

# **The Great White Throne Judgment (Part 4)**

## **What the Bible Says About the Judgment of Saints**

### **Revelation 20:11-15**

Sunday, 4 April 2017

We are looking at Rev 20:11-15, which may be considered as the most sobering and serious scene in all of the Bible because presents to us the final judgment where human beings are standing before Him who is seated on the Great White Throne to bring final confirmation on who goes to hell and who enters the eternal kingdom.

Remember that there are four elements that we're looking at here: *scene, summons, standard, sentence*. We are going to review some of the things that I shared with you and highlight some of them. And then I will continue the third point which is the *standard*, but I will focus on it will be applied to the saints.

### **Scene (20:11-12a)**

- **John saw a great white throne.** Look at how John describes it. "Then I saw a great white throne." This tells us that the final judgment is scheduled to take place after the previous event which is the complete destruction of the rebels at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:7-10).
- **John also saw someone seated on the throne.** I believe that we will see Jesus on that throne judging for God. Scripture teaches that God through Christ will judge the world.
  - Act 10:42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.
  - Act 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed...
  - Ro 2:16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.
  - 2Ti 4:1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:
  - Mt 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
  - 2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
  - Jn 5:22 The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,
- **He saw the uncreation of the universe.** "From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them."
- **He also saw all humans before the throne.** I believe that when John said, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne," he was talking about all of the human beings, both godly and ungodly, saved and unsaved, before the throne of God.

I think here, John is generalizing. He is not being specific and trying to show us only those who died and then resurrected and excluding those who were instantly glorified without dying during the rapture. I believe that John is just using terms to refer to all people because, normally, people die and then are raised from the dead.

While we're looking at this point, let me just show you some Scriptures that support the idea that believers as well as unbelievers will stand before God at the final judgment:

- Rev 11:18 The nations raged, but your wrath came, [this could very well refer to the last rebellion and complete defeat of God's enemies which will take place after the millennium (20:7-10)] and **the time for the dead to be judged (20:11-15)**, and **for** rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great (20:12), and **for** destroying the destroyers of the earth."
- 2Ti 4:1,8 I charge you in the presence of God and **of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead**, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ... 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me **on that Day** [this will have to connect to v.1, when Jesus will judge the living and the dead], and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.
- Mt 25:31-34, 41, 46 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the **sheep** from the goats. 33 And he will place the **sheep** on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his **right**, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the [eternal] kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ... 41 Then he will say to those to those on his **left**, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ... 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Notice the word "each" in the following passages:

- Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay **each person** according to what he has done.
- 1Co 4:5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then **each one** will receive his commendation from God.
- Ro 14:10,12 ... For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; ... 12 So then **each of us** will give an account of himself to God.
- 2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that **each one** may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.
- Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay **each one** for what he has done. [This does not have any qualification. It does not say that there is going to be a separate judgment for believers and another for unbelievers.]

**So that's the scene.**

- John saw a great white throne.
- John saw the one who is seated on the great white throne.
- John saw the uncreation of the universe.
- John also saw all humans before the throne.

**Next we saw the SUMMONS (20:13a)**

*13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them,*

As I said before, perhaps here, John is using a sweeping language that is intended to include all of those who have died and all of the places where their bodies and spirits were confined, whether it is in the sea, in the grave or in Hades. All of the dead from all of those places will be **summoned** to face God at the Great White Throne.

Again, John is not trying to be technical. He is using general terms to refer to the common experience of all people. Normally, all people, whether good or bad, will die.

How are the godly and the ungodly going to be judged?

**Next, we see the STANDARD (Rev 20:12b, 13, 15)**

- **Everybody will be judged by what is written in the "books."**  
*and books were opened. ... And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 ... and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.*
- **Everybody will be judged by what is written in the "book of life."**  
*Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. ... 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

## Today's Study

Last time we focused our attention on the sinners. Today we are going to focus on the saints, the godly or the believers.

### **STANDARD**

I mentioned that believers will also face judgment but we need to understand that their judgment will be different from the judgment of unbelievers. Believers will not face condemnation.

#### **1. First of all, the saints are going to be judged by what is written in the book of life.**

When the saints stand before the great white throne judgment, their names will be checked if they are in the book of life. And surely their names will be found there because they were chosen by God even before the creation of the world and also because they have trusted in Christ for salvation and submitted to His lordship when they were living on earth.

- Romans 4:5-8 says, *And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: 7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; 8 blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."*
- 2Co 5:21 [Ampli 2015] He made Christ who knew no sin to [judicially] be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we would become the righteousness of God [that is, we would be made acceptable to Him and placed in a right relationship with Him by His gracious lovingkindness].
- John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
- Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- Ro 8:33-34, 38-39 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ... 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."
- Hebrews 10:17 "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

Again, let us not try to resolve the issue of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. Both ideas are taught in Scripture and so we can only accept both ideas. It is true that God sovereignly chooses some individuals to be saved. But it is equally true that the elect should receive Christ in order to be saved.

*2Ti 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

God offers salvation to all. Those who have never heard of Christ but choose to remain in their sin and those who reject Christ will have no one to blame but themselves if their names are not written in the book of life and if they are thrown to hell.

## **2. Second, saints are going to be judged by what is written in the books.**

*Ps 56:8 [NLT] You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.*

*Mal 3:16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.*

Scripture teaches plainly of possible great rewards or grievous loss depending on what believers do with present opportunities and duties.

**a) The books will determine the rewards of the saints.**

Notice that the rewards will be given either during the millennium(\*), the Great White Throne judgment (\*\*), or the eternal kingdom (\*\*\*) .

- \*\*\**To the church in Ephesus* - Rev 2:7... To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'
- \*\**To the church in Smyrna* - Rev 2:10 ... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- \*\**To the church in Pergamum* - Rev 2:17 ... To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'
- \**To the church in Thyatira* - Rev 2:26-28 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.
- \*\**To the church in Sardis* - Rev 3:5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.
- \*\*\**To the church in Philadelphia* - Rev 3:12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.
- \*\* , \*\*\**To the church in Laodicea* - Rev 3:21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.
- \* 2Ti 4:1,8 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ... 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.
- 1Pe 5:4 *And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.* (This is the reward for faithful Elders.)
- Eph. 6:5-8 *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.*

Pillar NT Commentary: The use of the verb '**knowing**' suggests that the apostle is recalling a pattern of teaching familiar to Christians and to which he can now appeal. The content of what they have been taught is that their heavenly Lord will reward them for the good that each one does. ... No doubt many slaves had performed good deeds that were not noticed by their masters and so not appropriately rewarded by them. As a result, Christian slaves, like others, might have gone out of their way to ensure that any service they performed caught their masters' attention. But they did not need to respond in this way. Nothing escapes their heavenly Master's gaze. However they may be treated by their earthly 'lords', they still have a Lord who at the end of the day can be trusted to reward them. He notices the good deeds of each and every one of them – note the stress on '**each one**' – so that none will miss out on being rewarded for any good that has been done.

- *Mt 10:41-42 The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."*

**b) The books will determine the loss of rewards of the saints:**

- *1Co 3:12-15 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*
- *2Jn 1:8 Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.*

MSB: A loss of that reward may occur to any believer who does not discriminate fellowship on the basis of adherence to the truth (Col. 2:18–19 3:24–25). This is a potent warning. All the eternal reward one earns by seeing Christ purely, eagerly, and effectively in the Spirit can be diminished by any aiding or abetting of false teaching.

- *Heb 10:32-35 But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. 35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*

This implies that it is possible to lose one's reward.

The books will determine the rewards or the loss of some of the rewards of the saints. But allow me to add a third thing that the books will determine. I don't know how to explain this but don't want to hide this from you. I have to tell you this. The Bible seems to speak of some kind of chastisement and not simply loss of reward. So that is the third:

**c) The books will determine the chastisement of the saints:**

While I was studying a *Systematic Theology* written by Robert Duncan Culver, I read this conclusion from him and it kind of disturbed me a little bit.

John Sproule: "... believers will be rewarded for lives of faithful service and obedience. ... However there is strong evidence that believers, at the judgment seat of Christ, will suffer some kind of chastisement for slothful, careless lives. This involves more than simply the loss of reward. Concerning the details, the Bible is silent."

I know that this point is not what you find in most commentaries. Although this could be controversial but I can't keep this from you because I am afraid of Rev 22:18-19 which says,

*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Although in context, this is limited to Revelation. But this principle may apply to the whole Bible.)*

Let me show you passages from Scripture that seem to support the idea of chastisement for believers on the Day of Judgment.

- *Col 3:22-25 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 2 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. **25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.***
- *Eph 6:9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.*
- *2Co 5:9-11a: So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. ...*

New American Commentary: 5:11 The **fear of the Lord** ... refers to a religious consciousness, a reverential awe of God, that directs the way one lives. Paul does not live in unhealthy dread of God's judgment because he knows the love of Christ who gave himself for him. But his extraordinary experience of God's love and forgiveness does not deaden his consciousness that God remains a holy and righteous God.

- *Romans 14:10-12 Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; 11 for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

Understanding the Bible Commentary: In verse 11, Paul is quoting from Isaiah 45:23. "This quotation was a standard proof text of the rabbis for the inevitability of the last judgment."

In summary of the standard that God will use for believers, we must never forget that the believers are going to face the final judgment, although as I said, it will be a different one from the judgment unbelievers will face. The standard of judgment for believers will in accordance to what is written in the books and what is written in the Book of Life.

Since it is sure that the name of believers will be found in the list in the book of life, it means that they will not be condemned and they will not go to hell. Nothing that is written in the other "books" will bring them to hell. However, what is written in the

books will determine their rewards or loss. Also it is possible that because of the evil that we have done, there may be *some chastisement* when we face Jesus on the Day of Judgment.

So, we have looked at three points already in Rev 20:11-15, the **scene**, the **summons**, and the **standard**. Next time, the Lord willing, we will look at the **sentence**.

## In closing

I will close by making some application of Romans 14:12: "*So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.*" But for what will we be held accountable? Here are some suggestions from James Montgomery Boice [Some portions have modernized applications. Point "e" is mine.]"

**a. We are accountable for every word we have spoken.**

For example, Jesus said, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37). In the letter to the Ephesians Paul wrote, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs" (Eph. 4:29) and "Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving" (Eph. 5:4).

This does not mean that a Christian can never laugh or tell jokes. We do not have to be serious all the time. But it does mean that there should be a certain gravity about us as befits those who are aware of the gospel of the grace of God and of the fact that many are perishing because they will not turn from their sins and believe on Jesus Christ. And even if we laugh and tell jokes, which we will at times, we will not be telling dirty jokes. On the contrary, we will try to edify others even by our humor.

There is a positive side to this, however. Although our idle words will be condemned, our public confessions of Jesus Christ and words that are spoken in praise of God to bring him glory will also be remembered forever. For the text in Matthew also says, "By your words you will be acquitted" (Matt. 12:37).

**b. We are accountable for the talents that have been given to us.**

We should remember the parable Jesus told in various forms in which a king or owner of an estate left cities to be managed by his servants or gave varying numbers of talents to them, returning later to demand an accounting. In one of these, ... he condemned the faithless steward for being "wicked" and "lazy" (Matt. 25:26) but praised the faithful servants, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

... Have you ever done a complete inventory of who you are so that you may give it all to God for his service and glory? ... You may have been called to be a teacher or a doctor or a secretary or CEO of some company. ... You may have a high IQ or a low IQ. Whatever you have, it has been given to you by God, and you are responsible to God for how you use it. Are you using it for Him? If you do not know the answer to that question, you need to sit down quietly, take personal inventory, and ask God to show you what you can do that will make a difference for him in this life and for eternity.

**c. We are accountable for how we use our money.**

Nothing in life so mirrors our values and priorities as what we do with our money. What you do with your money tells volumes about you. This is why the Bible has so much to say about money. It is why Jesus spoke about it. Jesus said: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and*

*rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.... No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Money. (Matthew 6:19–21, 24)*

What would [the books show? You would have payments for the house, for the utilities, money for food, hospital and doctors' bills, tuition fees, vacation expenses, entertainment, taxes, etc.] But what beyond that? Would the books show more money being spent on a second home, a luxury car, the country club, or entertainment than for Christian work? What percentage of your income would [the books show] given to the support of your local church? Or to missions? Or to help people you know who are in serious financial need? If you give anything to your church or charitable causes, you probably consider yourself to be very generous, a great philanthropist. But would that judgment hold up to a really objective scrutiny? Would God be satisfied with your priorities?

**d. We are accountable for how we have used our time.**

How are you using your time? Do you waste long hours watching television [or You Tube, or checking your FB account]? Or if you work all the time, are you working for yourself only, or do you work for others and share your time with your family, or with others you could help? Do you invest some of your time in Bible study, witnessing, or some type of Christian work?

**e. We are accountable for our relationships.**

- *Husband and wife, parents and children, employers and employees.*
- *Believers with other believers (one another list)*
- *2Co 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*
- *Ps 1:1 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.*
- *1Co 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*