

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Revelation 20:11-15

Many people in our society believe there will be some type of judgment in the afterlife. Mistakenly, they believe this judgment will determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. The Bible reveals three judgments none of which determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. One's eternal destiny is determined in this life by one's response to Jesus Christ.

The first judgment is the Judgment Seat of Christ which will involve Church Age saints for the purposes of purification and reward (2 Cor. 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 3:10-15). This is the judgment you want to be part of.

The second judgment will be the Sheep & Goats Judgment which will involve gentile survivors of the Tribulation for the purpose of determining which of them will enter the Millennial Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46).

The third and final judgment will be *The Great White Throne Judgment* which will involve every human being who failed to be reconciled to God for the purpose of determining degree of punishment in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

You do not want to be at *The Great White Throne Judgment*. As we will see, the destiny of every defendant at *The Great White Throne Judgment* is the Lake of Fire.

The Great White Throne Judgment is revealed in Revelation 20:11-15.

Studied in context, it is clear that *The Great White Throne Judgment* will take place after the Millennial Kingdom is completed and Satan is defeated (20:7-10).

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT WILL TAKE PLACE AFTER THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Though verse 11 does not state it explicitly, we know from other New Testament passages that Jesus will preside as judge at *The Great White Throne Judgment*.

JESUS WILL BE THE JUDGE AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT (20:11)

Verse 11 reads:

Revelation 20:11 (ESV)

¹¹ *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.*

Jesus Himself revealed that God the Father has authorized Him to judge.

John 5:22-29 (ESV)

²² *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

²⁵ *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*

The resurrection of Jesus is proof that He will be the judge at *The Great White Throne Judgment*. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul to a gathering of philosophers in ancient Athens:

Acts 17:30-31 (ESV)

³⁰ *The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”*

The presiding judge at *The Great White Throne Judgment* will be Jesus.

EACH DEFENDANT WILL BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO HIS/HER DEEDS (20:12-13)

Revelation 20:12–13 (ESV)

¹² *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* ¹³ *And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.*

Will every human being stand trial at *The Great White Throne Judgment*?

Verses 12-13 reveal that every human being's name is written in one of two books; either your name is written in the *book of life* or it is written in the *book of deeds*.

Actually, all of our names initially are written in the *book of deeds*. The *book of deeds* contains the names of every human being separated from God because of the sin nature and because of sins committed. The *book of deeds* records every way in which we have disobeyed God in word and deed. The Bible makes clear that the wages (consequences) of sin is death – separation from God. Every defendant at *The Great White Throne Judgment* will be found guilty of sin and will be condemned to the Lake of Fire based on the *book of deeds*. They will not all experience the same degree of punishment – there are varying degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire (e.g. Matt. 12:38-42) – but they will suffer the second death (20:6, 14) which is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire.

But not every human being's name will be written in the *book of deeds* at the time of *The Great White Throne Judgment*. Many people's names will be written in the *book of life*. Those whose names are written in the *book of life* will not be judged at *The Great White Throne Judgment*. Our names are removed from the *book of deeds* and written in the *book of life* when we place our faith, our confidence, in the work of Christ upon the cross where He suffered the penalty of death on our behalf.

Colossians 2:13–14 (ESV)

¹³ *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,* ¹⁴ *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

By relying upon the deeds of Christ all our sins are forgiven, our records are expunged, our names are removed from the *book of deeds* and written in the *book of life*. We are delivered from *The Great White Throne Judgment* by the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

THE LAKE OF FIRE IS THE FINAL DESTINY OF DEATH AND OF EVERY DEFENDANT AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT (20:14-15)

Revelation 20:14–15 (ESV)

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.*

If the Lake of Fire is the ultimate destiny of every defendant, why will Jesus judge them on the basis of their deeds?

Because *The Great White Throne Judgment* is not for the purpose of determining who goes to heaven and who goes to the Lake of Fire. *The Great White Throne Judgment* is for the purpose of determining degree of punishment in the Lake of Fire.

Jesus is a righteous Judge. He clearly taught there will be degrees of punishment (Matt. 11:20-24, 12:38-42; Luke 12:47-48; John 19:11). Each person will receive what he or she is due. Rest assured that little old ladies who never hurt a fly will not receive the same degree of punishment as Hitler. Jesus is just.

Many people are offended by the Lake of Fire as being “unchristian,” and yet Jesus clearly taught its reality (Matt. 18:8; 23:15, 33; 25:46; Mark 9:46). It is to save us from the Lake of Fire that Jesus came and suffered what He did.

The Lake of Fire is a witness to the righteous character of God. He must judge evil; He must judge sin.

The Lake of Fire is a witness to man's responsibility; we are not robots or helpless victims. We are able to make choices. We are accountable to God, our Creator. He made us. He is the Sovereign Authority over all He created. We are obligated to honor Him and to do His will. In this we have horribly failed. God does not "send people to the Lake of Fire"; we send ourselves by rejecting God's means of salvation – the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (John 3:16–21).

God wants to deliver you from *The Great White Throne Judgment*. To be a defendant at *The Great White Throne Judgment* is to *perish*. Remember what Jesus said:

John 3:16–18 (ESV)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Put your trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Be saved from *The Great White Throne Judgment!*