

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Judgment Seat

Revelation 20:11-15

INTRODUCTION:

ILLUSTRATION:

One of the most uncomfortable feelings that we can have is the feeling of being watched. I am sure you know what I mean. How often as kids or as being a parent have you heard the statement "Quit looking at me!". You have the feeling that someone is invading your space and you just want to be left alone to do as you please without criticism. We get the sense that they are seeing something about us that we do not want them to see.

That is why so many people are afraid of public speaking. Because in public speaking you have all of these sets of eyes absolutely trained on you. It can be very, very uncomfortable because it gives you the sense that you are being exposed or judged.

For these reasons it is uncomfortable for us to have the feeling that we are being watched.

It is with that in mind that we come to our passage this morning. Here we are faced with something that can be uncomfortable for many people. That is the reality that God is indeed watching all of us and recording everything that we do on this earth. Not only the actions that we do, but also our thoughts and the intent of our heart.

God is keeping a record of everyone throughout history of what they have said, done, or thought. All of it is being recorded. This is what we see in the text this morning as we see this scene of the final judgment.

Revelation 20:11-15 (NASB)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

We need to recall why John was told to write this book of Revelation. He wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor that existed in that day (and of course to us as well). These were churches were facing persecution, imprisonment, and even death for their faith. And Revelation ultimately told them three things they needed hear:

1st – Everyone will face judgment.

2nd – Folks will pay for the harm they've done to God's people.

And 2nd – there will be an ultimate eternal reward for God's people. It is worth it to hang in there and serve our God.

BODY:

I. WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD?

Revelation 20:11-12a (NASB)

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne,

We see a person who is seated on the great white throne.

Is this referring to God or Christ?

As we know, God the father, Jesus the son, and the Holy Spirit all make up God.

But we see in scriptures that it is Jesus who will sit on the throne at the final judgment.

Matthew 25:31-33 (NASB)

³¹ "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then **He will sit on His glorious throne.** ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

We also see that the judgment has been given over to Jesus.

John 5:25-29 (NASB)

²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; ²⁷ and **He gave Him authority to execute judgment,** because He is *the* Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, ²⁹ and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.

Some scriptures say that God will judge. Others say it will be Jesus. However, the unity of the Father and the Son is such that it is not a problem.

Then we see "**from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.**" This once again tells us that heaven and earth will be destroyed when Jesus returns.

Revelation 20:12a (NASB)

¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne,

Who are the "dead" standing before the throne?

We have seen the statement that the "dead were judged" in earlier verses. In Revelation 11:18 the focus is on **believers**.

Revelation 11:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time *came* for the **dead** to be judged, and *the time* to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, **the small and the great**, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

In Revelation 19:18 the focus is on the **unbelievers**.

Revelation 19:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and **small and great**."

This verse focuses on the "small and great" of unbelievers.

Here in verse 12 the same wording "**great and small**" is a reference to both **believers and unbelievers**.

Will we ALL face judgment?

The answer is clearly **YES** in the scriptures.

Romans 14:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? **For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.** ¹¹ For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, **every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.**"

¹² **So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

In context, it is clear that both passages refer to Christians. The judgment seat of Christ, therefore, involves believers giving an account of their lives to Christ. And we know for sure that unbelievers will face judgment.

The judgment seat of Christ does not determine salvation; that was determined by Christ's sacrifice on our behalf and our faith in Him. All of our sins are forgiven, and we will never be condemned for them. We should **not look** at the judgment seat of Christ as God judging our sins, but rather as God rewarding us for our lives.

The Bible says that we will have to give an account for ourselves. But that will not be the primary focus of the judgment seat of Christ for the believer. Our sins were washed away by the blood of Christ and we received His righteousness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

God doesn't say He'll forget our sins, because God is not capable of forgetting, but He does say "**He will remember them no more**"! He will not hold them against us. Our sins were taken by Christ on the cross.

James 1:12 is a good summary of how we should think about the judgment seat of Christ:

James 1:12 (NASB)

¹²Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

ILLUSTRATION:

An article was written about a guide who took a group of tourists around the Empire State Building. On the elevator ride to the 102nd floor, a nervous woman asked, "What if these cables should break? Would we go up or down?"

The guide replied, "That depends entirely on the kind of life you've been leading."

Why would the guide think that?

Because that's what it says in Revelation 20.

The dead will be judged by what is written in the books, according to what they have done. Now the world reads that and they think..."Hey, I've got a chance. I've done some pretty good things."

ILLUSTRATION:

Years ago Reader's Digest had an article about a 67 year old man named Bill who - during his lifetime - had donated over 100 pints of blood. You can imagine that somewhere along the line he probably saved a few lives because of that donation.

Bill later jokingly told a reporter: "When that final whistle blows, and St. Peter asks, 'What did you do?' I'll just say, 'Well, I gave 100 pints of blood. That ought to get me in.'"

ILLUSTRATION:

About 10 years ago Warren Buffett announced that he was giving his fortune to charity. Buffett is worth \$44 billion just in stocks. He is giving away \$37 billion dollars and most of that will go to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (that leaves him with a paltry 7 billion dollars to live on). When Buffett presented his gift to the Gates, he made the remark, "There is more than one way to get to heaven, but this is a great way."

Now why would Bill the blood donor, and Warren Buffett the old rich guy believe they could get into heaven? Because of what they'd given. Because of what they'd done.

I mean - that's what it says in Revelation isn't it?

"The dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."

Well... sort of.

Notice it **DOESN'T** say the dead **got into heaven by what they'd done.**

It **ONLY** says they were **JUDGED** by what they had done.

II. WHAT ARE THE BOOKS THAT WERE OPENED?

You've heard of people keeping 2 sets of books?

Well God keeps two sets of books.

The first set are the books that record the deeds of every person who ever lived. It records their every word, actions, and thoughts.

The second book is the Lamb's Book of Life that lists everyone who will live with God in heaven.

Revelation 20:12-15 (NASB)

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds....¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

In other words – you can do all the good deeds you want.

- You can donate all the blood you've got.
- You can give all your wealth to the poor.

But if **your** name is **NOT WRITTEN** in the Lamb's book of life it won't make any difference. You're not going to make it.

Revelation 21:27 (NASB)

27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Those whose names are not in the book of life will be judged according to their deeds to determine the degree of punishment they will receive in the lake of fire.

Believers will also be judged by Christ, but since Christ's righteousness has been imputed to us and our names are written in the book of life, we will be rewarded, but not punished, according to our deeds.

It's only be having your name written in His book that you have any chance of heaven.

III. HOW DO YOU GET YOUR NAME WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE?

Now, you might ask...

How can a person get their name written in this book?

Well, I'm so glad you asked.

In Acts 16 a Philippian Jailer asked Paul and Silas "What must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31 (NASB)

³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

The **youth group** asked a week and a half ago. "Does that mean that all we have to do is believe in order to be saved?" Let's continue in chapter 16.

This jailer didn't know what to believe about Jesus...so for the next hour or so they taught he and his family what they should believe about Jesus. Then listen to verse 33.

Acts 16:33 (NASB)

³³ And he took them that *very* hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his *household*.

Once this jailer and his family knew what to believe they baptized the jailer and his family into Christ that very hour. It would have been a little after midnight.

Earlier in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit arrived on the day of Pentecost, the crowd interrupted Peter's sermon to ask "What shall we do?"

Acts 2:38 (NASB)

³⁸ Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is very clear on how we should respond to God's free gift of salvation.

- Hear God's Word.
- Believe in the Lord Jesus.
- Repent of our sins.
- Confess Jesus as our Lord.
- Be buried in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
- Live for Christ.

It's not that hard.

CONCLUSION:

The only reasons people would refuse to do it would be...

- They just refuse.
- They've heard advice from people who oppose doing that.
- They refuse to believe Jesus is coming back soon... so they put off the decision.

But the key thing is this: Jesus **IS** coming back.

And when He returns there will be **NO** second chances.

We need to be ready when He comes.

Explain the invitation hymn and coming forward.

This is the Day!