

The Great White Throne

Introduction:

- I. The book of Revelation is a great book to study, but the truth is it is studied too much by the wrong people, and not enough by the right people. The people who should be studying the book are those who have already learned the more important things—like how to get into Christ and how to worship God and live acceptably before the Lord. In other words, those who are Christians. But the one who has not yet had his sins washed away by the blood of Christ, has no business worrying about who the beast of Revelation 13 is, or what the number 666 really means. The one who is still in sin should be asking the simple question, "what must I do to be saved," not trying to unlock the mysteries of the book of Revelation. And yet we often find that the first thing a person outside of Christ wants to do is discuss the book of Revelation.

- II. Having said that, there is a passage in the book of Revelation to which I believe we all should all take note. It's found in **Revelation 20:11-15**. Let's begin by reading this passage together. I want to talk to you about The Great White Throne, and in doing so let's look at four things that John saw.

Lesson:

I. John Saw A Throne (ver. 11a).

The throne in this passage implies a judgment. Listen to me: a judgment day is coming. The Bible is clear on this (**Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10**). We should all see what John saw! We should be able to look through the glass of written revelation and see a great white throne. We should all be able to see and understand that one day we will be standing before that throne being judged. Why is it that this world is so morally bankrupt today? Why do so many people shrug off their responsibilities before God and live their lives as if there were no God? I'll tell you why. It is because too many people are ignoring the throne of God.

Listen to me: If you have not yet obeyed the gospel of Christ and your sins have not been washed away by the precious blood of Christ, you better see what John saw—you better stop and look at the throne of God. If you're thinking that the world is fun and the streets are exciting and that you are just going to live it up for a while, you better stop and look at the throne of God. If you have developed the mentality that says, "this is my life and I'll do whatever I want; after all I'm in charge of my life and nobody can tell me what to do," you better stop and look at the throne of God. If you have been buried in the waters of baptism but you are no longer walking in the newness of life; instead you are following the same old path that you used

to follow, you better stop and look at the throne of God. If your life consist of a little dab of religion and you aren't seeking first the kingdom of God; if you're thinking that coming to church on Sunday morning is enough to pacify and conciliate God and that your sporadic attendance will cover a multitude of sins, you better stop and look at the throne of God. What are you saying preacher? I'm saying if your life is not in order, you better see what John saw. Listen to me: He saw a throne. He saw a throne. He saw a throne. And there is no question but that the great throne that he saw reminded him of the day of judgment, and we all better be reminded of that day too (**Heb. 9:27; 2 Pet. 2:9**). Please don't live your life as if the here and now is all there is. Don't make that mistake. Too many people are just living in the moment without giving any thought to the future. The time is coming when this life is going to be over. Paul once said, "*Then cometh the end...*" People want to live as if the end is never going to come, but Paul said it's coming and he was right (**Jas. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:24-25**). And this word which is going to last forever is the standard by which we shall all be judged (**Jn. 12:48**). Don't live your life in view of what others may be doing. Don't make the mistake that the Corinthians made by measuring yourself by the standards of others (**2 Cor. 10:12**).

Illus: Proper Standard

There was an armed robber named Dennis Lee Curtis who was arrested in 1992 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Curtis apparently had scruples about his thievery. In his wallet the police found a sheet of paper on which was written the following code, sort of a robber's rules, if you will:

1. I will not kill anyone unless I have to.
2. I will take cash and food stamps, no checks.
3. I will rob only at night.
4. I will not wear a mask.
5. I will not rob mini-marts or 7-Eleven stores.
6. If I get chased by cops on foot, I will get away. If chased by a vehicle, I will not put the lives of innocent civilians on the line.
7. I will rob only seven months out of the year.
8. I will enjoy robbing fro the rich to give to the poor.

This thief had a sense of morality, but it was flawed. When he stood before the court, he was not judged by the standards he had set for himself, but by the higher law of the state. Likewise, when we stand before God, we will not be judged by the code of morality we have written for ourselves, but by God's perfect law. Compare yourself to the right standard. Why? Because someday you're going to die and after this the judgment.

II. John Saw Someone on the Throne (ver. 11b).

Take note of the fact that John didn't just see a throne, he saw an occupied throne. The question is, "who was on the throne?" It wasn't a judge who

could be tricked or fooled in some kind of way. Notice that it was one who was so great that even the earth and the heaven fled away from His face. Now we are not left in the dark as to who John saw on the throne. It was Jesus, the Son of God (**Jn. 5:22**). Now let's get a picture of Jesus (**Rev. 1:12-15**).

- **Hair white as wool & white as snow.** This symbolizes the purity and righteousness and holiness of Jesus. And it tells us two things. First, *His judgment is going to be just and fair (Rom. 2:2-5)*. Second, *there won't be any way to get out of a just verdict*. You won't be able to talk your way out of your verdict. You won't be able to buy your way out of your verdict. You won't be able to bribe your way out of your verdict. You will get exactly what you deserve under the stipulations of the gospel of Christ, whether it be good or bad. Now what that tells us is that we better prepare ourselves for that judgment right now while we can. No wonder Paul said, "...*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...*" We had better be sure that we are doing that because there won't be any second chances once we die and the judgment of God begins.
- **Eyes like a flame of fire.** This symbolizes the piercing and penetrating vision of Christ. Listen to me: earthly judges sometimes make mistakes (there are some who are in prison unjustly because the judge made a mistake), but there won't be any mistakes made when we are judged by Jesus. Someone may think, "maybe He won't know this or maybe He has forgotten that ." No, no, no! When we are judged by Jesus he will know all the facts and have all the details because he will be able to search out every corner of our minds and see into the deep crevices of our heart and soul (**Heb. 4:13**).
- **Feet like brass burned in a furnace.** This is a symbol of destructive power and reveals the ability of Jesus to trample under his feet all of His foes. It is sad to hear people today saying all manner of wicked things about Jesus, but one day he shall trample them under His feet. Listen to me:
 - **The scribes and Pharisees** who said that Jesus was an imposter will be trampled under His feet.
 - **The Jewish officials** who spit in the face of our Lord and smote Him with the palm of their hands will be trampled under His feet.
 - **The unrepentant Jews** who yelled out to Pilate, "crucify him, crucify him," sure enough got what they wanted, but one day they will be trampled under His feet.

- **The Roman soldiers** who mocked Jesus by putting a crown of thorns on His head and a scarlet robe on his back and bowed down and said, "Hail, king of the Jews," were having big fun at our Lord's expense, but one day they will be trampled under His feet.
- **The atheist** will be trampled under His feet. **The agnostic** will be trampled under His feet. **The feminist** who says that Jesus is nothing but a male chauvinist will be trampled under His feet. **The unbeliever** who says that Jesus is only a myth will be trampled under His feet. All of His enemies and foes may have their way right now, but someday they will all be trampled under the feet of Jesus. And what this should tell you is that you better not die outside of His favor. When Jesus comes back you are going to what to be on his side because His feet are like brass burned in a furnace.
- **Voice as of many water.** Imagine the overwhelming roar of a great waterfall like Niagara Falls. It captivates the mind and demands the attention of all who see it. Hear me on this: you may want to ignore Jesus right now; you may decide to pay Him no mind right now, but when you appear before the judgment seat of Christ and hear His mighty voice call out your name, you will pay attention. When Jesus tells you to bow, you will bow. When He tells you to get up, you will get up. When He tells you to confess His name, you will say it's Jesus and you will acknowledge His as Lord. But pay attention now! If you don't confess Him now, it will be too late when you stand before that great white throne.
- **From His mouth, a two-edged sword.** The two-sword is an instrument of judgment and punishment. Jesus may have come the first time as a Lamb ready to be slain, but when He comes the second time, he will be ready to judge the world and punish all those who have done evil in the sight of God.

This is the One who will be sitting on the great white throne. Are you ready to appear before Him? I hope so. I hope so. But now, let's notice what else John saw.

III. **John Saw All the Dead Standing Before the Throne (ver. 12a).**

This points to the inclusive and all-encompassing nature of the judgment. Everyone wants their day in court and when it comes to heaven's court, we will all get it. Imagine the scene that is taking place. Here we are in heaven and there are millions of people. All kinds of people. Black and white and those in-between. Rich and poor and those in-between. Educated and uneducated and those in-between. Male and female, and yes those in-

between. Everyone will be there. Listen to me: Your mother will be there, and so will your father. Your grandmother and so will your grandfather. Your brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles will be there. Everyone will be there for John saw the small and the great. And at some point there is going to be a great separation between those who do right and those who do wrong (**Matt. 25:31-33**). What side will you be standing on? Will you be to the right or to the left?

I know one thing, we will see all men standing before the throne, stripped of all their pretenses and hypocrisies, appearing before God as they really are. We will see the greatest collection of sinners that has ever been seen, and if we be found faithful in Christ, we will be seeing them for the last time. They will be gathered together, standing one next to the other without regard to the station they occupied in life. The petty sinner will be standing next to the glorious sinner. The rich sinner will be standing next to the poor sinner. The common drunk will be standing next to the wicked world leader. Can you picture that? Everyone who ever lived and died in sin will be in the judgment line waiting to be judged. Cain will be there. Hitler will be there. There will be Presidents, Popes and even preacher standing there. What a frightful group that will be. A multitude of thieves, murderers, harlots, drunkards and drug users will be standing there. But let me tell you one thing. This group will not be limited to those who commit overt acts of sin that are despised by all. Those who commit the more subtle sins will be there too.

Those who are full of unkindness will be standing there. Those who hold grudges, refusing to forgive will be standing there. Those who think that God deserves only one hour of their time a week will be standing there. Those who play the hypocrite and who have fooled the preacher, and the elders, and the whole church into thinking that they are living righteously but really are not will be standing there. Anybody and everybody who has any kind of unrepentant sin in their life will be standing there will all the other sinners waiting to hear the words of Jesus, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."*

IV. John Saw Books Being Open (ver. 12b).

Now, take note here that John sees two different kinds of books. The first kind is simply a ledger in which God keeps track of every thing that we do. This book is an important book because it is going to be the book upon which our judgment is based. Everything that you have ever done is in that book. Everything that you have ever thought is in that book. Everything that you have ever said is in that book. This is why there won't be any mistakes made in the judgment. Everything is written down and since the book is in the mind of God it can't be tapered with. But now listen to me: there is a way to get a bad mark out of the book. It's called repentance.

Thank God he is willing to remove from the book the bad that we have done if we repent of it. And let me tell you something about God's eraser. It doesn't leave smudges. That's the way forgiveness is with man sometimes, but not with God. God forgives and forgets (**Heb. 10:15-17**).

Now, if things are in order in the book that contains the doings of your life, God places your name in a different book—the book of life. Now this is the book that you want to be in. If your name is in this book you are going to heaven (**Rev. 21:25-27**).

If my name is in that book, I don't care what else happens to me in this life. I may end up poor and lonely, but I don't care if my name is written in the book of life. I may not ever reach the physical goals that I have set for myself and my family, but I don't care if my name is written in the book of life. I may be persecuted and cast down by men, but I don't care as long as my name remains in the book of life. Pay attention to me now: family members may bring sadness to me, friends might disappoint me, loved ones may forsake me, but I don't care just as long as my name is in the book of life. You see, in the overall scheme of things, nothing is more important than getting your name in that book. And the only way you can do it is to obey the gospel and live faithfully unto death (**Rom. 1:16**).

But remember this: God's eraser works as well on the book of life as it does the other book. God can remove your name whenever He wants to. There is only one thing that would cause God to do that and that is sin, but make no mistake about it, sin will do it (**Rev. 22:19; Rev. 3:5**). Listen carefully: we can fall from grace (**Gal. 5:4**). So, whatever you do, you'd better make sure that your name is in that book, for John also saw what happens to those who are not written in the book of life (**Rev. 20:14-15**).

Conclusion:

Yes, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It is an appointment that we can't miss. There is only one way to assure yourself of a good verdict and to save yourself from the fire of hell—you must get into Christ.

Illus: There were some 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. Only one man seemed to have an 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 fire has already 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."