

## **The Last Judgment Revelation 20:11-15**

An arrogant Department of Agriculture representative stopped at a farm one day and said to the owner of the property, "I need to inspect your farm." The old farmer said "OK, but I warn you, don't go in that field over yonder." The Department of Agriculture representative said, "Sir, do you see this card? This card says that I have the authority of the U. S. Government behind me. This card means I can go wherever I want to on your farm no questions asked. Do you understand?"

The farmer nodded politely and said "Yes sir, I understand." A few minutes later the farmer heard some loud screams and when he looked up he saw the government agent running for the fence just as fast as he could and right behind him was the farmer's ornery old bull. The bull was madder than a nest full of hornets and gaining ground on the government man with every step. Just as the Ag Rep ran by him the old farmer yelled out, "Hey mister, why don't you show him your card!"

The agent should have listened to the farmer's warning.

The Bible contains a warning for all of us in Hebrews 9:27. *"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."* Friends, we would be wise to heed God's warning of judgment.

The message of God's judgment is written throughout the pages of the Bible. Time and time again the Holy Scripture warns us of coming judgment. While the Word of God speaks of many judgments there is going to be one last judgment. When will the last judgment occur? It will occur at the conclusion of the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth. At the end of the millennium Satan will be judged and cast into the lake of fire and then there is going to be the last judgment.

Please turn to Revelation chapter 20 with me. In our scripture text this morning we find four tremendous truths about the last judgment. First of all we see...

### **1. The Savior who will administer the last judgment**

John writes in 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."*

Notice that this last judgment is described as a *"great white throne."* It is called *"great"* because it is the throne of God. It is *"white"* because it represents the perfect holiness and purity of God. It is referred to as a *"throne"* because it speaks of the sovereignty of God.

I want you to know that God is on His throne right now. Isaiah wrote in chapter 6:1, *"I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up."* Now, if you are a Christian, the thought of the Lord sitting on His throne ought to fill your heart with a great sense of comfort and security in these challenging and uncertain days. But dear friend if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior it ought to fill your heart with a great sense of terror knowing that one day you will stand before Him at the great white throne judgment.

Look again at verse 11. John writes *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it.”* Who did John see sitting on this great white throne? The one sitting on the throne of judgment will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. How do we know that? Turn to John chapter 5. Look at verse 22. Jesus said, *“For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father”* (Jn. 5:22-23a).

Why has God the Father given all judgment to His Son? All judgment will be given to the Son because it was the Son who was judged for our sins on Calvary. Two thousand years ago the Son of God, Jesus the Christ died on a cross, and on that cross all of our sins were laid upon Him. Now, because of His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection the Bible teaches that judgment will be in the hands of the Lord Jesus. Today the question is, “what will you do with Jesus?” On the Day of Judgment the question will be, “what will Jesus do with you?”

Verse 11 goes on to tell us, *“From whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”*

When Jesus sits upon the great white throne at the final judgment the heavens and the earth as we know them will be no more. The Bible teaches that there will be a sudden, violent destruction of the universe. Let me read to you how the Apostle Peter describes it in 2 Peter 3:10-13. *“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. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 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? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”*

Just as the heavens and the earth were created from nothing by the word of the Lord, they will one day be sent back into nothingness by the word of the Lord. All that God has created will be uncreated. The heavens and the earth will flee from the face of the one who sits upon the great white throne and there will be no place for unrepentant sinners to hide from the Son of God and escape the judgment to come.

Next we see...

## **2. The Souls who will be the subject of the last judgment**

John says in verse 12 *“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God.”* Now look at verse 13. *“The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them.”*

Before the Lord Jesus destroys the current heavens and earth and replaces them with a new heaven and a new earth He will resurrect the dead bodies of all the unbelievers who have ever lived and summon their souls from Hades. Christ will call them all to come and stand before His great white throne. Out of the deep blue seas, and the lofty mountains, and the scorching deserts, and the tropical jungles where their bodies have been buried and their ashes scattered over the eons of time they will come. Out of all the little country cemeteries, and the beautiful memorial gardens, and the elaborate mausoleums they will come.

All of the unsaved of all the ages will be gathered together before the Great White Throne judgment.

The small sinners are going to be there. The great sinners are going to be there. The rich and the poor sinners, the famous and the obscure sinners, the good and the bad sinners, the young and the old sinners are all going to be there. The scoffers, the scorners, and the skeptics will be there. The sinfully rebellious, the self-righteous, and those who were simply religious will be there. The atheist who arrogantly boasted “there is no God” will be there. The agnostic who dismissively declared “It’s impossible to know if God even exists” will be there. The average Joe who foolishly believed just being a “good ole boy” was going to get him to heaven will be there. Every lost soul in human history who has rejected God’s mercy and grace will be there. They will all stand in one great throng before the righteous judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. What an awesome scene it will be.

Not only do we see here the mighty Savior who will administer the last judgment and the great mass of souls who will be the subject of the last judgment but John also describes for us...

### **3. The Standard which will be used for the last judgment**

Look again at verse 12. *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God. 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. 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”* (Rev. 20:12-13).

Illus – “I can have coffee if I want too. I’ve got my rights!” Everyone seems to be demanding their rights today. They want what’s coming to them. If you die without Jesus Christ as your Savior I can guarantee that you are going to get what’s coming to you. On the Day of Judgment you will receive justice. If it is justice you want, it is justice you will get. But let me warn you, when you finally get what you want you will not want what you get.

It says in verse 12 that *“the books were opened.”* What are these books? The final judgment will be according to two kinds of books: the Word of life – that is the testimony of God’s Word the Bible, and the works of life – the record of your life. Every lost sinner who stands before the Great White Throne will be judged according to the truth he or she has heard in this life. Jesus said *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”* (Jn. 12:48). Dear folks, the words of this blessed book are life to those who believe, but they are death to those who reject God’s truth.

Those who stand before the great white throne will be judged according to the Word of Life. They will also be judged according to the works of their life. The Lord Jesus will open the books containing the record of every person’s life and the evidence against them is going to be given. Verse 12 says *“And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”* Again in verse 13 the bible tells us that each one will be judged *“according to his works.”* Man’s salvation is according to God’s grace. God’s judgment will be according to man’s works.

We are living in an amazing time. Because of modern technology there is a record of just about everything you or I say or do. Isn't that a comforting thought? God has a record of everything you and I have ever done. God sees everything that happens. He hears everything that happens. He knows everything that happens. Everything that you have ever done, said, thought, or felt God has a record of it. It's all in the books.

Jesus said in Luke 12:2-3, *"for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops."* The bible says in Ecclesiastes 12:14, *"for God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing whether it is good or whether it is evil."*

All of the unsaved are going to be judged according to their works as recorded in the books. Since all men are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ and not by works why then will the Lord Jesus judge the unsaved according to their works?

It's important to understand that the purpose of the final judgment is not to determine the eternal destiny of the lost. Every soul who stands before the Great White Throne judgment will be cast into hell. Their rejection of Christ will have already destined their soul for the lake of fire. The Lord Jesus will open up the books and examine the record of the life of all the unredeemed in order to determine the degree of their punishment in hell. Just as there will be degrees of reward in heaven there will also be degrees of punishment in hell.

Jesus is a righteous Judge. At the Great White Throne Judgment He will sentence every lost soul to the punishment in hell he or she deserves according to their own works, and when the sentence is passed no one will be able to question the justice of His decision.

Notice, it says in verse 12, *"And another book was opened, which is the Book of life."* What is the Book of Life? It is a record of all the redeemed. It contains the name of every single person who has repented of their sins and received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Please listen to me. You need to be absolutely certain that your name is written in the Book of Life.

Not all restaurants are like MacDonald's, where just anyone can walk in and be served. As many of you know some restaurants require a reservation. To dine in some of the finer eating establishments in Kansas City you must have your name in the reservation book. If the Maître de doesn't find your name in the book you will not be seated. No matter how much you may want to eat there, if you show up without a reservation you will be shown the door.

Two thousand years ago Jesus went to the cross. With His own precious blood He paid the price for every sin you have ever committed from the day you were born until the day you die. By His sacrificial, atoning death, Jesus made it possible for you to be forgiven of all your sins and to have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Let me ask you this morning. Is your name in that book? Only those whose names have been written in the Book of Life will escape the judgment of hell and experience the joys of heaven.

Finally we see...

#### 4. The Sentence that will result from the last judgment

Verse 14 says “*Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*” Now look at verse 15. “*And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*” (Rev. 20:14-15).

With those words the last judgment is over. The evidence from the books is presented and the sentence is passed. Those whose names are not found written in the book of life are banished forever from the presence of God and cast into the lake of fire. Court is adjourned and the lost are never seen or heard from again. What a terrifying and tragic picture.

It is terrifying for obvious reasons. It is tragic because hell was never intended for man. The Bible tells us that God prepared this place of everlasting fire for the devil and his angels. The scriptures tells us that God is “*not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9) and be saved.

Imagine that you are sitting alone in a prison cell on death row. You have been tried fairly and found guilty. The Day of Judgment has come. You've had your last meal. You are just waiting for the prison officials to come and take you to the place where the sentence of death will be carried out.

All of a sudden you hear steps coming down the hallway. The steps draw closer and closer and grow louder and louder until they stop outside of your cell. You hear the key go into the lock. The door to your cell opens and I step in. I say, " I have some really, really good news for you. Now, I know you're guilty. All the evidence proves beyond a shadow of doubt that you are guilty as charged. I know it and so do you. The truth is, you deserve the sentence you have been given. But someone has agreed to take your place and pay for the crime you have committed. You have been offered a pardon. If you accept it you can walk out of here right now a free man.”

Wouldn't you be a fool to reject a free pardon like that?

When Jesus was crucified He died for every sinful thing you've ever done. He took your place. He took your judgment. He took your punishment. I'm here today to tell you that because of Christ's sacrifice for your sins you can receive God's free pardon.

If you will confess to God that you are a sinner and trust Jesus Christ as your Savior, you can leave this place today saying, "I am a child of God. All my sins are forgiven and I have been set free."

In the book of Deuteronomy the Lord God said to Israel, “*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life*” (Deut. 30:19). It's your choice: life or death, blessing or cursing, God's mercy now or God's judgment later.