

# In Shadow Of The Judgment

*Evangelistic Institutes*

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My Bible says all eternity-bound men and women will stand at a common judgment that awaits all mankind. Hebrews 9:27 declares, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." And the word of God in Ecclesiastes states, "For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil." There is a certain solemnity of that final judgment because the wages of sin is death.

Men spend their lives in a vain pursuit of money and pleasure, I know for that was how I lived until God showed me otherwise and he stamped eternity on my eyelids and gave me a burden for the souls of men. I want to preach this message to you today, friends, and you'd better listen to it because it has to do with your soul, your eternity-bound soul. When I was a young man years ago, I stood on the isle of Patmos and I looked around that rocky island and I reflected on how the Apostle John had an encounter there with the risen Christ, with his head and hairs white like wool, and his eyes as a flame of fire. And I found a Greek monk, an old man who walked me up to a little cave on a hillside with a drawing of an open Bible and a dove above the door that cave for inside that cave was the place where John received the book of Revelation as Jesus gave it to him.

John was an old man at the time and he received those visions from the Lord; he related them to his scribes who wrote them down. And John saw things that day, friends, so dreadful, it was just like his account of seeing Jesus in the midst of those seven golden candlesticks and his feet was like fine brass, and John records, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." John got a clear sight that day of the last judgment and he wrote it all down in Revelation 20, beginning in verse 11 which reads, "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." Oh, the terribleness, friends, of that holy and pure great white throne with the judge of the earth sitting there. The Apostle John fell down as a dead man before the risen Christ on the isle of Patmos. How in the world do you think a little puny you will be able to stand before him, before that judge on that day? This is the dissolution of heaven and earth which flee away with the force and fury of an atomic blast. You tell me how you're going to stand there and not be like Belshazzar at his feast when he saw the hand writing on the wall, and in his fear and trembling his knees went to knocking one against the other. You'll be standing there like you've got the heebie-jeebies and look at that big crowd there that day, friends.

This is what John saw, look at what he wrote down. "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." The dead small and great meaning rich and poor from every generation that's ever lived and died that are heading for the judgment; all of mankind will stand in that immense crowd on that day, the day of the final judgment. Every generation including those antediluvians who drowned in the flood in the days of Noah; every filthy Sodomite who got burned up when God poured out hellfire from heaven on the cities of the plains and burned them up and reduced them to ashes; every Caesar, every dictator, every Pharaoh will stand before that judge as will every crooked politician, every perverted Hollywood celebrity, every greedy businessman, he's going to stand there; every rotten king and queen that ever sat on a throne; every evil ruler of every nation; every adulterous, power-hungry President of the United States is going to stand there and opened up before them is a painful record of a bookkeeping God.

Psalm 130:3 talks about it, "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Who shall stand, friend? What's going to be revealed that day of man's wicked acts would make the devil sick to his stomach if he had a heart. And everybody does what's right in their own eyes, even if it's wrong in God's eyes.

I was reading about Ernest Hemingway, the great author, standing on a street corner in New York City talking to a drinking buddy of his who was also known for his womanizing and carousing, and the man said to Hemingway, "I'm not ashamed for one thing I've ever done," and Hemingway smiled and agreed with him saying, "Neither am I." Men don't view their wicked deeds of fornication and adultery and taking the name of the Lord in vain, but they don't view that as sin because they maintain a high opinion of themselves, they think God looks the other way. But no, friend, God keeps a detailed record book on every one of us and every mother's son will one day stand before this great white throne and be confronted by the judge who sits there, and shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

God's going to peel open that record book on your life, friend. He's going to peel you like an onion and every thought you ever had, every deed you ever did, every word you ever spoke along with every motive behind it will be read out loud that day, not only the things you did in secret but the things you didn't do that you should have done, sins of commission, sins of omission, willful sins, presumptuous sins. Lord have mercy! Listen to me, friend, God doesn't want your leftovers that you've been giving him. You're either 100% sold out to him with all your heart or you're just fooling yourself with a deceived and divided heart. Jesus must have first place in your life, self must be dethroned and another enthroned there, the living Lord.

The Apostle John was confronted with terrible frightening things that day on the isle of Patmos. He saw the vast black-hearted crowd of humanity standing before a pure white holy throne. He saw it all. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Oh, I wish I could close all the windows in here and lock the doors and shut out the light and ask the Spirit of the Lord to throw back the curtain of darkness on eternity and let you see what

the Apostle John saw at the great white throne. It's one thing, friend, to hear about a thing, it's quite another to see it.

Job came to the end of all his sufferings when he finally looked up, cried out to his God in heartbroken desperation, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear but now mine eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Some of us might do well to go find us a heap of ashes and sit there for a while in humility and confession of sin. How can you sit there under the knowledge of your secret sins and not come clean with God right now, right now? You're going to stand before this God one day, friend, a God who knows every move you've ever made and writes it down. I wish you could see what John saw, friend, because one day soon you'll stand before him, he will open the book on you and your life will be revealed and you will fall under his intense scrutiny as your deeds are held up against his unbending law; the strictness and severity of that law stops every guilty mouth. You will stand before God, before a holy God who has eyes of fire, they'll burn right through you, burn through all your hypocritical ways, burn up all your pathetic excuses.

God is like a fire, my Bible says, and you'll be on the hot seat that day. You'll stand there before that solemn judge in your own merits. You will fail that test for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. You must stand there in the merits of another, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must get your sins washed in the blood of the Lamb for forgiveness of sin. If earth and sky can't stand before the great white throne but all they can do is flee away, how can you stand there as a guilty rebel before a holy God? You'll be blown over like a leaf in a hurricane. Your cover will be blown up like a worm being blown up by a stick of dynamite. How will you stand on that day when the books are opened, your dirty deeds dragged out to the searching spotlight of God's Holy Spirit? The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

"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. 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." Hell and its torments are the portion for the damned. The terrible screeches and screams that rise up from a smoking hell would make the hair stand on the back of your neck, friend.

When I was a little boy, I attended the funeral of my Italian grandfather. I went to an old-fashioned Italian wake and there I heard the most ungodly cries of anguish and grief from the family of my dead grandfather. It was terrifying to a little boy like me to hear grown men and women wail and shriek in grief and agony. Jesus speaks of hell by saying, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Weeping speaks of great grief and loss; gnashing of teeth signifies great anger and regret. Hell is full of millions and millions of screaming souls crying night and day. Trust me, friend, when I say you don't want to go to hell, you don't want to go to hell, you don't want to go to hell! You'll stand at that great white throne with the lake of fire flashing and crackling behind you, you can feel the heat of it on your back. You don't want to be bound hand and foot and thrown in there against your will. Listen to me, friend, listen to me: nobody goes to hell on their own accord,

they had to be thrown in there kicking and screaming. That neighbor of yours will be cast into the lake of fire. That coworker of yours will be cast into the lake of fire. That loved one of yours may be cast into the lake of fire.

I stood at the casket of my father-in-law and his sister came up beside me weeping and saying, "Oh, I hope he was saved! Oh, I hope he was saved!" She didn't know because she never witnessed to him even though she claimed to be a Christian herself. "I hope he was saved," was all she could say. It makes me reflect on the shame of my own life in not witnessing more. His face still haunts me, I can still see it now as I think of him. There was a young man, a construction worker, who I hired with a three man crew to do some work on my house. I'd meet the crew there at 7 AM and this young man was always the first one there so we'd kill time as we waited on the other two men. Why, we'd talk about sports or politics, we'd kill time with things of the world like that, then about a month after these men had finished the work on my house, I was sitting at my kitchen table one morning reading the newspaper, I always made it a habit to read the obituaries to see if there was anybody in there I knew. Well, this young man's face stared at me at the top of the obituary page. He'd died suddenly and tragically. He was only 32 years old. And as I stared at his face, I came under Holy Ghost conviction of sin, the sin of omission was all over me like a dark cloud as I sat in my chair that morning for I had failed to share Christ with that young man even though God had that young man show up early every single morning in the week so I'd have time to talk to him and I wasted that opportunity by talking sports and nonsense when I should have been telling him about Jesus. He died one month later. His face haunts me still for my failure to witness to him. How about you, friend, are you going to stand at a coffin and moan, "Oh, I hope he was saved," when it's too late to do anything about it?

Hell is a place of unending torment. If you've ever seen a slash movie or a horror movie that was so upsetting to you that it kept you awake at night, that movie's only make-believe but hell is a real place with real suffering and real misery, and once you're shut up in there you can never escape. Listen to me, friend, I know I am a sinner and I need a substitute for sin and so do you, so do you, friend. Jesus is the friend of sinners. Look at that man on the cross, friend, see him there with his arms outstretched beckoning you to come to him and believe on him. Look at that blood-stained Savior for sin who loved me and gave himself for me. Jesus is the pearl of great price worth selling all for so he may be gained. Jesus is chief among 10,000. Jesus is the lily of the valley, the bright and morningstar, and one day every knee shall bow at him, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Why wait until then, friend? If you've not trusted this blessed Savior, do it now. Surrender to God. Receive him now before it's too late. Soon he will come in judgment on this world when his anger shall burn as an oven and then you shall meet him as your judge. As your judge.

Let me close with this story which always means so much to me. There was a man traveling through the city of St. Louis and it was a Sunday and he was a Christian, so he parked his car at a downtown church and he went inside to worship. Once he was in there, he realized he was the only white person in an all black church, so he took his seat on the back row. Up on the platform was a well-dressed elderly pastor who was speaking

on his subject that morning and his subject was heaven. He began his sermon by saying, "Some folks call heaven paradise, other folks call it Abraham's bosom. I like to think of heaven this way. Here is Jesus just returned from his earthly ministry and old Gabriel greets him, 'Hello, Jesus, sure is good to see you, Jesus. Welcome home, Jesus. But wait, who's that with you? Is that that thief from the cross? Oh no, sir, we can't have no thieves up here. He's not welcome here.' Then Jesus replied, 'Never you mind, Gabriel, never you mind.' And just then he placed his arm around the thief and said, 'Never you mind. He's with me.'"

Well, I like that story, friends, because it's so true. If you're going to get to heaven, it'll only be by Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." Here Jesus answers the three greatest questions of the human heart. How can I be saved? Jesus said, "I am the way." How can I be sure? Jesus said, "I am the truth." How can I be satisfied? Jesus said, "I am the life." And in John 6:35 Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Listen, friend, the gospel is for the hungry, the weary, and the thirsty. Let me ask you, friend, are you hungry for God? Are you sick and tired of your sins? Are you thirsty for Christ? He invites poor sinners to come to him and believe on him, the duty required is to come and he has a pure gospel promise to all who come, "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Listen, friend, put it down big plain and straight: a day is fast approaching where you will stand at the final judgment and face that judge. Surrender all you are to all he is and he is Lord. Throw down your shotgun of rebellion and trust Jesus as your Savior so you can be there when he wraps his arm around you at that heavenly gate and he proclaims, "He's with me. She's with me." Listen to this gospel call. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let them take the water of life freely."