

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Revelation: God's Revelation To His Servants Today On Events About To Occur Part IV: "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter": Events After The Rapture Of The Church F. The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Troubling concerns have risen over the Bible's news of God's final judgment of mankind:

(1) Ephesians 2:8-9 claims one is saved by faith in Christ apart from human works. However, the Bible also teaches that Christian believers will be judged for their works at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), that unbelievers will be judged for their works at the great white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-12) and that Christ will judge the nations for their works, Matthew 25:31-46. Thus, amillennialists, some Protestant and others Roman Catholic, tend to make all three judgments the same, "that the great white throne judgment . . . will be the time that believers and unbelievers alike are judged." (John F. Walvoord, The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation, 1976, p. 136; J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come, 1972, p. 86; gotquestions.org/Printer/great-white-throne-PF.html)

What complicates this matter is the Revelation 20:15 claim that anyone at the great white throne judgment who is not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire, and Revelation 22:19 KJV adds that if anyone takes away from the book of Revelation, God will "take away his part out of the book of life"! Thus, some believers dread the final judgment, fearing God might tell them there that a bad work they did will send them to the lake of fire!

(2) Also, we all know of great, unresolved injustices in history, leading many to wonder how they can all be properly resolved, if **ever!** The thought that injustices might go unresolved is very troubling to victims of injustice!

Need: *So, we ask, "Does the Bible offer answers for troubling concerns we have about God's final judgment(s)?"*

- I. First, (1) the judgment seat of Christ, (2) Christ's judgment of the nations and (3) the great white throne judgment EACH occur at DIFFERENT TIMES for DIFFERENT REASONS (as follows):**
- A. The *judgment seat of Christ* occurs for *Christians after the rapture* to *reward* them for their *Christian works*:
1. This judgment occurs after the rapture and before the Church returns with Christ at His Second Coming, for Revelation 19:7-8 NIV reveals that the Church, Christ's "bride," will be granted to clothe herself in white garments that represent her godly works before Christ's Second Coming in Revelation 19:11-21.
 2. This righteous clothing of the Church is provided **due to** the judgment seat of Christ that occurs in heaven, for that event destroys a believer's sinful works and leaves only his righteous ones, 1 Corinthians 3:13-15a.
 3. Of note, this judgment does **NOT** result in anyone's losing his salvation: 1 Corinthians 3:15a,b KJV claims that even if every work of a given believer is burned up as evil, he himself will nevertheless still be saved!
- B. However, Christ's *judgment of the nations* occurs at Christ's *Second Coming* when He sorts the saved from the lost based on the *evidence* that their works provide *regarding their faith or lack of faith* in Jesus Christ: Matthew 25:31 reveals that at Christ's Second Coming, He will separate the saved "sheep" from the lost "goats" by the **evidence** of faith or of its lack in their works in the previous Great Tribulation era: if one had treated Jews well, he evidenced faith in Israel's coming Messiah, Jesus; if he had treated Jews badly, he evidenced unbelief in Christ, but belief in the antichrist, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Matthew 25:32.
- C. Finally, the *great white throne judgment*, coming *after the Kingdom*, *condemns all the lost* to damnation:
1. This judgment involves those of the "second resurrection" (Rev. 20:14) *versus* the "first resurrection" of Rev. 20:6, that "first resurrection" involving believers of all ages who enter the Kingdom. [Scripture does not state it, but we believe God raises the believers who die during the Kingdom era at the end of that era.]
 2. This great white throne judgment occurs after Christ's thousand-year Messianic reign, Revelation. 20:7-11.
 3. Those who are judged at this event can only be condemned by their works, seen in the fact that though they are judged for their works, no one escapes the lake of fire by his works, but only by having his name written in the book of life, Rev. 20:12, 15. Scripture elsewhere explains why this is so (as follows):
 - a. The Apostle John who wrote the book of Revelation also wrote in John 3:36 that one must trust in Christ to be saved, and that failure to believe in Christ leaves one an object of God's wrath.
 - b. Romans 3:19-28 provide the theological reasons for these truths: (1) God's law can only condemn every mortal as a sinner, Rom. 3:19-20. (2) However, God gives one His righteousness as a gift when he trusts in Christ as his Savior during his earthly life, Rom. 3:21-24. (3) This gift is based on Christ's atonement as Christ's death for sin fully absorbed God's wrath against man's sin, Rom. 3:25. (4) God thus pronounces a

believer just, justifying him by faith in Christ, Rom. 3:26-28. (5) After a man physically dies, he has no second chance to trust in Christ for salvation, for after death, only judgment awaits him, Hebrews 9:27.

II. Second, the Bible's "book of life" term needs expositional clarification to counter misunderstandings:

- A. Scripture mentions **two** books "of life," one for the *physically* living, and the other for the *spiritually* living:
1. In Exodus 32:32, Moses asked God to blot him out of His book if the Lord would not forgive and thus slay the nation Israel, and God replied that He would one day blot out whoever in Israel had sinned, Ex. 32:33.
 2. This blotting occurred when God punished that generation not to enter Canaan by **premature physical death** (Num. 14:22-23), so this "book" was a list of the *physically living*, Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Ex. 32:32.
 3. Yet, the New Testament book of life, the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 13:8), lists the *spiritually* living. (Ibid.)
- B. One is **removed** from the book of the *physically* living when he *physically dies*, but **no one** is **removed** from the book of the *spiritually living* due to **unconditional salvation security, and we show how Revelation 22:19 in the Greek text HARMONIZES with this claim on unconditional salvation security (as follows):**
1. The Textus Receptus behind the KJV was tainted by Erasmus' "importing of entire passages from the Latin *Vulgate*. This how Erasmus came up with 'the book of life' at Revelation 22:19 rather than the reading of the Greek manuscripts, 'the tree of life.'" (James R. White, The King James Only Controversy, 1995, p. 66)
 2. Ryrie adds that for the KJV word "part" in the verse, we should read "share" (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Rev. 22:19), so God in Revelation 22:19 warned **unbelievers** who take away from the salvation truth of His Word will be judged not to have access to His salvation blessings, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 989-990.
 3. Revelation 22:19 thus **warns UNBELIEVERS -- NOT BELIEVERS -- against rejecting salvation truth!**
- C. In summary, the book of the *physically* living either lists or has blotted out those who respectively physically live or die, but once one is written in the book of the *spiritually* living, he is **unconditionally forever saved!**

III. Third, the three judgments mentioned in this sermon will address all of history's needs for justice:

- A. The judgment seat of Christ addresses all the needs for justice re: Christians' works, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.
- B. [The lost who are sent to damnation in the judgment of the nations will be judged at the great white throne. Israel will also be judged at Christ's return, and Old Testament saints who are raised then will also be judged and rewarded for their works much as Christians had been, Ezekiel 20:34-38; Ibid., Pentecost, p. 412-413.]
- C. Then, the great white throne judgment addresses all the needs for justice re: all the works of the unsaved dead:
1. Christ will sit on the great white throne (John 5:22), and He will judge men somewhere in space as the first universe passes away with enormous noise in a colossal fireball, Rev. 20:11; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Ibid., p. 423.
 2. All the unsaved dead will once-for-all stand (*hestotas*, perf. act. ptc.; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 889) there before Christ, and the books of their recorded works will be opened with the book of life, and they will be judged by what is once-for-all written (*gegrammenon*, perf. pass. ptc.; Ibid.) there, Rev. 20:12.
 3. The Rev. 20:13a,b claim that the sea gave up its dead shows that no matter how far a body is disintegrated, it will be raised for this event (Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 983), and the claim that death and Hades gave up their dead means the bodies of the unsaved will be joined to their spirits that had been in Hades, Ibid.
 4. Thus, all the unsaved of all history will be judged by Christ according to all of their works, Rev. 20:13c.
 5. As the result, death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (1 Cor. 15:25-26), the "second death," and since no unbeliever's works can save him, and since he does not have his name in the Lamb's book of life, every lost person will be cast into the lake of fire to be constantly, eternally tormented, Rev. 20:14-15, 10.

Lesson: (1) *Those who trust in Christ now have their names irreversibly written in the Lamb's book of eternal life, and they will be raptured and their works in the Christian life will be then judged at the judgment seat of Christ, resulting in their either being rewarded or losing reward, not their salvation.* (2) *At His return, Christ will separate believers on earth from unbelievers, with believers entering the Kingdom while the lost go to damnation.* (3) *After the Kingdom, Christ will judge all the lost dead, and all of them will be forever cast into the lake of fire.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ to escape God's wrath and be saved, John 3:16, 36.* (2) *Then, (a) may we rejoice that our names are irreversibly written in the Lamb's book of eternal life, and (b) live in obedience to God's Word to prepare to give an account of our Christian lives and service to the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate . . .)

Considering the fact that he himself would face the judgment seat of Christ, Paul wrote, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others," 2 Corinthians 5:10-11a ESV. We, too, need to get ready to meet the Lord!

(1) May we believe in Christ to be saved! (2) Then, may we like the Apostle Paul revere and obey God!