

The great white throne

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Date: 01 January 2000

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- [0 : 0 0] As we have read in the book of Revelation, the Revelation of John, in the 20th chapter, and reading again from the 11th verse, And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.
- And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.
- And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works.
- And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.
- No words of mine, my dear friends, can ever impress on you or anyone else the awesome solemnity of this passage of scripture.
- [1 : 2 5] No eloquence of man can do this. It is something that must be impressed on our minds and spirits by the Spirit of God.
- And only the Spirit of God can bring before our minds in a forcible way the tremendous awesomeness of standing before this passage and being judged by it.
- In these words we have of course a glimpse of the most awesome sin that anyone can ever imagine. The end of time and the judgment that will follow.
- The end of the world. God had often before declared that he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world in righteousness and where all men everywhere would give an account of themselves to God.
- But in these verses before us, in this 20th chapter of the book of Revelation, a highly favored servant of God is brought into our notice informing us of what was made to pass before himself in cynical representation when he was in spirit on the island of Patmos.
- [2 : 5 7] And things distant and invisible to fleshly eyes were made manifest to him by the great power of God. He saw the glory of the universal judge in all his majesty, his splendor, and his power.
- The one who at one time was made of no reputation, who was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who was made a little lord of the angels for the suffering of death.
- John saw him, I say, in the glory of his regal splendor, summoning the myriads of men before him and bestowing on every man according to his discern.
- Much of what is written in this great book of the Revelation is deeply mysterious and obscure and is both unwise and improper to dogmatize on matters which the Holy Spirit has been fit to keep in a twilight.
- Dark things belong to God, and we should be content that this should be so. But when he said, let it also be emphasized that a great many things have been made perfectly lucid in this great book, and so things which are revealed belong to us and to our children.

[4 : 20] There are revealed duties and obligations to the church and to the people of God which they are under no circumstances to neglect. In the course of this book, we get clear glimpses throughout of the glory and the blessedness of the land of far distances and the king and his beauty, and of the happiness, the eternal happiness that will be the portion of the people of God.

We get a foretaste of these things and of that rest that is awaiting the redeemed family. We are given clear warnings and clear causes also as to how we should conduct ourselves in this world so that we may have boldness in the day of Christ and stand before him without shame.

Now we know the general views among men of this matter, of this question, of the judgment seat of Christ, and how cynical the generality are when it comes to this question.

But it is very clear that Scripture asserts that there will be a day of judgment. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in the body according as he has done, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

After death, says Scripture, annihilation. Oh no, after death, the judgment. Marvel not, said Jesus, in that chapter we read in John's Gospel.

[6 : 08] Marvel not, for the hour is come when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth. The Lord is speaking there as if men were marveling that such a thing could happen, that men could come out of their graves, that they could be resurrected.

Marvel not, for the hour is coming, he asserts, when the dead shall hear his voice and shall come forth. And these are some words that we have here in this chapter before us.

I saw a great white throne, and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. So again and again, Scripture asserts that there will be a judgment.

Furthermore, reason demands that there should be a judgment. So that justice is not only done, but seems to be done. It seems that passing strength that men should deny to the righteous judge of all the earth, the very things which they themselves practice amongst themselves, in every society if order is to prevail in that society.

There must be a judgment seat. Although we deplore the disorder, the chaos sometimes in our own society and in other societies throughout the world, yet if there were no courts in our society, if there was no judgment seat in our society, if there was no law, then we cannot imagine what things would be like.

[7 : 45] And so reason itself demands that there should be a judgment at the last. And what is more, conscience insists that there will be a judgment, when awakened and enlightened by the Spirit of God.

Even in ungodly men, the spirits of conscience at times remind them of the reality and of the certainty of judgment.

So when Felix listened to Paul, reasoning to remember of righteousness, of temperance, and of judgment to come, he trembled. But on this matter, the enlightened conscience never has any doubt at any time.

The sensitive conscience is always summoning itself before this tribunal, reminding himself of the fact that he must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

And so then, we are confronted here with its awesomeness, a great white throne, him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away.

[8 : 56] The frequent reference made throughout this book of God's throne, and to the tremendous effect which seeing the throne of God had on both angels and men.

There is reference in chapter 7 and chapter 11 to this matter. In the Old Testament, you remember, when Isaiah the prophet, when he saw the glory of God and the holiness of God, it simply denuded him of all strength.

Wash me, for I am undone, as is all that glorious throne. Chapter 6 in his very book tells us that wicked men will pray on that day to the mountains to fall on them and to hide them from the face of the one who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

And we are made aware, too, not only of the awesomeness of this scene, but of its extensiveness. I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, says John.

And you are not to marvel at this, as our Lord said, in the words we have already quoted from John chapter 5. For the hour is coming, though when all who are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth.

[10 : 21] No one, all, no one will be deemed inconsequential enough as to be excluded from this tribunal.

and no one will be deemed of such great consequence as to be passed over. All will be summoned. And it is a matter that is constantly said before us in the course of the word of God.

But we notice that there is reference made here in the passage to the book and to the books being opened and men being judged according to their works from the books.

What are we to understand by this reference? Well, we would suggest that for one thing it may have reference to the book of God's omniscience.

After all, God is a God of knowledge. A scripture tells us that by him actions are weighed. God is the searcher of the heart.

[11 : 29] He is the trier of the reins of the children of men. All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. This is the emphasis which we have in Psalm 139.

For instance, the omniscience of God. Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off.

God who knows the secrets of men will look at all that he knows on that day when he will present, when men will be presented before him.

The books were opened. But you might also refer to the book of man's own conscience. Is it not reasonable to suppose that one day conscience in all men will come into its own that it will be given the most stupendous egg?

After all, conscience in many instances is alarmed. It is awakened in this world and the reproving ministry of the Holy Spirit. This, as we know from Scripture, is a very specific activity of the Spirit of God.

[12 : 45] He reproves the world of sin. And the Spirit in his convicting or reproving exercises touches the conscience, awakens the conscience, so that it is alarmed.

As was the case with Felix. And we believe that yonder the book of conscience will play a decisive role in both excusing and accusing those all who will be summoned before the judgment seat of God.

the book of God. Then, too, one could mention the book of personal obligations. Remember, no rational man is not responsible to God and before God for his own actions and for his own life.

For instance, we are taught this in the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25. There we see that some who were given talents, they traded them, they used them as they should, others failed to do so.

And we saw the Lord's response to those who both traded their talents, who made the proper use of their talents, and those who didn't. All of them were blessed with gifts and opportunities and talents of some kind or another, and the giver of the talents intended that they should utilize them to his good and to his glory, and a failure to do so rendered them guilty in his presence.

[14 : 17] The wicked and slothful servant is the indictment that is spoken against the one who failed to crave his talent aright. And so that is reminiscent of the day of judgment.

It is on that day that the obligations of men that the Lord will judge men as to their obligations, their duties in this world.

But then to remember that it's a book of unerring rectitude. That is the book of the gospel and the inscripturated word of God in which the gospel is enshrined. Remember what Jesus says in the twelfth chapter of John's gospel at verse 48 He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him the word that I have spoken that same shall judge him in the last day.

As Paul says in Romans chapter 2 As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. Ah yes, if they hear not Moses on a prophet.

As was said to the rich man in hell, if they hear not Moses on the prophets, neither will they hear though one rise from the dead. The books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and they were judged out of what was written in the books.

[15 : 50] Now we see the focal point on which the divine judge will determine destiny according to their works. What are we to understand by this term?

Does it mean that a man can build up a reservoir, so to speak, a sufficient store of merit for himself by his own doings and by his own efforts? Is that what the words mean?

That men shall be judged according to their works? Not at all. Not for a moment. But it does mean that works of righteousness are inseparable from the operations of grace.

In 1st Thessalonians chapter 1 we read these words. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

You see how the mind of the inspired author of that letter is working? The operations of grace stem, it is, from the election of God and is accompanied by works of faith.

[17 : 09] Faith in the believer is not something passive, it is not something inactive, a dead letter. True faith evidences itself by its works and by works is faith made perfect.

It is indeed the whole thrust of the epistle of gifts to stress, if you will, the activeness, the energy of all true faith. True believing faith can never be still.

It can never lie dormant. Its very nature causes it to exercise itself diligently and perseveringly and this will enter into the activity of the divine judge.

faith. The operations of grace are accompanied by works of faith and they are accompanied by the apostle there by the labor of love. We are to be careful that we do not make too clear-cut a division and distinction in the exercises of the various graces of the spirit in a believer's life.

Faith indeed is a principal grace and from it every other grace is fed and nourished. But faith works by love. It is love that gives momentum and meaning and significance and feeling to all the activities of faith in a believer.

[18 : 31] The two are twins that are inseparable in their exercise in the child of God. It is faith that works by love. And then too, the operation of grace are accompanied by the patience of hope, as Paul says in that letter to the Thessalonians.

For undergirding every activity of the soul is that good hope which grace has brought with it into the heart and into the life. And so we labour in hope, do we not?

We sow in hope. We press forward in hope. We have this hope as a nanker of the soul, both sure and steadfast. We are constantly feeling as well the pull of the rope attached to the anchor reminding us of where that hope is grounded.

And so we are unable to exercise patience. And so men are to be judged according to their works.

And so the question for you and for me is this, are those works in us at the present hour? Are we those works that stem from the operations of grace in our hearts and in our lives?

[19 : 50] Works of faith, labour of love, patience of hope, these are the works that accompany salvation. These are the works that flow from the operations of grace in the hearts of men and women.

And if these things are not present, then there will be nothing upon which the great divine judge will find ground to acquit us, but he will find ground in the absence of them, will find ample ground to condemn us at that great tribunal.

Now in the light of this notable event, how should we act? What should we do? What should we desire?

Well I suggest that for one thing we should seek that God would judge us here and now, and that we would be enabled to submit to his incallible judgment of us.

You see my dear friends, God by his word is sitting in judgment upon all his creatures, whether they themselves acknowledge or accept this or not.

[21 : 07] He has spoken in all certain terms about sin, his own attitude to sin, and the consequences that sin will have on the eternal destiny of men, if they are not delivered from its power and from its dominion.

sin. By the entrance of sin we learn that all mankind lost communion with God are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the mysteries of his life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

There is none righteousness, scripture, no, not one. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And because of this man is an anemone and an alien in his mind by wicked works from God, is far off, is dead in trespasses and in sins.

This, my friend, is God's testimony concerning man in his foreign state. This is his judgment concerning you and concerning me.

And it is precisely here that the natural man rejects and refudiates the testimony of God, the judgment of God, upon man in sin. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

[22 : 25] These things are foolishness to him, and he will have them under no circumstances. My dear friend, would you not pray that you might be enabled to submit to the judgment of God now, at his present hour, the judgment which God passes on you as a sinner, emanated from him, and far off by reason of your sinful condition.

It is a first step towards being reconciled, towards being brought nigh, and it is a duty that is demanded by God of all men.

So God would, we ought to seek that God would judge us here and now at this present hour. And not only this, but we ought also to seek that God would justify us here and now at this very hour.

For when we are unable to submit to the judgment of God, concerning our state and condition before him as condemned and undone sinners, then we shall seek the deliverance which only he can infect in us and for us.

It is by grace that we must be saved, through faith and not of ourselves. It is the gift of God. This is what the gospel of the grace of God is all about.

[23 : 43] The justifying of the ungodly. The reconciling of those who are enemies and aliens in their minds by wicked works. The adopting into God's family of those who are the children of God, even as others.

This, I say, is what the gospel of the grace of God is all about. God reckoning men and women just and justified on the basis of the accomplished redemption.

of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit, and being justified here and now, we shall never again be condemned, for it is God that justifies us.

Who is he that condemn us? Our judge will then become our advocate and representative and represent us before his grand heavenly tribunal, his judgment seat.

We ought to seek then to be justified by the grace of God as we are confronted with this awesome matter. But then too we should seek also that we would daily live under the sexy eye of God, so that our walk will be blingless, careful, and holy.

[25 : 10] Sadly, there is a great deal of careless walking, careless talking, careless conduct in the Christian community of all day and age. There appears to be a great deal of insensitivity as to the ordering of life and of living, of the footsteps.

In many places, Christ is being put to shame and is honor by those who profess to be his friends and his followers. Remember that unchristly conduct and behavior is a crucifying of Christ anew and putting him to an open shame before the world.

Ah, this ought never to be. This ought never to be. There is a same thing which the believer in Christ should also be the greatest legalist of all men.

What I mean by that is that the man of God, the man who has been redeemed by the grace of God, should be more fastidious in the keeping of the commandments of God than any other person living.

He has not been, he is not, he is not redeemed by the works of the law. He is redeemed by grace and he ought to be the most fastidious of all men in keeping the commandments of God because this is Christ's own command to him.

[26 : 41] If you love me, keep my commandments. Not because you have to do so in order to be justified, but because you love me. This is the grand motive and when this motive is lacking, then men become careless and indifferent and unwatchful with regard to this matter.

We should always, we should live daily as those who are seeing the judgment seat of Christ standing before them. We should also seek that we would know the peace of a conscience void of offense.

And there is no possibility of having such a conscience except in the pursuit of the strictest possible discipline over the way in which we ourselves live.

And in order to this, conscience must be sensitive. It must be kept in a state of tender sensitivity day by day. And the only way this can be effected is to keep near to the Lord Jesus Christ.

To keep near to him in prayer. To keep near to him in daily communion, in meditation and his word. If these things are neglected, then we shall move far away.

[28 : 04] We shall not know his presence and we shall not know the sensitivity that comes through remaining close to him in our walk and in our conversation. There is no magic formula, remember, whereby the conscience can be kept sensitive.

And if we neglect those well-worn paths which I have just mentioned, I'll hold out little hope for any man. And when conscience is sensitive, it will keep hammering away at ourselves, not at other people.

Ourselves, we ourselves will be the object that conscience will dictate to more than to anyone else. And so let us ever seek, my dear friends, to have such a conscience so that the life we live in the world will be a life of true holiness and a life of true godliness, a life in which Christ will be honored and in which he would be magnified.

Let us then apply this solemn passage of God's word to ourselves as we are on the way to that throne, to appear before that tribunal.

Let us seek by the grace of God to keep it before us as we go on through the world, step by step, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

[29 : 41] The remembrance of it, of this, the remembrance of whom, whose we are and whom we serve, as the believing people of God, should make us more sensitive in our Christian living in the way in which we project our witness and the manner in which we show forth the praises of the one whom we profess and we say has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Let us keep that judgment seated in view not from fear but from love of the one who sits upon that throne and who is looking upon the way in which his people walk and who is daily commanding them, keep my commandments if you love me, keep my commandments and my commandments are not grievous.

How grievous it is that any who profess to love should find that these commandments are grievous and that they are hard and difficult.

God grant that we may ever live, all of us, as before the judgment seat of Christ and remember that we are on our way to meet him there. Amen.

May he add his blessing to our meditation, his word. Shall we pray? O Lord, our God, psalmonize our spirits we beseech thee, as we present ourselves before thy holy throne and give to us a deeper sensitivity of conscience as we look at ourselves in the light of the judgment seat of Christ and in the light of the demands which thou art making upon us in our pilgrimage.

[31 : 30] Do thou in mercy, O God, deliver us from every false and every evil way. Do thou lay thine hand upon us, we beseech thee moment by moment that we may be enabled to live to thy glory and show forth thy praise day by day, step by step.

We pray thee to seal to our hearts and consciences the word of truth. grant, O God, that thy word may produce in us fruit to thy glory and to the honor of thy great name.

Go with us now, we beseech thee as we go from this place. Abide with us still as we continue to meet in thy name and graciously do in us and for us above and beyond what we can ask or think and pardon graciously our sin.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.