

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 12/21/16

Bible Prophecies

The Great White Throne Judgment

In the Bible's book of Revelation, the Apostle John is given visions that explain what will take place in the future. One of the visions John receives is recorded in Revelation 20 and concerns a judgment that will take place after Christ's second coming.

After Jesus returns, the devil is imprisoned for 1,000 years, and during that time Christ will rule as king upon the earth (a time that is often referred to as the millennial reign of Christ; Revelation 20:1-6). Once the 1,000 years are completed, Satan is released, the last human rebellion against God is crushed, and Satan is consigned forever to what the Bible calls the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

The Bible describes what happens next: "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 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. 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. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

This event is often referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation pictures Jesus as the judge over all the living and the dead, a role He predicted during His earthly ministry: "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). It is the final judgment of God upon humankind. After this event, there will never again need to be a trial, and God will never again need to act as judge.

The Prophet Daniel also wrote of this time in a vision he was given hundreds of years earlier: "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened" Daniel 7:9-10

No one knows for certain what is contained in the books mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. Many theologians speculate that they contain a record of sins committed in this life, and the resulting debt owed by each person to those they have wronged, including God, the ultimate target of all sin.

In the first century, every criminal who was crucified had a piece of paper detailing his crimes nailed to the cross above his head. Those who were imprisoned often had a list of their crimes posted outside their cell so all would know what they were guilty of. For these reasons, Bible commentators feel the books at the Great White Throne Judgment are records of every person's "spiritual crimes" against other people and God.

More is known about the book of life that is mentioned. According to Scripture, the book of life contains the names of all who have trusted in God for their salvation and have been saved from God's judgment. Paul mentions the book of life in one of his epistles: "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these . . . whose names are in the book of life" (Philippians 4:3).

The Bible makes it clear that no person will spend eternity with God based on his works and that it is only faith in Christ that saves a person (Ephesians 2:8-9), John records that those whose names are not found in the book of life (i.e., those outside of Christ) are consigned to the lake of fire based on their deeds (Revelation 20:13, 15). Our works cannot save us, but they may condemn us.

Believers in Christ escape the Great White Throne Judgment because their debts and transgressions have been paid for by Christ, a fact that Paul mentions: "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, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14).

In the end, the Great White Throne Judgment underscores the fact that God's justice will be done and that, outside of Christ, that justice will be terrifying, sure, and final.

Hundreds of years ago, the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant asked the question, "What would it take for ethics to be truly meaningful?" For humanity to have true ethics, and for there to be meaning in ethics, Kant said that there must be true justice. Kant reasoned that if good people suffer and the unjust prosper, there is no practical reason to be ethical; in other words, crime does indeed pay.

But Kant then asked another question: "What does it take for justice to be truly real?" Kant observed that this world shows that justice doesn't always prevail, so Kant said for justice to be real, there must be life after death where true justice is meted out.

Kant reasoned that meant there must be a judgment in the next life of all who have ever lived. And, said Kant, that judgment must be perfect.

But for that judgment to be perfect, Kant said there must be a perfect judge, one who knows all the facts of every case, and that means the judge must possess all knowledge so that no fact escapes his awareness.

That, however, still isn't enough to have true justice. Kant remarked that a judge may know all the facts about a case, but if he is corrupt, justice may not be done. Therefore, the judge must also be righteous.

Yet that *still* isn't enough to have true justice. The all-knowing and righteous judge, Kant said, must also be in a position where there is no force that can oppose his action and ruling. He must have unlimited power and nothing must be able to resist him, so that he can ensure justice is done.

Even though Kant did not believe the Bible to be the revealed word of God, he described a judgment which takes place after life in this world is over and which has an omnipotent, omniscient, righteous, perfect, and holy Judge examining every person's life and ensuring that justice is finally done. Without knowing it, Kant perfectly described Revelation's Great White Throne Judgment.

It is important to note that the first doctrine of God to be denied was judgment. When Eve recited God's warning about the result of her disobedience, Satan denied what God said. Satan told her, "You will not surely die" ([Genesis 3:4](#)). But that lie resulted in the first couple's disobedience, God's judgment being handed down to Adam and Eve, and the introduction of sin into the human race.

Unless a person puts his faith in Christ, he will stand before Jesus at His Great White Throne and be judged unworthy of spending eternity with God. Speaking 2,000 years ago to a group of unbelieving philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul said, "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" ([Acts 17:31](#)).

If you haven't yet received Christ as your Savior and Lord, pray to Him now, ask for forgiveness, and escape the certain judgment that is to come.