



GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

(Revelation 20:11-15)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

On July 8, 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached his famous sermons, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Edwards held the manuscript so close to his face that the congregation was unable to see his expression as he read every word. The people, so terrified by his words, gripped the backs of their pews, feeling that the ground below was about to open and swallow them into hell. One man rushed down the aisle crying, “Mr. Edwards, have mercy!”

That was then but it is not the way many respond to preaching on hell. Hell today is not taken very seriously today. Martin Marty, American church historian, summarized the attitude of our day: “Hell disappeared, and no one noticed.” However, God’s faithful servants have always warned about hell fire and judgment. D.L. Moody said, “The same Christ that tells us of Heaven with all its glories, tells us of Hell with all its horrors.” Billy Sunday said, “You will not be in Hell five minutes until you believe there is one.” A more recent evangelist, Jerry Johnston, said this: “People screaming in hell will make my voice a small voice.” R.A. Torrey said, “I claim to be a scholarly preacher. I have a right to so claim. I have taken two degrees, specializing in Greek in one of the most highly esteemed universities in America. I have also studied in two German universities. I have read the Bible in three languages every day of my life for many years. I have studied a large share of what has been written on both sides of the question in English and in German. I have written thirty or forty different books which have been translated into many languages. Yes, I believe in scholarship and I believe in the old-fashioned doctrine regarding Hell.”

The church today needs to come to grips with the subject of hell. In Matthew 23:33 Jesus said to the religious hypocrites of His day, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Jesus and the Bible validates the destiny of the damned! In the Matthew 23:33 passage Jesus was referring to the Lake of Fire which we are going to study about in Revelation 20:11-15. This is perhaps the most terrifying question that Jesus ever asked. "How shall ye escape the damnation of hell?" These are not words that will promote ecumenical rallies with liberals and modernists but they are Jesus' words. During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke about people being damned to hell for all eternity. He spoke of them being condemned and judged in a place of torment if they failed to place their faith in Him for their forgiveness of sin and salvation from hell.

In this study, we are going to discover that the unsaved will be judged before God's throne.

John MacArthur summarizes the passage well:

"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 be 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."

On an American troopship, the soldiers crowded around their chaplain asking, "Do you believe in hell?" "I do not" said the chaplain. "Well, then will you please resign, for if there is no hell, we do not need you, and if there is a hell, we do not wish to be led astray." Now that is honesty!

We are about to look at a solemn prophetic passage of Scripture that deals with the Great White Throne Judgment. This future scene should terrify the unsaved and cause them to flee to God's grace and mercy for salvation. This final judgment should also strike a tender cord in our hearts toward

the lost. When we realize the final fate of the unsaved, it should motivate us to get witnessing and praying for the lost to be saved from this awful fate. It should give us a burden for Harry at work and other people that we meet and make contact with every day.

Let's get our prophetic timeline correct. After the millennium is ended (Rev. 20:7) and the devil is cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10), the unsaved of all the ages will stand in the open expanse before a Great White Throne and the face of Jesus. And this is where we begin our study.

Judgment Day is Coming at a Great White Throne.

This Judgment Day is revealed in five ways.

1. There is a fearful throne (vs. 11a)



a. It's fearful because it is a place of judgment.

This is a "throne" that depicts a tribunal or judgment bar and for this reason it's a fearful throne. It is a place of sentencing to hell and final judgment. It's the place

where Christ in His sovereign majesty will consign the unsaved wicked to eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire. Yes, it is a fearful throne.

Where will this dreadful throne exist? We simply don't know but it will be somewhere in limitless space and outside of human history. It is seated somewhere on the outer edges of God's universe of space and time, as we know it, since the present heavens and earth are destroyed (Rev. 20:11). The Lake of Fire will also be near this throne for it's here where the host of lost humanity will be cast in the end of time. They will know that Judgment Day has arrived since they possess a clear view of this great or giant white throne hovering before them.

b. It's fearful because of its description of greatness.

This is also a fearful throne because it is described as being a "great" throne.

The text reveals this.

1. *It's great because of its immense size.*



The actual size of this throne is not stated but it is evidently so immense or big that all of the unsaved of the past ages (billions of people) will be able to see it from wherever they are in relationship to the throne. Every lost soul will be able to witness the throne and know that their judgment and fate is coming.

Psalm 1:5 declares:

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

2. *It's great because of Christ who sits on it.*

Jesus Christ is the great Judge who sits upon this throne. The lost will stand before Christ as He sits on this large throne waiting their sure and fiery judgment. Jesus said in John 5:22: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." In Acts 17:31, while on Mars Hill, Paul proclaimed: "Because he hath



appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

If you are not yet saved from hell’s damnation and judgment, then you should fear the coming wrath of the Judge (Jesus Christ), who will one-day sit upon this great white throne. This is a fearsome throne because of the One who sits upon it. Jesus at this point will have already opened the seal judgments upon the earth (Rev. 6) and tread the winepress of the fierceness of His wrath when He returns to earth (Rev. 19:15). But now He is seen as the Judge who will be sitting upon a giant throne somewhere in the outer limits of the universe where all lost humanity is waiting to be judged.

John Philipps said:

“All the foolish little delusions behind which men hide today will be gone, and men will be confronted by a fact too terrible to contemplate—the great white throne.”

c. It’s fearful because of its brilliance in color.

Particular mention is made of its “white” character. The immense throne was blinding because it was seen as a dazzling white throne of brightness. White speaks of the purity and righteous character of this judgment. This white throne reflected the intense purity of this judgment of the lost and wicked. Because God is absolutely holy and impeccably flawless He must judge sinners who have not received forgiveness for their sins.

Habakkuk 1:13

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.”

The brilliant dazzling color of white speaks of the righteous character of the One judging. God’s judgment is pure, just and righteous in every way. You may think that God is unjust to judge lost people but you are wrong.

Romans 9:20 asks: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? God’s holy judgment against sinners is just and pure righteous.

Romans 2:5 declares:

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

Revelation 16:7 adds:

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.”

Anglican Bishop J.D. Ryle, about 100 hundred years ago, said:

“A flood of false doctrine has lately broken in upon us. Men are beginning to tell us ‘that God is too merciful to punish souls for ever...that all mankind, however wicked and ungodly...will sooner or later be saved.’ We are to embrace what is called ‘kinder theology,’ and treat hell as a pagan fable...This question lies at the very foundation of the whole Gospel. The moral attributes of God, His justice, His holiness, His purity, are all involved in it. The Scripture has spoken plainly and fully on the subject of hell... If words mean anything, there is such a place as hell. If texts are to be interpreted fairly, there are those who will be cast into it.”

The judgment of hell is real. But you ask, “How can a loving God send me to hell.” The answer is simple. A God of love will not send you to hell but a God of absolute holiness, righteousness, and justice will send you to hell (Hab. 1:13; Ps. 145:17). This is the other side of God’s character which nobody wants to talk about today. Today man has created a lopsided God but the Bible says that our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). He will judge the lost.

Josh McDowell

"A lot of people say, well how can a loving God send anyone to hell? First of all God doesn't send anyone to hell. If we go to hell, it's by our own choice. But when somebody says to me, how can a loving God allow anyone to go to hell, I'll turn around and say, "Well how can a holy, just, righteous God allow sin into His presence?""

J. Vernon McGee

"Don't say that a loving God is going to send you to hell - He's not. The thing that's going to send you to hell is that you're a sinner and you don't want to admit it."

God is righteous and just in condemning lost sinners who have offended his holiness and even rejected His loving offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you do not come to Jesus for salvation today, you will face Him as your Judge someday. He is either going to be your Savior or your Judge. I'd rather settle out of court! I'd rather come to faith in Jesus and have my court date canceled!

There is a fearful throne but we must move on in this prophetic study.

2. There is the face of Jesus (11b)



Revelation 20:11

“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.”

Apparently the Great White Throne will not be located in Heaven nor on earth but in limitless space, as suggested by the statement of both the heavens and earth fleeing away.

This description of the earth and the heaven fleeing out of existence before the face of Jesus tells us how this old earth and universe is going to be destroyed someday. The brilliant radiance of the face of Jesus will bring about the explosion that will destroy planet earth and the universe as we now know it. The face of Jesus with its majestic glory will in some way cause this old world and universe to be destroyed in a great blast and

atomic noise, wherein everything in existence will pass away in a devastating destruction.

Henry Morris remarks in this way:

“The fire which had fallen from heaven to consume the multitudes following Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8-9) seems to be nothing less than the unveiled glory, the pure, white-hot energy, of the Creator in all His ineffable brilliance. Now that same cosmic power penetrates the very atomic structure of the earth and its atmosphere, and they are vaporized in a gigantic holocaust that brings this present world to an end.”

The expressions “fled away” and “there was found no place for them” (referring to the earth and heavens) is significant. This “passing away” is talking about a complete disappearance – not just a refurbishing of the universe, since the Scriptural language indicates total destruction. The earth and heavens are not going to merely get a face lift. They are going to be completely destroyed and then recreated.

This is confirmed by the opening statement of Revelation 21:1

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

Matthew 24:35

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

This text teaches that the earth and the heavens will flee out of existence or pass out of existence in a giant cataclysmic judgment. This is why the verse says, “and there was found no place for them.” This simply means that the universe (planet earth and all of universal space), as we now know it, will be no more. It will be destroyed and cease to exist. There will be no more place for the earth and heavens to exist since Jesus will undo the atomic structure of this universe!!

Peter talks about the total destruction of the created universe and likens it to a cataclysmic fire.

2 Peter 3:10 prophetically declares:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

The whole structure of the universe is operating on the principle of a clock which is running down. And one day, as a result of the face of Jesus’ fiery brilliance, this old world order will pass away. Someday God is going to split the atoms of the universe and will destroy planet earth and then create a new heaven and earth as outlined in Revelation 21. In any event, all will be destroyed and nothing will remain of the earth or the heavens, as we now know them.

The Bible teaches that the earth and heaven will be destroyed or terminated by the inexpressible and indescribable brilliance of the face of Jesus! The face of Jesus will cause the old earth and heavens to pass out of existence. And this is the same face that all of lost humanity will someday stand before. Lost mankind may want to hide from the face of Him that is on the throne! But there is no place to hide! Why? It’s because the earth and the heavens as we now know them will have passed out of existence and all that will be left is open expanse (limitless space) with absolutely no place to hide. It will be just you and Jesus!

The face of Jesus! This was the face that ungodly men spit upon while he was on earth and the face from which His beard was plucked. It is the face that was marred more than any other man! Isaiah 52:14 says that “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” But now, at this End Time judgment, it will be the face of Jesus that all of lost humanity will gaze upon in fear and dread. After the destruction of the universe, the Great White Throne Judgment will appear in the open expanse, and all of lost humanity will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and receive His righteous judgment.

3. There is the future resurrection – 12a, 13, 14



The only judgment that takes place after the Millennium (Rev. 20:7) is the judgment of unbelievers. Only the unsaved will appear before the Great White Throne Judgment. No saved person will be present at this judgment bar. This judgment scene only depicts the unsaved of all the ages being resurrected and judged. There is no mention of a believer being judged for his sins.

As I've already mentioned, I will not stand before the Great White Throne Judgment because I have settled out of court! Jesus died for me and I have by faith accepted His sacrifice as the necessary payment for my sins and judgment. The old account (sinful record against God) was settled long ago, down on my knees, when I prayed the sinner's prayer for salvation! For those who have not had their sins forgiven, they will suffer the wrath of the Lamb and be cast into the Lake of Fire.

“O awful day, who would not be,
Sheltered O Lamb of God in Thee.
Safe at Thy side while wild and loud,
The shrieks of that unnumbered crowd,
Shall rend the heavens and fill the skies,
Till judgment doom shall close their cries.”

I thank God that I am saved today and will never face God's judgment. I thank God for Calvary for it's the blood that sets me free! Christ's sacrificial death saved me from God's wrath and set's me free from facing this awful day of reckoning and judgment.

The Bible in the next set of verses is personifying the realms of death (referring to the body of unsaved people) and hades (referring to the spirits of unsaved people).

Revelation 20:12 begins by stating:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”

When the Bible mentions the dead standing before God it is most assuredly pointing to the future resurrection of human bodies that is going to occur of all the unsaved people of past ages. The fact that the unsaved have died and are now standing before God speaks of their bodily resurrection as previously confirmed in Revelation 20:5 which states, “But the rest of the dead lived not again (physically) until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.”

The “dead” in Revelation 20:12 would then refer to those who have died physically and who are now raised from the realm of physical death. They are now seen standing before God indicating that their bodies have been resurrected and they are now waiting to be sentenced. A verdict is about to be rendered by the Judge of all the earth.

Revelation 20:13 adds:

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ...”

Let’s pause and think about the first part of this verse. The expression of how the sea “gave up the dead” would also speak of the resurrection of human bodies to be judged before God. Only bodies can come forth from the sea – the watery graves where they have died.

Revelation 20:14

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.”

The repetition of the terms “dead” and “death” in these verses is referencing the human body. It is the body that dies and ceases to exist – not the spirit of a person (2 Cor. 5:8; Heb. 9:27). So, death is a very clear reference to the human body. But what does the Bible mean when it states

that both “death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them?” (Rev. 20:13b) and “death and hell were cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14)?

The term “hell” is actually the word “hades” in the Greek language and refers to the place of departed spirits. This term is likely referencing the unsaved spirits of people who are residing in hades. Since Hades is mentioned, this once again verifies that the unsaved are being judged. Their spirits were residing in this place of temporary judgment (“I am tormented in this flame” - Luke 16:23) where they awaiting their final judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Great White Throne Judgment



What Revelation 20:13 is teaching is that there is coming a time when “death” (a reference to the human bodies of unsaved people) will be joined or united with “hell” or hades (a reference to the spirits of unsaved people who reside in this place). The bodies and spirits of people will be joined together for this final

Judgment Day. Jesus called this “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). This is because the unsaved of all the ages will be raised to be damned to hell forever.

The expression in Revelation 20:13 that says, “death (the realm of the body) and hell (the realm of the human spirit) delivered up the dead which were in them” (delivered up both the body and spirit to complete the resurrection of the dead). Delivering up the dead speaks of a bodily resurrection where both the bodies and spirits of unsaved people are reunited to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment. Essentially, the graves are emptied of bodies and the place of hades is emptied of spirits resulting in a resurrection of unsaved people that consists of both human bodies and spirits.

Revelation 20:14 paints the final and dreadful doom of sinners:

“And death and hell (a scene of the body and spirit of unsaved people coming together to form a resurrection that consists of the physical and spiritual aspects of people) were cast into the lake of fire.”

In this resurrection scene, the usage of the terms death and hades in these verses refer to the physical and spiritual aspects of men. The physical (dead bodies) and spiritual (hades - the spirits of lost people) will be reunited for this final judgment day. Death brings forth the bodies of the unsaved and hades is emptied out, bringing forth the spirits of the unsaved, which results in the resurrection of the human bodies of unsaved people being rejoined with their human spirits that were residing in hades.

The mention of all the “dead” in Revelation 20:12-14 may be a reference to various groups of unsaved people who died. The first mention of the dead (Rev. 20:12) might be a reference to those who died in the fire which destroys planet earth and which are immediately resurrected. This is likely because of the reference to “the dead” in verse 12 comes right after the fiery holocaust. The second mention of the dead are those who died in the Genesis Flood (Rev. 20:13a). The third mention of the dead (Rev. 20:13b) may have reference to the rest of humanity that died after the Flood but prior to the destruction of the earth by fire.

In this resurrection day:

a. Status will not matter – 12a

The Scripture speaks of the “small and great” (12a). This means that a person’s former earthly existence or status will not matter to God in the Day of Judgment. You may have been a president or a pauper on this earth. But it will make no difference to God. Both the great and the small, the rich and the poor, the famous and non-famous will stand before Jesus Christ because they were unsaved and had never received forgiveness for their sins.

God is not a respecter of persons! A person’s age, prestige, popularity, power, or poverty will make no difference on Judgment Day. All the unsaved

from all the ages of history will be there ranging from Pharaohs to farmers, presidents to paupers, and the important to the inconspicuous. No person will be left out and no stone will be unturned! Bill Gates will be there if he is not saved when he dies. There will be nobody spared from this judgment because they were famous or great on this earth. Do you mean to tell me that God is going to judge presidents, kings and Queens? Yes! Nero will be there Alexander the Great will be there. The world's greatest sports people and movie stars will be there who have rejected God's saving grace. But the janitor of a school will be there. The unknown individuals who have never received Christ as Savior will all be there.

The question I need to ask you today: "Will you be there?" Nobody is going to escape this judgment whether they were great or small in this life.

Billy Sunday

"God keeps no half-way house. It's either heaven or hell for you and me."

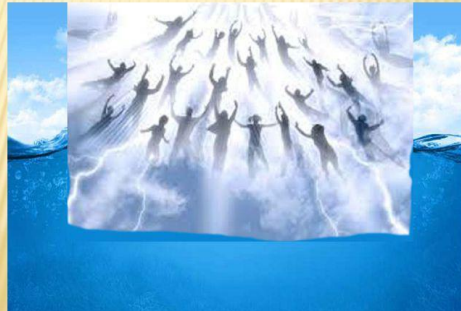
J. C. Ryle

"The saddest road to hell is the one that runs under the pulpit, past the Bible, and through the middle of warnings and invitations."

b. Location will not matter – 13a

God knows how to bring the body back from the grave and the spirit back from hades. Some people might ask, what about those bodies that were lost at sea or eaten by sharks? Can God bring them back from their watery graves? Yes. Let's investigate what the Bible says.

"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."
(Revelation 20:13)



In Revelation 20:13, special mention is made of the sea. Many have asked what it means when it states that the "sea" is going to give up the dead

which were in it. There is no question in my mind what this means. Have we forgotten that there was a universal flood that wiped out the entire world except seven people? God has not forgotten (2 Pet. 3:6). What God is saying here is that those dead bodies that have died at sea long ago, as a result of the Genesis Flood, will be brought back together and raised to stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Genesis 7:23

“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”

The sea is mentioned in Revelation 20:13 to remind people that God will raise people from the most difficult places from which bodies could be resurrected. All those who perished in the Genesis Flood will not be forgotten. Those who perished in the sinking of the Titanic will not be forgotten at this judgment. All will be resurrected from their watery graves.

So what we see taking place here at the end of time is the bringing together of the body which had died and the spirit which is in hades. The Bible teaches that the unsaved will be resurrected and experience eternal suffering in a physical body that is suited for eternal torment and suffering. What a frightening resurrection and judgment this will be when every lost person who has ever lived on the face of the earth is going to stand before the face of Jesus! And they will be resurrected to be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire as we will see at the close of this study.

4. There are the final books – 12b

Revelation 20:12

“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.”

Two sets of books will be opened on this judgment day:

I. The record of sinful works.



What is revealed here is not a decision to see whether or not someone is saved. Just the opposite is true. What is revealed in this judgment scene is the confirmation of one's eternal destiny by means of God's written records of their sinful deeds. The point of this passage is NOT to prove that salvation is by works (good deeds), but to teach the condemnation of the unsaved by their sinful works.

These books or scrolls will reveal several things.

A. There will be a revelation of sins – 12a

Revelation 20:12 states that “the books were opened.” These are books or scrolls that contain the record of the sinful deeds of lost humanity. My friend, if we do not receive forgiveness for our sins, we will someday have to face our sins at this judgment. These scrolls are God's records of the wicked deeds or sins of rebellion that the unsaved of all the ages have committed. These might be called the final books for they are God's final records of the sinful deeds which the unsaved have committed against Him and everything that has offended His holiness. God knows how to keep accurate records. Not one of your sins will be missed!

The dead (those resurrected) were “judged out of those things which were written in the books (scrolls) according to their works” (sinful deeds). This means that lost humanity has every sin, which they have ever committed recorded down on these scrolls. And they will be judged or sentenced for eternal punishment according to the way that they have lived.

I shudder when I think of how people living today flippantly take God's name in vain over and over again. I cringe every time I hear it! They do not

realize that every blasphemy they have said against God will be written down on the books or scrolls!

Jesus forewarned in Matthew 12:35-36:

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

Every swear word, every time you have taken God’s name in vain, every evil thing that you have said against others will come back to haunt you on this day. A record of every sin will be written on the books! You will be “judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to (your) “works” (sinful deeds). Think of all the sins you have committed against God. They will all be there to haunt you, if you are not saved; and if your sins have not been washed away through the blood of Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7).

Every lustful thought, every evil thought, every sinful action, every wicked thing you have committed is recorded and will resurface in this day. Everything that you have viewed which was sinful will be on record. Every angry thought, every act of fornication, adultery, covetousness, theft, murder, jealousy, lie, or dishonest action will be on the record.

Friend, God keeps accurate records! No sin will pass God’s judgment on this day. They will all be written down in the books - every last one of them. The Great White Throne Judgment will not be similar to our court of law. There will no defense attorney, no jury, no plea bargaining, no appeal, and no leniency. Sinners will fall prostrate (Psalm 1:5) before God’s majestic holiness and have nothing to say before the God of absolute justice and righteousness.

B. There will be a righteous judgment for sins – 12-13

Revelation 12:12 and 13 both verify that all unsaved mankind will be judged “according to their works” (sinful deeds) which suggests God will judge righteously on the basis of one’s sins which they have committed against

God. Romans 2:5 speaks “of the wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Every sinner will get what is coming to them – not more and no less. This is because God judged righteously based on a person’s wickedness or “according to their works.”

This would mean that there will be degrees of punishment in hell since everyone will be judged “according to their works.” Not every individual will receive the same or equal judgment. Although all judgment will be horrible for every doomed lost sinner, the Bible teaches that God is going to judge some people more severely than others depending on the sinful lives that they have lived.

Sniper killers (terrorists), Saddam Hussein, and Hitler are going to be punished in a greater way than other sinners who may have not committed these same types of terrible sinful atrocities upon humanity. But every person will be judged for their own sins and suffer God’s eternal vengeance based upon the degree and severity of their sins.

John R. Rice said:

"Those who go to Heaven ride on a pass and enter into blessings that they never earned, but all who go to hell pay their own way."

The Bible clearly teaches that the unsaved will be judged on the basis of their wicked deeds which indicates degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire.

Romans 2:6 says:

“Who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

This is exactly what Revelation 20:12 and 13 says. People will be judged on the basis of their sinful works which they have committed against God. When people are judged “according to their works” it means several things.

This righteous judgment of the unsaved consists of:

1. *The severity of their sins.*

The severity or serious nature of a person's sins will be taken into account ("the greater sin" – John 19:11). Pilate was guilty for turning in Jesus, but Caiaphas and Judas, and all the wicked Jews were guiltier and had committed the greater sin for they had rejected the claims of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. They had the greater sin! We can conclude that Hell will be hotter for a Hitler or Osama Bin Laden than it will be for someone else who did not commit the same kind of dastardly acts that he committed and was responsible for in the Holocaust. Abortion doctors will have a hot place in eternal hell.

The severity of one's sins will be taken into account on Judgment Day.

Matthew 23:14

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

This means that certain types of sins are more serious than others. Sins like personal gain, at the expense of others, and pretense or pride, will produce greater judgment or more severe punishment. Notice that Jesus said "greater damnation" – not greater annihilation. It would be ludicrous and senseless to talk about people being annihilated in a greater way than others. Greater types of sins will mean greater damnation. Jesus clearly taught this during His earthly ministry. He taught the truth about people receiving judgment according to the severity of their sins.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:14-15:

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

If something is "more tolerable" in the context of judgment, this would mean there will be degrees of sentencing and judgment in hell. When a person rejects a clear Gospel witness about Christ (the Messiah), they will receive greater judgment than those who did not have a Gospel witness, but who sinned against the light they had. God looks upon rejection of His

Son as a greater sin worthy of greater judgment than the perversion of homosexuality.

2. The stockpiling of many sins.

The quantity or amount of sins a person commits will be taken into consideration.

Romans 2:5 speaks of the accumulative aspect of our sins:

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

The truth is very clear. The more a person sins, he builds or gathers up God’s wrath, which will be meted out against him at the Great White Throne. A person will receive a greater expression of God’s wrath as a result of stockpiling a large amount of sins before God. As a result, he will receive the greater punishment. People will be judged “according to their deeds” which can mean the quantity of sins people commit (Rev. 20:12). The Bible teaches that unsaved people are accumulating a debt of sin that will one day come due. The day of reckoning will come when the bill must be paid, or else, one will be judged for all eternity in the Lake of Fire. God collects on all His debts.

Our sins are piling up and as they do we are treasuring up (stockpiling) sins that will bring God’s wrath against us on this day. You will have to face your sins someday unless you have them forgiven through the work of Jesus Christ.

We need to have our account settled in this life so we don’t have our sinful record and account brought before us in the next life. Has your sin account been settled before God? Jesus will forgive all of your sins (past, present and future) if you will come to Him in faith and trust in His saving provision. This means that you will never have a sinful record before God again! You are forgiven!

“Long ago, long ago,
Yes, the old account was settled long ago;
And the record’s clear today, for He washed my sins away,
When the old account was settled long ago.”

Yes, everyone will be judged “according to their works.” This expression would also take into account the revelation of light given to people.

3.. The shunning of light which reveals sin.

There is also the light or revelation that a person has received and rejected which will be taken into account at the Great White Throne Judgment for Paul calls this judgment “the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). God will judge fairly. He will not judge someone for rejecting the Gospel who never heard about it from a missionary.

Romans 2:12 declares:

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”

The Bible teaches that this judgment will be measured and meted out in proportion to the actual revelation or light (illumination) that was given to people. God’s judgment will be righteous and fair. Light rejected is light denied and people will be judged for the revelation they reject. The future judgment of the heathen who never heard the Gospel will be fair. The heathen will be judged for rejecting the Creator; they will not be judged for rejecting the Savior. They will not be judged for rejecting the grace of God but the Creator God.

Yes, people will be judged “according to their deeds” (Rev. 20:12) but this judgment will always be based upon the revelation or light that people have received and the righteous character of God’s judgment (Rom. 2:5).

I purchased a little booklet on hell many years ago while I was in a Plymouth Brethren bookstore. The author was Reverend George Gordon Macleod of Carnwath, Scotland. His words are very pointed as he commented on the

Psalm 9:17 – “The wicked shall be turned into hell.” Here are the words in the booklet.

“I remember when a boy reading a book entitled The Horrors of The Damned, in which a harrowing description of the torments of the lost was given; but words fail to paint hell. You must go there. You shall be turned into hell. It will be by force. No entreaties shall save you. No power can rescue you. The arm of God Almighty will turn you into hell! ... Drunkard! you shall be hurried from your cup, smitten of everlasting thirst. Swearer! God will rivet the last oath on your tongue, and drag you to judgment. ... Ye drunkard-makers, who put the bottle to your neighbor’s mouth and money by the murderer of souls, you shall be turned into hell, damned for ever! ... I warn you, decent and respectable sinners, you shall be turned into hell. All ye shall be turned into hell. Your decency is damning you while it keep you from Jesus. ... Decent unbelievers, you are going from the communion table to and endless hell. ... Cowardly and unbelieving, you shall have your portion with the hypocrites, where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Dear friend, the only way to escape this judgment and have your sins erased from these scrolls is to believe on the Son of God and receive His loving forgiveness of all your sins!

Ephesians 1:7 declares:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Colossians 1:14 adds:

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ to save us from hell, He erases all of our sins forever and they will never appear in the books at the Great White Throne Judgment. Jesus Christ forgives us of all our past, present, and future sins. You need to settle out of court!

II. The roster of the redeemed – 12, 15

2 Timothy 2:19 declares:

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

Two sets of books will be opened on this day of God’s wrath. There will be the record of sinful works but another book (scroll) contains what we might view as a roster of the redeemed saints of all ages.



Revelation 20:12

“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.”

Revelation 20:15

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

The “book of life” is the record of those who are saved. This same scroll is mentioned in other texts of the book of Revelation. It’s a scroll and roster of God’s redeemed, born-again, blood-washed saints. These are the saints who have received spiritual life from God and therefore their names are recorded in this scroll of life.

Revelation 3:5

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

The Book of Life is opened at the Great White Throne Judgment to prove that the names of the unsaved or unredeemed of all the ages are not found in this scroll. Therefore, these untold billions of people standing before the Great White Throne are worthy of Christ's righteous wrath and judgment. You can say what you will but God has the final word on who gets into Heaven.

Revelation 21:27

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Your name must be recorded on the roster of the redeemed if you are going to enter Heaven someday. Think of it. If your name is not there you will not enter Heaven. Instead, you will experience the wrath of God in hell for all eternity. I'm thankful my name is recorded down in the scroll of life and it's there to stay!

Once again, this "book of life" (a record of the redeemed) surfaces at this judgment (Rev. 20:12) to actually prove that a person's name is not present in the book of life. It is a confirmation that a person's name is not there and has never been there. This is not a book or scroll that determines who gets into Heaven but a scroll that determine who enters hell. How sad when everyone before this Great White Throne Judgment must acknowledge with God that their name is not written down in this scroll and therefore is worthy of judgment.

Revelation 20:15

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Is your name written down? Does your name appear on the scroll in Heaven? Friend, if you make a definite decision of saving faith in Jesus Christ, you can know that your name is recorded in the scroll of life as well.

"When the roll, is called up yon-der,
When the roll, is called up yon-der,

When the roll, is called up yon-der,
When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there."

5. The fiery judgment – 14-15

Revelation 20:14-15 once again reveal this final fiery judgment.

"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."

"At His call the dead awaken,
Rise to life from earth and sea;
All the powers of nature shaken
By His look, prepares to flee.
Careless sinner, what will then become of thee?"

The Bible says repeatedly that the unsaved will be cast into a place that can be best described as a Lake of Fire. If your name is not found in the scroll of life on this coming day of judgment, you will not spend eternity with Jesus Christ, but be cast into the place called the "lake of fire." Jesus spoke of this final judgment place during His earthly ministry when referring to the place called Gehennah (Matt. 5:22; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33) which was the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. It continually was smoldering and on fire and became a fitting description of this eternal Lake of Fire.



The damned will be dumped into Gehennah's awful flames forever. God will see to it that no unsaved person escapes his sinful crimes against a holy God. Language like this leaves no room for any form of universal salvation, soul sleep, an intermediate state of purgatory, a second chance, or annihilation of the wicked.

Although Dante added many of his own ideas to the superstitions of his day when he wrote "The Inferno," the sign he read in the vestibule of hell does portray the Biblical teaching of hopelessness and abandonment that people face in hell.

"I am the way to the city of woe,
I am the way to a forsaken people
I am the way into eternal sorrow.
Abandon all hope ye who enter here."

I'm so very glad that I will not have any part in what the Bible calls the second death. Worms (maggots) and a horrible stench of Sulphur will be experienced in this awful place (Mark 9:44-48; Rev. 14:10; 20:10; 21:8). Hell or the Lake of Fire will be God's eternal cosmic dump of lost souls who will be burning as garbage forever and forever. In other words, they will experience the wrath of God in the torments of a fiery flame that is suitable for their appropriate sins.

There are four questions we might answer about the Lake of Fire.

1. Where is the Lake of Fire?

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, it's probably somewhere on the far outreaches of God's universe of space which is unknown to us. It is somewhere outside what we identify as the created universe of time and space. It is a fiery lake that will never cease to burn but the exact location is unknown to us.

A companion of a newly converted Christian said to him one day, "Can you tell me where hell is?" After a moment's hesitation the young Christian said, "Yes, it's at the end of a Christless life."

2. Is the fire literal?

Yes! Jesus never said anything that would lead us to believe that the fire of hell is not literal. Of course, we must realize that there are different types of fire that can burn. This will be a type of fire that will burn people and yet keep people in utter blackness, since hell is also a place of total darkness (2

Peter 2:17; Jude 13). It's a type of fire that will bring torture and suffering upon Christ rejecters for all eternity. Jesus spoke about this place during His earthly ministry.

I think Russel K. Tardo gave an accurate Scriptural summary of the fires of hell: "Perhaps you imagined that where there is fire there must be some degree of light, but not so in hell! The fires of hell are of a different and far more horrible nature than fire here. Hell fire produces no light, but leaves men in total darkness. They see and feel the lick of the flame but cannot see through its black walls."

Mark 9:43-48

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Of course, Jesus was not talking about literally mutilating your body. What He was saying is this. Do not sin with your hand, feet or eyes for it will mean greater judgment in hell, Gehennah, the Lake of Fire! So, do anything you can to avoid using your body to sin. This is because an unsaved person will receive greater judgment for each sin he commits against God.

The late Sir Robert Anderson once wrote:

"So awful is the teaching of the Lord Jesus respecting the doom of the impenitent, that every statement on the subject ought to adhere strictly to the very words of Scripture."

"Does it make any difference to you?
Does it make any difference to you?
If a soul dies in sin God has told you to win,
Will it make any difference to you?"

3. Will the fire annihilate people?

No! The Bible does not teach that a person is annihilated where his soul and spirit ceases to exist.

Revelation 19:20

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Revelation 20:10 then says:

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

The beast and false prophet were cast into the Lake of Fire for 1,000 years and they were still there after Millennium which is the time when the devil is cast into the Lake of Fire. The fire of Gehennah will not annihilate people.

Revelation 14:11 adds this:

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

These are not the words of the cults who teach annihilationism but the clear expression of eternal and physical suffering. A person cannot be annihilated forever (this makes no sense!) but they can be tormented forever in this awful place. The fire will keep unsaved people in the continual state of death, dying, and suffering. They will never be able to cease from existing.

This brings us to a final question.

4. Why is the Lake of Fire called a second death?

The Bible teaches that the unsaved or unredeemed will be cast into a Lake of Fire where they will experience what the Bible calls a second death. The "second death" is actually pictured as a separation from God that will go on for eternity. It is a second or final separation from God that will last forever.

Revelation 20:14

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

What is the "second death?" It certain is not annihilation. The second death is mentioned on multiple occasions in the book of Revelation (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 11, 14-15) and is synonymous with the Lake of Fire. It is a "death" in that it is a final separation from God, the Giver of spiritual life. It is called the "second" death because it follows the first death of an unsaved person when his spirit is separated from his body.

Death means separation. The first physical death of an unbeliever involves the body dying and the person's human spirit separating from his body (James 2:26), the time when the spirit of a person is transported into hades (the temporary holding tank for the lost). The second death involves the resurrection of the human body and the spirit being reunited together, which results in the eternal death (separation from God) of both the body and spirit (both the physical and spiritual aspects of man's existence) where unsaved people will suffer the vengeance of God forever in the Lake of Fire.

Think of this; just as the resurrected bodies of the saints will be living forever, so the resurrected bodies of the unsaved will in some sense be dying forever. This would mean that their bodies will not be consumed by the fire of hell (annihilated), but will remain in a state of "being consumed" or a state of "ongoing" death and separation from God which is exactly what Jesus taught (Matthew 10:28, Mark 9:43-48).



Revelation 21:8

But the fearful, and unbelieving,
and the abominable, and murderers,
and whoremongers, and sorcerers,
and idolaters, and all liars,
shall have their part in the lake
which burneth with fire and brimstone:
which is the second death.

If God can make a believer's body eternally glorified to live in His presence, He can surely make an unglorified body, eternally suited for pain and death in the fires of Hell.

An infidel said, "There is one thing that mars all the pleasures of my life." "Indeed!" replied his friend, "what is that?" He answered, "I am afraid the Bible is true. If I could know for certain that death is an eternal sleep, I should be happy: my joy would be complete! But here is the thorn that stings me. This is the sword that pierces my very soul, -- if the Bible is true, I am lost forever."

And lost you will be if you reject the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the coming day, you will have no hope and will only receive of God's eternal wrath throughout the eons of time. You must remember that God has two sides to His eternal character — mercy and justice. Lost sinners will not escape the justice of God (Revelation 15:3, 16:7) in the unending doom of Hell's fire, burning Sulphur, and maggots (Revelation 20:10, 15, Mark 9:42-49, Isaiah 14:11). The unsaved will die a second or final (eternal) death in the unending agonies of damnation where both their spirit and body will be separated from God's presence forever.

Oh the unquenchable fire, the eternal darkness, the undying worm, the loneliness and the fear! No more will God's mercy be within your reach! You will be separated from God forever! Never shall you rest again! Your sins will haunt you and God's wrath will judge you throughout the eons of time! On Judgment Day, you will have no hope when you stand before the Great White Throne. On this day, you will be sentenced to receive God's eternal wrath throughout the eternal ages of time. Dear friend, ponder the words "for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Think what it means to be lost forever!

Charles Spurgeon's congregation heard him declare that hell was real and hot and eternal: "Suffice it for me to close up by saying, that the hell of hells will be to thee poor sinner, the thought, that it is to be *forever*. Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and it shall be written "For ever!" When the damned jingle the burning irons of their torments, they shall say, "for ever!" When they howl, echo cries "for ever!"

On one occasion Robert G. Ingersoll, the agnostic lecturer of the last century, was announced to give an address on hell. He declared he would prove conclusively that hell was a wild dream of some scheming theologians who invented it to terrify credulous people. As he was launching into his subject, a half-drunken man arose in the audience and exclaimed, "Make it strong, Bob. There's a lot of us poor fellows depending on you. If you are wrong, we are all lost forever. So be sure you prove it clear and plain."

John Bunyan wrote:

"When thou hast been in hell so many thousand years as there are stars in the firmament, or drops in the sea, or sands on the seashore, yet thou hast to lie there forever. Oh, this one word forever, how will it torment thy soul!

Thomas Watson said:

"The torments of hell abide for ever... If all the earth and sea were sand, and every thousandth year a bird should come, and take away one grain of this sand, it would be a long time ere that vast heap of sand were emptied; yet, if after all that time the damned may come out of hell, there were some hope; but this word EVER breaks the heart."

Thomas Brooks cried out:

"The damned shall live as long in Hell as God himself shall live in Heaven."

Think what it means to be lost forever!

A drunken man staggered up to a New York policeman and asked how to find a night club called "Hell's Gate." "See that steeple over there?" asked the policeman. "That's the steeple of Calvary Church. Just keep going past Calvary and you'll come to Hell's Gate." My friend, you must go past Calvary's cross in order to go to hell. And if you bypass the grace and love of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9), you will stand before this final judgment someday. But if you stop at the foot of the cross, realize that Jesus died in your place and took your own judgment of hell upon Himself, and place your faith in His provision, then you can be saved from the Great White Throne Judgment.

1 Corinthians 15:3 says that "Christ died for your sins" which means that He took your own sins upon himself (substitution), every sin that you committed and ever would commit was judicially placed upon Christ when He hung on the cross and died in your place. Galatians 3:13 adds that Christ was "made a curse for us" when He hung on the tree. He endured God's wrath so we never must experience God's wrath.

To know that you are saved from the Lake of Fire and Second Death, you must place your faith in Christ's saving sacrifice and resurrection. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Belief involves a definite decision where you place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to save you. Friend, either you will receive the salvation that Christ provides for you, when He took your punishment in your place, or you must take the punishment for your own sins in the Lake of Fire.

One day, when Vice President Calvin Coolidge was presiding over the Senate, one Senator angrily told another to go "straight to hell." The offended Senator complained to Vice President Coolidge, since he was the presiding officer. Cal looked up from the book he had been leafing through while listening to the debate and said: "I've been looking through the rule book," he said. "You don't have to go to hell."

Today is the day of salvation and grace! Come to Christ and receive Him as your Savior from hell while there is yet time and while He extends His mercy to you.

Revelation 22:17 gives this invitation to you:

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come (come in simple faith and receive Christ as your Savior). And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (the refreshing and eternal drink of salvation through Jesus).

“Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, I come! I come.”

Here is a prayer that you might pray in order to express faith in Christ and receive His free offer of salvation. **“Dear God, I know that Jesus Christ died for me on the cross to save me from the Lake of Fire. I am so thankful that He took my punishment for all my sins when He was on the cross. Right now I place my personal faith in Jesus Christ to be my Savior. I believe He died in in my place and rose again to give me salvation and eternal life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”**