that day. **Mat.7:22 – Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?** Lord I thought I was saved! Mother told me I was baptized as a baby! Lord I thought that was good enough! I lived a good, moral life! Oh please look one more time and see if my name is there! I don't want to spend eternity in hell! Don't find yourself in this terrible situation.

C. The Announcement of the Verdict – With the evidence presented, a verdict will be given. Their works will condemn them and they will be eternally separated from the Lord.

- Jesus is the only way to escape a guilty verdict. If you are not trusting in Jesus, you are trusting in yourself. We are not saved of our own works. Jesus will declare these guilty and condemned. **Mat. 7:23 – And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.** What sorrow there will be to hear these words, realizing they have missed it all in rejecting Christ!

I. A Sovereign Display (11)

II. A Summons Delivered (12-13)

III. The Sentence Declared (14-15) – It is troubling to consider, but all of those who stand before God will be condemned. Not a one of them will receive pardon. After the guilty verdict is rendered, these will be sentenced to an eternity of separation from God and the pleasures of heaven to a devil's hell. I want to share a couple thoughts about this sentence.

A. An Active Sentence – All who were not found in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire. I fear that neither our minds nor our English language can find words to describe the horror and torment that awaits those reserved for hell. This will one day become a reality for those who reject Christ.

- In our day of injustice, many receive a suspended sentence, delaying punishment pending good behavior on the part of the accused. There will be no suspended sentences at this throne of judgment. All who are guilty will be cast into the lake of fire. There will be no hope of a plea bargain or a lighter sentence. There will be no early release for good behavior.
- Eternity is a long time and those who are condemned to hell will never escape. They will be there forever, suffering the torments reserved for those who denied the Lord's mercy.

B. An Absolute Sentence – Many may read this passage and believe that it is merely symbolic or that somehow it doesn't apply to them. God is very clear in regard to sin. It must be atoned; there must be a sacrifice made. Jesus made that sacrifice so that all might be forgiven and redeemed.

- There will be no escape if you face God in sin. There will be no second chances or purgatory. If you die lost, this will be your fate.
- God's Word has promised the judgment of the sinful. If you stand before God in sin, you will be without excuse. You are accountable to God for the life you live and the condition of your soul.

I want to close with the words of John MacArthur from his commentary on Revelation. *“This passage describes the final sentencing of the lost and is the most serious, sobering, and tragic passage in the entire Bible. Commonly known as the Great White Throne judgment, it is the last courtroom scene that will ever take place. After this there will never again be a trial, and God will never again need to act as judge. The accused, all the unsaved who have ever lived, will be resurrected to experience a trial like no other that has ever been. There will be no debate over their guilt or innocence. There will be a prosecutor, but no defender; an accuser, but no advocate. There will be an indictment, but no defense mounted by the accused; the convicting evidence will be presented with no rebuttal or cross-examination. There will be an utterly unsympathetic Judge and no jury, and there will be no appeal of the sentence He pronounces. The guilty will be punished eternally with no possibility of parole in a prison from which there is no escape.”*

Are you absolutely certain of your salvation? You don't have to face the Great White Throne. Come to Jesus today!