

The Book Of Revelation Study 95

Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB77)

¹¹ *And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.*

¹² *And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

¹³ *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.*

¹⁴ *And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*

¹⁵ *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

This passage describes the final sentencing of the lost and is the most serious, sobering, and tragic passage in the entire Bible.

Commonly known as the Great White Throne judgment, it is the last courtroom scene that will ever take place. After this there will never again be a trial, and God will never again need to act as judge.

The accused, all the unsaved who have ever lived, will be resurrected to experience a trial like no other that has ever been.

There will be no debate over their guilt or innocence.

There will be a prosecutor, but no defender; an accuser, but no advocate.

There will be an indictment, but no defense mounted by the accused;

The convicting evidence will be presented with no rebuttal or cross examination.

There will an utterly unsympathetic Judge and no jury, and there will be no appeal of the sentence He pronounces.

The guilty will be punished eternally with no possibility of parole in a prison from which there is no escape.

The language of this passage is plain, stark, and unembellished.

Few details are given, and the description is utterly lacking in the vivid, eloquent modifiers that might be expected.

But the scene is frightening enough in its own right that such language would be superfluous.

The beloved apostle John, recording this vision in a cave or on a hillside on the island of Patmos, no doubt was shaken as he wrote of the eternal damnation of the wicked.

Ever since the Fall, Satan, the father of lies has attempted to deceive people about the reality of the coming judgment.

He has done his best to convince people that there will be no final tribunal.

Satan has deceived sinners into believing that they can live as they please without fear of ultimate accountability or future punishment.

Satan said to Eve, ***"You surely will not die!*** (Gen 3:4), thus voicing his denial of judgment on sin.

The primary means the devil uses in his deception are atheism (particularly the godless theory of evolution) and false religion.

Atheism's denial of God's existence means there is no moral Judge to whom people are accountable after they die.

They wrongly believe that they are free to sin as they please and then simply pass out of existence.

The gods of most false religions are not holy, requiring inward righteousness and heart obedience, and they are appeased by ritual and ceremony; thus these gods inspire no fear of accountability in their worshipers.

But despite the vain, foolish speculations of men, the true and living God is the Supreme Judge of the universe.

His judgment of unbelievers will be just, because He is just.

Deuteronomy 32:4 (NASB77)

⁴ "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

Also Job declares;

Job 37:23-24 (NASB77)

²³ "we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power; And He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness.

²⁴ "Therefore men fear Him; "

God cannot but be just, because the absolutely holy perfection of His nature will not allow Him to do anything but what is right.

God's will is the supreme standard of justice and equity, and He wills nothing but what is just, right, and true. Nothing outside of Himself compels God to act justly; Justice is His very nature.

Thus, all of God' acts toward people are perfectly just; Sinners have all wronged God's justice, but God's justice has not wronged them, nor could it ever

No one at the Great White Throne judgment will have the slightest grounds for complaint about his or her sentence.

Those who reject God's grace and mercy in this life will inevitably face His justice in the life to come.

God said of wayward Israel:

Psalms 81:11 (NASB77)

¹¹ "But My people did not listen to My voice; And Israel did not obey Me.

To their stiff-necked descendants Jesus declared;

John 5:40 (NASB77)

⁴⁰ you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.

John 8:24 (NASB77)

²⁴ "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

Unrepentant sinners will experience God's justice at the Great white Throne judgment.

This simple, but powerful text describes the terrifying reality of the final verdict and sentence on sinners under four heading;

1. The scene,
2. The summons,
3. The standard,
4. The sentence.

THE SCENE

Revelation 20:11-12a (NASB77)

¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne,

In one brief, straightforward, unembellished statement, John describes the appalling, terrifying scene before him.

The apostle is shown the Judge seated on His throne of judgment, and all the accused standing before Him.

The first thing John **saw** was a **great white throne**.

Nearly fifty times in Revelation there is the mention of a throne.

In this case it is the seat of God's sovereign rule.

It is called **great** not only because of its size as greater than the thrones mentioned in 20:4, but also because of its significance, majesty, and authority.

That it is **white** symbolizes its purity, holiness, and justice.

The verdict handed down from this **throne** will be absolutely equitable, righteous, and just.

David wrote;

Psalm 9:7-8 (NASB77)

⁷ But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment,

⁸ And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.

Daniel described this scene also;

Daniel 7:9-10 (NASB77)

⁹ "I kept looking Until thrones were set up, And the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, And the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, Its wheels were a burning fire.

¹⁰ "A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; The court sat, And the books were opened.

Jesus described this scene as the "**resurrection of Judgment**" (John 5:29)

Of this judgment, the apostle Paul wrote;

Romans 2:5 (NASB77)

⁵ But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Now even more awe inspiring than the throne was the vision of Him who sat upon it.

The Judge on the throne is none other than the eternal, almighty God, described in the throne scene of 4:8-11.

Revelation 4:8-11 (NASB77)

⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, who was and who is and who is to come."

⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created."

Earlier in Revelation we read;

Revelation 7:10 (NASB77)

¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

And;

Revelation 19:4 (NASB77)

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

Sharing the throne with the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ;

Revelation 3:21 (NASB77)

²¹ He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

In John's vision of the New Heaven and New Earth, he saw;

Revelation 22:1 (NASB77)

¹ And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

Revelation 22:3 (NASB77)

³ And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him;

Though the Father and the Son share the throne, it is the Son who is uniquely in view here, since Scripture teaches that He will judge sinners.

John 5:22 (NASB77)

²² ***"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,***

John 5:26-27 (NASB77)

²⁶ ***"For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;***

²⁷ ***and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.***

Peter declared;

Acts 10:42 (NASB77)

⁴² ***"And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.***

After describing the vision of the Judge on His throne, John, noted the startling reality that **from His presence earth and heaven fled away.**

This is an amazing incredible statement describing the un-creation of the universe.

The earth will have been reshaped by the devastating judgments of the Tribulation and restored during the millennial kingdom. Yet it will still be tainted with sin and subject to the effects of the Fall, decay and death; Because of that it must be destroyed, since nothing corrupted by sin will be permitted to exist in the eternal state.

God will in its place create, ***"a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away (Rev 21:1, 5)***

The present **earth and heaven** will not merely be moved or reshaped, since John saw in his vision that **no place was found for them.**

They will be un-created and go totally out of existence.

This is nothing less than the sudden violent, termination of the universe

Isaiah 51:6a (NASB77)

⁶ ***"Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment,***

Hebrews 12:26-27 (NASB77)

²⁶ ***And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, " YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."***

²⁷ ***And this expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.***

Barnhouse wrote:

"there is to be an end of the material heavens and earth which we know. It is not that they are to be purified and rehabilitated, but that the reverse of creation is to take place. They are to be un-created. They came from nothing at the word of God, they are to be sucked back into nothingness by the same word of God"

The details of God's un-creation of the universe are given by Peter;

2 Peter 3:10-12 (NASB77)

¹⁰ ***But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.***

¹¹ ***Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,***

¹² ***looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!***

The day of the Lord will come suddenly, unexpectedly, and with disastrous consequences for the unprepared, just like the coming of a thief.

When that day comes, several things will happen;

1. **The heavens will pass away with a roar. *Rhiozedon* is the word and it speaks of being a onomatopoeic word; that is a word that sounds like what it means. It describes the loud whistling, crackling, rushing sound that will result when the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up,**
2. **Elements (*Stoicheion*) refers to the basic building blocks of matter, such as atomic and subatomic particles.**
3. ***Luo* destroyed is often translated dissolved.**

The present universe will explode like a gigantic nuclear bomb, and the resulting intense heat will literally dissolve all the matter in it.

The present laws of thermodynamics, which state that matter can neither be created nor destroyed, will no longer be in effect.

As a result, the universe "*will be burned up*"; it will be totally consumed.

The absolute reverse of creation will occur.

It didn't take eons of evolution to create the universe, nor will it take eons to un-create it.

The un-creation of the universe, like its creation, will take place by the word of God.

Now introducing the final element in this fearful scene, John writes that he **saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne.**

The setting is the indescribable void, the inconceivable nothingness between the end of the present universe and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth.

The prisoners before the bar are all physically **dead**, since there are no longer any living people, none could possibly have survived the destruction of the present universe.

The last living unbelievers will perish when God crushes the rebellion at the end of the Millennium.

The last living believers will be translated and transformed into their eternal bodies, like Enoch, and Elijah, and the raptured church.

The **dead** pictured here **standing before the throne** of divine judgment are not just from the millennial rebellion, but include all the unbelievers who ever lived.

This is the **“resurrection of judgment (John 5:29)**, the resurrection **“to disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2)**, the **“resurrection of the wicked (Acts 24:15)**

The Bible teaches that no believer will ever face God’s judgment, because;

Romans 8:1 (NASB77)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

John 3:18a (NASB77)

¹⁸ “ He who believes in Him is not judged;

John 5:24 (NASB77)

²⁴ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Far from being judged, all the godly participants in the first resurrection will have already received their rewards.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NASB77)

**¹² Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
¹³ each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.**

¹⁴ If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵ If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB77)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Revelation 19:7-9 (NASB77)

⁷ “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”

⁸ And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

**⁹ And he said to me, “ Write, ‘ Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’”
And he said to me, “ These are true words of God.”**

To emphasize the all-encompassing scope of the judgment, John notes that the sweeping mass of unbelievers before God’s throne includes both **the great and the small**.

All will face judgment, the somebodies and the nobodies

Romans 2:11 (NASB77)

¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.

Colossians 3:25 (NASB77)

²⁵ For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

God will be fair and will be just. His righteousness will bring justice. All who die without Christ will stand in this fellowship before this great throne without fail.