

“The Great White Throne Judgment”

Revelation 20:11-15

Media Reference Number GSX643 Sunday, February 25, 2018

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Key Words: Judgment

“One of the first gospel illustrations that ever made a real impression upon my young heart was a simple story which I heard a preacher tell when I was less than nine years old.

It was of pioneers who were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was necessarily slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it. As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?" The leader replied, "My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!"

What a picture of the believer, who is safe in Christ!

*"On Him Almighty vengeance fell,
Which would have sunk a world to hell.
He bore it for a chosen race,
And thus becomes our Hiding Place."*

The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, and all who are in Christ are safe forever, for they are now standing where the fire has been."

H.A. Ironside, Illustrations of Bible Truth, Moody Press, 1945, pp. 34-35.

The judgment we are about to read, is in fact, the judgment of unbelievers

The One on the Throne

Revelation 20:11 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.”

- *Him who sat on it* – Jesus Christ

- I always thought it was God the Father until this Study.
- **John 5:22-23** ^{“22} For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father.”
- **Romans 2:16** “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”
- *The earth and heaven fled away* – (The current heavens and earth are destroyed)
 - **Psalm 102:25-26** “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. ²⁶ They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed.”
 - **Isaiah 34:4** “All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll”
 - **Isaiah 65:17** “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”
 - **Matthew 24:35** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”
 - **2 Corinthians 4:18** “For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
 - **2 Peter 3:7** ^{“7} But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”
 - **2 Peter 3:10-13** ^{“10} But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
 - **Revelation 21:1** “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”

The Dead before the Throne

Revelation 20:12 “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God...”

- *The Dead* – those that rejected Christ
 - The dead are very much alive, but in comparison to those that go to heaven, their destiny is that of punishment.
 - The living will not be there, only those that accepted Christ.
 - The Believers Judgment –

- **1 Corinthians 3:11-15** ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."
- **2 Corinthians 5:10** "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
 - Judgment – Gr. Bema; a step, a raised platform
 - *"At this bema believers are to be made manifest, that each may receive the things done in (or through) the body," according to what he has done, "whether it be good or bad." There they will receive rewards for their faithfulness to the Lord. For all that has been contrary in their lives to His will they will suffer loss, 1 Cor. 3:15.*
 - Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Vol. 2, p. 338). Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.
- **Small** – Small in their influence, resources and power
- **Great** – Great in their influence, resources and power
 - Regardless of stature or what good a person did, they will ALL stand before the throne.
 - **Standing** –
 - *"This is not a trial, trying to determine what the facts are. The facts are in; here is the sentencing of someone already condemned. "Their standing posture means that they are now about to be sentenced." (Walvoord)*
 - There will be no second chances, this judgment is final!
 - **Hebrews 9:27** "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"

The Books

Revelation 20:12-13 ¹² and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."

- **Books** –
- Judgment is then based on what was recorded in those books.

- **Ecclesiastes 12:14** “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing”
- **Luke 8:17** “For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light.”
- **Hebrews 2:2** “For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward”
- **Revelation 20:13** “And they were judged, each one according to his works”
- **Book of life –**
 - Everyone that has ever lived is in this book
 - *If their name isn't in the Lambs book then they are blotted out of this book*
 - **Psalm 69:28** “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.”
 - **Philippians 4:3** ³ “And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the *Book of Life*.”
 - **Revelation 17:8** “And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the *Book of Life* from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”
 - **Revelation 22:19** “and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the *Book of Life*, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”
- **Lamb's book of life –**
- Only those that are Born-Again are in this book
 - **Revelation 21:27** “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*.”

The Second Death

Revelation 20:14-15 ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And *anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*”

- **The Second Death –**
 - **Revelation 21:8** “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”
 - “*As there is a second and higher life, so there is also a second and deeper death. And as after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life.*” (Alford)
 - If you are born (physically) once, you die twice (physically/spiritually).
 - If you are born twice (physically/spiritually) you die once (physically).

- **Lake of Fire –**

- **Matthew 25:46** “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”
- **Mark 9:45-46** “⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—⁴⁶ where ‘*Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.*’
 - “*Hell is a witness to the righteous character of God. He must judge sin. Hell is also a witness to man’s responsibility, the fact that he is not a robot or a helpless victim, but a creature able to make choices. God does not “send people to hell”; they send themselves by rejecting the Saviour (Matt. 25:41; John 3:16–21). Hell is also a witness to the awfulness of sin. If we once saw sin as God sees it, we would understand why a place such as hell exists. In light of Calvary, no lost sinner can condemn God for casting him into hell. God has provided a way of escape, patiently waiting for sinners to repent. He will not lower His standards or alter His requirements. He has ordained that faith in His Son is the only way of salvation.*”
 - Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 621). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Wrapping up –

This heavenly courtroom will have no jury, there will be no defense attorney, there will be a judge, there will be a sentence, and there will be a judgment rendered. The question is, why would a man or woman reject the free gift of salvation?

Today is the day of salvation!

John 3:16-21

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”