

Behold | Sermons through the Revelation

Sermon #44 | Revelation 20:11-15 | The Last Judgment

Revelation 20:11 | The Great White Throne

- Now at the *end* of the thousand years, John sees a **great white throne**. This is often called *the Great White Throne Judgment*.
- This throne is presumably the same that John saw in Revelation 4:2-6. However, this time the throne appears to be (by context) on earth. We are taught that God will *dwell with His people*. We are not told if the dwelling time began at the beginning of the millennium, but that would seem to be the most obvious conclusion.
- Psalm 102:25-26 contains the same message about God as verse 11. The Psalmist said, *heaven and earth shall pass perish, but thou shalt endure*.
- It appears to be at this point that **the earth and the heaven fled away** (v. 11). In the next chapter we will read that **the first heaven and the first earth were passed away** (Rev. 21:1). After the battle of Gog and Magog, the earth is seemingly desecrated, and God removes the physical material and begins again.

Revelation 20:12-15 | The Second Death

- The judgment at the Great White throne *could be* in two stages, though this cannot be fully confirmed.
 - First, **the dead** (v. 12) which are in reference to the immediate context; that is, those killed in verse 9.
 - Second, **the sea...and death and hell** (v. 13). This appears to be a collective statement meaning, “everybody dead.” The phrase **death and hell** would be difficult to separate into two meaningful locations. Literally, *Thanatos and hades*.
 - It is *possible* that the last resurrection comes in at least two stages: those killed in verse 9, and then those who died throughout time and had not yet been resurrected (in verse 5 referred to as **the rest of the dead**).
- The judgment was according to **books** and **another book** (v. 12).
 - The **books** seem to contain a record of **their works**, and the first portion of the judgment is **according to their works** (v. 13).
 - We are not given any indication how this judgment is carried out, what the punishments are, whether or not there are rewards, etc.
 - The best we can say is “we don’t have some of the information.”

- The worst we can say is, “we have all the information.”
- Dante (*Inferno*) wrote of nine circles of hell. In doing so he had a fascinating piece of literature, and a plethora of made-up theology.
- The second book (**another book which is *the book of life*** – v. 12) is not a book of works, but is the sole standard by which those at this judgment are **cast into the lake of fire** (v. 14).
 - Verse 15 reveals that those in the book of life are *not* cast into the lake of fire.
 - From this, we can make two theories:
 - That *none* of the people at this judgment are in the book of life, and thus *all* of them go to the lake of fire. This is the most common view. Comparing with verse 6 gives support to this view.
 - That *some* of the people in this resurrection *were* found in the book, and thus *were not* cast into the lake of fire. This would be an unpopular view, but the text itself does not rule it out.
- The ultimate punishment is **the second death** (v. 14). The *first death* would be that of the body, the *second* of both the body and the soul.

The Importance of Recognizing Temporary Grace

- We are blessed to live in an age in which *we don’t have to worry about this second death*. Not because we are immune, but because we’ve been given a means of escape.
- Throughout the Bible, God dealt with mankind by judging them according to their works. See Luke 10:28, Leviticus 18:5, Genesis 2:17, etc.
- Currently, God is **not imputing their trespasses unto them** (2 Cor. 5:19), and thus not measuring our works (see Eph. 2:8-9). We can have **the righteousness of God** in us (2 Cor. 5:21). All we do is **believe on the Lord Jesus Christ** (Acts 16:31).
- Many of us have placed our faith in Jesus Christ and His completed work of death, burial, and resurrection. Having done so, it is important to recognize that this glorious gospel of *grace* is *temporary*. It has not always existed, and it will not always exist. We must, therefore, be diligent to be **ambassadors for Christ** (2 Cor. 5:17).