

## The Sinner's Day in God's Courtroom

**Text:** Revelation 20:11-15

**Introduction:** We need to answer a couple of important questions relating to this judgment:

1. When will this judgment occur? Answer: At the end of the millennium (refer chart).
2. Who will be at this judgment? Answer: The lost of all the ages. This is NOT a judgment for believers. They will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, not to have their salvation reviewed but their service for the Lord and to determine their rewards (See Rom. 14:10; 1. Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).
3. The Great White Throne Judgment will be the sinner's day in court. In this sermon we will consider 4 truths about this judgment.

### I. THE JUDGE ON THE THRONE (VS. 11)

#### A. The Seat Described (The Judge's Throne) (Vs. 11a)

1. It's size – 'great'
  - a. The throne's size is symbolic of the greatness and Omnipotence of the One sitting upon it.
  - b. Unlike the throne described in Rev. 4, this throne has no rainbow encircling it. This is not the throne of grace which the believer has the privilege of approaching. It is the throne of pure and undiluted justice. No grace will be dispensed from this throne, only God's Holy wrath against sin.
2. It's color – 'white'
  - a. The word for white is a word that speaks of a radiant, dazzling white.
  - b. The color of the throne is significant. It symbolizes the absolute purity and righteousness of God, his unchanging holiness.
  - c. John Phillips: "There is a terrible fact set before us, the fact of the great white throne. It is the throne of God, dazzling to the eye, reflecting a purity so intense that before it the very seraphim shrink. Guilty men summoned to that throne, have no place to hide, nothing behind which to cower. All the foolish little delusions behind which men hide today will be gone, and men will be confronted by a fact too terrible to contemplate – the great white throne."

#### B. The Sovereign Described (The Judge's Countenance) (Vs. 11b)

1. The Sovereign's Identity – "him that sat on it"
  - a. This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ as the following Scriptures make clear that judgment is committed to the Son of God.
  - b. John 5:22 "For the Father judgeth no man, **but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:**"
  - c. Acts 17:31 "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness **by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof** he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

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- d. Challenge: You can either receive Christ now as your Saviour and experience His indescribable, wonderful grace and mercy or you can reject Christ and face Him one day as your judge and experience His wrath and justice.
2. The Sovereign's Majesty – "from whose face"
  - a. The following words barely come close to describing this scene: Majestic, Awesome, Dreadful, indescribable. Imagine his eyes as a flame of fire, burning with holy anger against your sin. Those eyes that see right through you with perfect knowledge. Imagine the glory and light streaming from His face.
  - b. "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" = so awesome and majestic is the countenance of the One seated on the throne, the earth and heaven are described as fleeing away. "The material universe shrinks away as if awed by the face of Him who summons the dead to their accounting." (Harry Ironside) This could well be the same event described in 2 Peter 3:10 because when we come to the very next chapter the first heaven and first earth have passed away (Rev. 21:1). "The Great White throne is located somewhere in limitless space and outside human history. The words describe a sudden and violent termination of the physical universe." (Robert L. Thomas)
  - c. "found no place for them" = there is no place found for the earth and the heaven which means there is absolutely no hiding place for the sinner. There is no escaping this judgment. In this life, men have a free will and can choose to reject Christ and the truth but they will have no choice about being present at this judgment no matter how viciously they may oppose God.

## II. THE GUILTY BEFORE THE THRONE (VS. 12a, 13)

### A. Their Summons to the Throne (Vs. 13)

This verse describes the second resurrection unto damnation (See Vs. 5-6) in fuller detail. There are three places from which the dead are said to be raised:

1. The resurrection of the body
  - a. "the sea" – this means this resurrection includes all those without an official burial place will be resurrected. All the unsaved dead will be raised regardless of the condition of their bodies. Think of all the lives that have been lost at sea and the picture of their bodies being raised.
  - b. 'death' – death gives up the bodies of the unsaved dead. At present, the spirits of the unsaved are in hell but their bodies are in the grave. But in this day there will be the bodily resurrection of the unsaved. Like the saved, their resurrected bodies will endure for eternity but in torments.
  - c. Phillips: "...out of the tombs they will come, up from the depths of the sea, forth from the arctic wastes, up from the burning sands, and out of the tropical bush. From this age and from that they will come, those newly dead and those whose bones are but dust...The bodies will rise from the dust, and the souls will come up from hades. Back they will come, with faces wrecked

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and ruined by sin...Back they will come to be judged – according to their works.”

2. The resurrection of the spirit
  - a. 'hell' = the current place of fiery torment where lost souls await this day of final judgment.
  - b. Hell (hades) is like a temporary lock up, a remand center. In South Australia, “a remand prisoner is someone held in custody while waiting for their trial or sentencing.” (S.A. Department for Correctional services).

### **B. Their Standing before the Throne (Vs. 12a)**

The unsaved dead are seen standing before the throne. “They come from all walks of life and degrees of greatness.” (Walvoord)

1. The small – the unknown people of no rank (See Rev. 19:18) but who have rejected Christ.
2. The great – God’s judgment will not be a respecter of persons. It won’t matter how rich, famous or powerful you were in this life. You will stand alongside the rest of lost humanity, levelled before the great judgment bar of God.
3. Imagine what this will look like:
  - a. Neighbors will be there, tradesmen that worked on your house, unsaved family members and work colleagues.
  - b. Kings, queens, emperors, presidents, princes, prime ministers and famous military commanders will be there. People like the Roman Caesars and Egyptian Pharaohs. People like Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin.
  - c. Pop stars, movie stars, the rich and famous will be there. People like the Beatles, the rolling stones, Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe, and multitudes of others like them.
  - d. Unsaved sports stars will be there. Football players who loved their fornication and drunkenness too much to repent and seek Christ.
  - e. Philosophers like Voltaire, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx will be there.
  - f. Apostate pastors, priests and priestesses of Christendom will be there. Roman Catholic Popes and bishops, false prophets and prophetesses. Joseph Smith will be there, Ellen G. White and Charles Taze Russel.
  - g. Founders and leaders of false religions will be there. Buddha, Confucius and Hindu gurus. The Dali Lama, Muhammad etc...
  - h. Atheists will be there. Men like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

## **III. THE EVIDENCE REVEALED AT THE THRONE (VS. 12B)**

In this verse there is “the books” and “the book”. There is...

### **A. The Books of the Sinners**

These will be a complete, perfect, Divine records of each individual’s sinful life. God’s judgment will be based upon perfect evidence and perfect justice will be given. Twice it is stated that the lost will be judged “according to their works” (Vs. 12b & 13b). The following sins will be revealed:

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1. Secret sins – Rom. 2:16 “In the day when God shall judge **the secrets of men** by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” Secret sins committed and no one knew or found out. Secret sins of the heart. Secret lusts, secret thoughts, secret hatred etc...
2. Spoken sins – Matthew 12:36 Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That **every idle word** that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” This is more than just words spoken carelessly. The word also means barren and useless. It includes ever dirty joke, swear word and blasphemy.
3. Statute Sins – 1 John 3:4 “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law.**” Romans 3:19 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: **that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**”
4. Specified Sins – Rev. 21:8 “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.**”  
These are some of the sins that will be found recorded in the books and form the basis of God’s judgment of the lost.
  - a. Fearful = those who refuse to trust Christ because of the fear of man. E.g. the fear of opposition from family and friends.
  - b. Unbelieving = unbelief is a sinful choice that damns the soul (Mk. 16:16).
  - c. Abominable = the root word is “I pollute” and refers to that which is unclean before God both spiritual and physical. Refers to those who live and practice abominable sins.
  - d. Murderers = those who break the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment (Ex. 20:13).
  - e. Whoremongers = a user of whores (prostitutes). The word encompasses all forms of sexual sins which are against the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment such as fornication, adultery, pornography, sodomy and bestiality.
  - f. Sorcerers = those involved in witchcraft and the dark arts in all its forms. The word encompasses “every type of dark craft, enchantment, astrology, fortune telling, necromancy, and consulting with familiar spirits.” (Cloud)
  - g. Idolaters = those who break the first and second commandments – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” and “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.” It includes those who create their own imaginary god.
  - h. Liars = notice the word ‘all’. It covers lying in all its forms. God is truth so to lie is to put yourself in direct opposition to His very character. “Lies are of the devil (Jn. 8:44). Lies plunged God’s creation into darkness. Fallen man is a liar by nature (Ps. 58:3). The fallen heart is “deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9).
5. Self-righteous Sins – the sin of trusting in your good works instead of receiving God’s free gift of salvation by faith (Eph. 2:8-9; Isaiah 64:6; Rom. 3:20; 4:4-5).

### B. The Book of the Saved

1. The Foreknowledge in the Book (Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

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- a. In the ancient world a city would keep a roll of its citizens. In a similar way, only those who are enrolled as citizens of heaven will be granted eternal life.
  - b. The book of life is “the book containing the names of those of all ages who are elect in Christ according to the foreknowledge of God through faith in the Gospel (Rev. 13:8; 17:8).” (David Cloud) It is “the roll of those who are saved and have eternal life.” (Walvoord)
2. The Finality of the Book (Vs. 15).
- a. The Bible seems to give some indication that names are blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5; Ex. 32:33). Some suggest that it contains the names of all the living but when a person rejects Christ, their name is removed (blotted out).
  - b. Whatever the case may be, in the final analysis, only the names of the saved are in the Book of Life and only they will be allowed into heaven.
  - c. The evidence in the “books” supports the absence of their names from “the book”.
  - d. Cloud: “The very presence of the Book of Life will remind every sinner at that judgment that they rejected the life offered through Christ and the Gospel.”
3. Challenge: Is your name in the books or **THE BOOK?**

### IV. THE SENTENCE FROM THE THRONE (VS. 14-15)

#### A. Death (Vs. 14)

1. Death is cast into the lake of fire.
2. Hell is cast into the lake of fire.
3. The lost are cast into the lake of fire (Vs. 15).
4. This is described as “the second death”. Romans 6:23 says “For the wages of sin is death...” Warning! This is not death in the sense of ceasing to exist but a conscious, living death for all eternity. The word death means separation in the Bible. It is described in 2 Thess. 1:9 as “everlasting destruction”.
5. Illustration: Adam and Eve were separated from God spiritually long before they ever died physically.

#### B. Damnation (Vs. 15)

1. The Degrees of their Damnation (Matt. 11:20-24; 23:14). The more you’ve heard the Gospel, the more accountable you become. God judges the unrepentant on the basis of the light they have.
2. The Description of their Damnation (Vs. 15b)
  - a. “the lake of fire” = nothing could be more descriptive of the torments awaiting the unsaved than this.
  - b. Matt. 25:46 Jesus said, “And these shall go away **into everlasting punishment:** but the righteous into life eternal.”
  - c. Matt. 13:41-42 Jesus said, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into **a furnace of fire:** there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

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- d. Thomas: “Language like this leaves no room for any form of universalism, soul sleep, an intermediate state, a second chance, or annihilation of the wicked.”
3. The Duration of their Damnation (Vs. 10)
4. Imagine yourself standing at this judgment having rejected Christ and the Gospel:

The book with the record of your life is brought out and blow by blow the evidence of your sin is laid bare before Christ. Every thought, word and deed is exposed. There is no hiding place, no escape and no option to appeal. You cannot argue your way around your case as you know that the evidence being presented against you is flawless and perfect. Your mouth is stopped and you stand utterly condemned. Your good works amount to nothing. In fact, your prideful reliance upon them only increases your guilt before God. You rejected His free gift of salvation, the gift purchased with His own blood. The verdict is clear – guilty! You hear the dreaded words from the throne “Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41). Suddenly, a strong hand grips you. You look, an angel has come to escort you to the lake of fire. You try to pull away but there is no escaping his strong and powerful grasp. He pulls you towards the entrance to the lake of fire. As you draw near, you begin to hear the cries and wails of the damned. You are going to the flames forever, never to return, never to escape. You rejected Christ, you turned away the gift of eternal life. You could have lived forever in heaven, now you will spend eternity in hell. You could have enjoyed eternal happiness, now you will experience eternal torments. You could have spent eternity with Christ, now you will spend eternity with Satan. You reach the lake of fire and feel yourself lifted into the air and hurled into the fire. Your body is engulfed in flames. The pain and torment is beyond description. You long to be burned up so that it will be over but the burning continues on and yet you are not consumed. The thought dawns on you that even after a billion years of this has past, it will be but a tiny drop in the ocean of eternity. You are there for all eternity, forever and forever.

### Conclusion:

1. Challenge to the lost: The time to receive Christ as your Saviour is NOW!  
“...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2).
2. Challenge to the saved:
  - Are you thankful for your salvation? Consider what Christ rescued you from! No wonder it is described in Hebrews 2:3 as “so great salvation.” Should not our response be one of total surrender to God? He purchased us with His own blood. Should we not yield our lives to Him and serve Him all our days? Should not our response be, “If Thou didst all that for me, what can I do for thee!”
  - Are you sharing Christ with others? A consciousness of the future punishment of the wicked coupled with the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, should drive us to share the Gospel with others.