***The Great White Throne for Unbelievers  
  
RV242-01***

Please turn in your Bibles to Revelation 20:11-15 as we begin a new section. Our subject is "The Great White Throne." This is segment number one.

**The Millennium**

This week, during a phone conversation with one of our tapers, I was asked where we were in the Revelation study. I told him that last Sunday we had thrown the devil into the lake of fire, and he cheered. Indeed, the whole rational universe, I suspect, who is loyal to Jesus Christ at that point in time, at the end of the millennium, when Satan is cast into that lake of fire, will rejoice at this final disposition of the archenemy of God, disposed of once and for all. With a 1,000-year millennium, the God of truth will have kept His promise to Abraham and to David to establish the nation of Israel as the kingdom of God upon this earth. It is very important that you understand that that is where history is moving, and that is what God is doing. He's getting ready to go into that final dispensation of the kingdom age, so the God of all truth is going to fulfill His promises to the Jewish people.

**Israel**

Now, one has to be blind; dumb; and, stupid, and several other things, not to be able to see that the world is rapidly revolving around the nation of Israel once more. That's where all the trouble is coming from in the world today. Indeed, when we were once told that the Jews had no future, they have a tremendous future; that the Jews were no longer a significant element in world history, they're the core element, just exactly as the Bible said that they would be. This is necessary because God made promises to Abraham, which were later expanded in the Palestinian Covenant; the Davidic covenant; and, the New Covenant, in addition to that Abrahamic covenant; and what God promised, He has never fulfilled.

The problem is that those covenants were made specifically to the Jewish people, and to them alone. The trouble is that God said that these will not be dependent upon what you do (whether you will be faithful or not faithful to Me). I am going to do this for you. Someday, the Jewish people will be the super nation of the world, and they will be the head of all nations. They will be the source of all great spiritual knowledge. For 1,000 years (the New Testament tells us specifically the timespan), Christ will reign upon this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That event and that era is immediately on the horizon following the rapture of the church – the catching away of Christians from this earth. Then come the final seven years of Daniel's timetable of 490 years of Jewish history, from the time that the command was given to go back and rebuild Jerusalem. That has clicked off like clockwork, except for the last seven years, precisely to the very day Christ was rejected on Palm Sunday in 32 A.D. when the 483rd year was finished, and the final seven years (the worst of that period) has not been fulfilled. That is yet in the immediate future.

So, all these things are the details of prophecy that help us to understand what is going on in our world today, and where history is moving.

**Satan is Imprisoned**

At the beginning of the millennium, we found that all unbelievers are put to death, and Satan is imprisoned with his demons in the abyss. The antichrist and the false prophet, at the beginning of the millennium, are thrown into the lake of fire. During the 1,000-year period here on earth, with Christ ruling, mankind will experience its golden age with Israel as the world's superpower, and Jesus Christ reigning from Jerusalem over a world government.

**Satan is Released**

However, millions of children will be born during the millennium, and many of them will refuse to accept Jesus Christ as Savior. So, when Satan is released, we have learned, from the abyss for a short period at the end of the millennium, he will be able to rally them for a final war against Jesus Christ. This is a war at the end of the millennium period. The rebels, however, we found, are incinerated as they surround Jerusalem. They are incinerated by God, and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where the antichrist and false prophet (still alive) have been for 1,000 years, and are awaiting his arrival.

**Hell**

The lake of fire or hell, as we commonly referred to it, is clearly a real place. Those who are consigned to it really feel suffering. It is forever, because of their unforgiven sin. This is because of the justice of God. The penalty of sin is death. The Bible makes that clear. Death is always a separation. This is eternal separation from God. This is called the second death in the Bible.

People don't like that idea. Whole denominations like the Jehovah's Witnesses simply eliminate the concept of hell completely. It is unbecoming a loving God. They fail to understand that the justice of God demands this kind of treatment, and that people have been treated completely in a fair way.

**Literal Interpretation**

So, the lake of fire is a big problem for people looking at it from a non-divine viewpoint frame of reference. What do they do? Well, they do their best to discredit the Bible as being God's Word, or they spiritualize the meaning of the words in order to eliminate the lake of fire. Liberals and non-dispensationalists, such as the amillennialists, are forced, of course, to abandon the biblical requirement of literal interpretation of Scripture in order to eliminate many of the things that they do not like in the Scriptures, not the least of which is the concept of an earthly kingdom of Christ ruling for 1,000 years on this earth.

However, when you take the Bible literally, and when you let words say what words mean, from the Old Testament through the New Testament, the picture is very clear. There is a reign of terror to come upon this earth from of the antichrist. This will be the epitome of man's attempt to build his kingdom on this earth. It will be a world government. Do I have to remind you that everything in our world today is moving toward internationalism, and to a world government? I think not. The Scriptures are being fulfilled in our day as never before. Those who are attempting to evade where history is moving have to compromise the meaning of Scripture.

Well, we're not going to do that. We're going to let the Bible say what it actually says. You may accept it or not as you please. But you must not say that this is not what the Bible teaches. You cannot say that unless you abandon the meaning of words. The Lord made it very clear that not one word of Scripture would be eliminated or destroyed before being fulfilled.

**Prophecy**

However, some wonder at the value of knowing the prophetic Scriptures which the Holy Spirit has recorded for our learning, and which we've been engaged in for some time. Most church congregations, you would find, know little of our history is moving so rapidly today. The reason for that is that their pastors are either incompetent in Bible prophecy knowledge, or they're indifferent to it. So, people in those churches seldom hear about the prophetic Scriptures. They just don't hear people getting up in the pulpit and saying, "What do you think? Look what happened this week. Here you go. Here is the Scripture. God told us ahead of time. He took us into his confidence. It is taking place before our very eyes."

It is interesting to note that the apostle Paul spent a period of six weeks in the city of Thessalonica teaching the Christians of that city. He then wrote them two books: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. The contents of those books show us what an enormous amount of biblical prophecy he had taught them, and that he had as a frame of reference. Bible prophecy is of strategic importance. Don't ever sell it short. And consider yourself robbed if you do not know in-depth what is going on in the future. Today's news on world events cannot be intelligently understood and related to as a believer if one lacks a Bible prophecy frame of reference. Without that frame of reference, you're out of it. You're just a sweet Christian floating along; going along; and, doing the best you can, oblivious to the enormous world currents that are moving about you.

**The Results of Knowing Prophecy**

So, is prophecy important? Should we be studying it? I propose certain results to you that would answer in the affirmative.

1. **Praise to God**

The first thing that results from knowing prophecy is that it produces praise to God. In the book of Romans, the apostle Paul explains the temporary removal of Israel from national blessing because of rejecting the Messiah Jesus Christ. That's found in Romans 9:10-11. Romans 9 is the past history of Israel; Romans 10 is the present status of Israel; and, Romans 11 is the future for Israel. In those chapters, it is made very clear that is God is not through with the Jews. They have temporarily been set aside, but God is raising up another group of people totally distinct from Israel, namely the body of Christ, the church – the Christians. However, Paul predicted in those passages that there was a future restoration of the nation of Israel, and that they would come under God's blessing again, but that would take place at the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul's realization that God controlled Israel's future moved him to a song of praise in Romans 11:33: "All the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable his ways." As Paul thought about the things that God had taught him concerning Israel's future, he just burst out into a paean of praise of God. So, prophecy moves us to a sense of awe at the God who can predict what is going to happen, and then carries it out. And that's happening all around us.

1. **Encouragement**

Second thing the prophecy does for you is that it produces encouragement. It encourages us as believers. The Christians in Thessalonica were experiencing great persecution. So, some of them began to wonder whether they were already in the tribulation, which they knew would be a sign of persecution of believers. Furthermore, they were worried about some of their loved ones who had died, because they wondered whether or not they missed the rapture, and they wondered whether they'd ever see them again. So, Paul wrote to them, expanding on the knowledge he had given them of prophecy. And he predicted that the rapture event and the consequent reuniting with their families was still ahead.

Furthermore, Paul predicted that Christians would not be left on this earth during the tribulation era. That's a Jewish time of tribulation, not Christian, and we were not in that at all. We have shown you several passages that have made that clear. Therefore, Paul gave them certain prophecies to encourage them in this time of their own tribulation and concern.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:18, his summary statement was: "Therefore, comfort one another with these words."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, he said, "Therefore, encourage one another and build up one another, just as you are also doing." What's he talking about? Well, he's talking about the contents of prophecy, and what he has taught them further in these books.

So, you and I find a great comfort in knowing that God, who works out the fate of nations, can also work out our personal life needs. Yes, we Christians are under the gun. Yes, we are an offense to our society, but never forget that we are the winners.

1. **Spiritual Stability**

The third ting that prophecy will do for you is that it will produce personal spiritual stability. Apparently, a false letter had been sent to the Thessalonians Christians under Paul's signature. It claimed that the time had arrived for the tribulation, and that they were in it. Paul, therefore, reviewed the sequence of events in prophecy about the antichrist, and about his reign of terror, to show them that that was not true; that they were not in the tribulation; and, that this letter was not from him. Paul predicted that Christian suffering does not include the tribulation era (that seven-year period), so they should not get upset.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:2, Paul says, "That you may not be quickly shaken from your composure, or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as from us to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." The day of the Lord begins with the tribulation, and it finishes with the Millennial Kingdom period. Paul admonished these believers to stand firm with the doctrine of prophecy that they have received.

2 Thessalonians 2:15: "So, then brethren, stand firm, and hold to the traditions (the prophetic Word) which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us."

So, Christians have a prophetic road map of where history is going to guide them in facing daily developments so that we have no reason to push the panic button. Things look pretty bad today, but they are all on track, moving exactly where the prophetic Scriptures have told us they're going. Christians with prophecies know the end of the story, so they are mature, and they are not bewildered by the circumstances of the moment.

1. **Holiness**

Then a fourth and final benefit of knowing prophecy is that it produces holiness. The apostle Peter reminded his readers of this – that revealed prophetic events will certainly take place, even though that revelation was made thousands of years previously. God delays fulfillment to give people time to be saved, and to accept and to escape the terrible tribulations judgments. God eventually will carry out His judgments of destroying the heavens and the earth, and creating new ones uncontaminated by sin. In view of the certainty of the total destruction of all that has been contaminated by sin, the apostle Peter calls upon the believers to respond with godly living. When we know that the future includes the destruction of the heavens and the earth, and everything that we possess that is on it, Peter says, "How do you think you should respond to that? Should you not respond with a life of godliness?"

In 2 Peter 3:11-12, Peter says, "For all these things are to be destroyed in this way. What sort of people want you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat." The termed "the day of God" is a technical term in the Bible for eternity. Such holiness is the course of wisdom for the Christian.

Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us that the Christian must stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ to account for how he has used up his life. So, a day of reckoning is coming for us as believers in that respect.

In 2 Peter 3:14, Peter says, "Therefore beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." We are to be found in temporal fellowship at peace with God. We are to be found spotless. We are to be found as those who are confessing their known sins. And we are to be found blameless – those who are making right what they do wrong. The knowledge of the future motivates us to guard the living.

Then Peter 3:17 says, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, as being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness." Peter admonishes us to be on guard in joining the lifestyle of the world system, which is going to be destroyed by God. That system is glamorous. That system is in the majority, and we might think that we should follow it.

For example, why are Christian women corrupted by the feminist movement? It is because it's a majority, and people think they should go with the majority, and that there's something wrong in being in the minority.

A lady recently was upset in the service when I said that a person who is not a born-again believer is not a normal person. And she probably demonstrated it. A normal person is a person who is born-again, and has a proper relationship to God. Otherwise you're abnormal, and everything you do is abnormal. Prophecy reveals that Christians are to be held accountable for the use of their lives, and so they pursue holiness until they face Christ at that judgment seat.

So, prophecy is important for just these few reasons, and it is well that we should pay attention to it.

**The Great White Throne**

Now, in Revelation 20:11, we come to one of the most dramatic scenes that John has yet been introduced to in his vision. Verse 11 says, "And I saw a great white throne, and Him we sat upon it." The Mormons, among their other many confusions, view the great white throne as a wonderful place to be. The great white throne to them is the presence of Almighty God. When they were in power, as they were in the early days of Utah and in Zion National Park, they were naming the peaks, and they liked to use these biblical references. There is one dramatic mountain as you drive down the road, and it's all white on the side, and they called it the great white throne.

**For Unbelievers Only**

In a hymn book that we used to have here in the early days of my administration at Berean Church, we had a hymn. And one of the verses said, "I want to stand at the great white throne," which told us a lot about the person who wrote that hymn. That is because if you stand at the great white throne, you are in big trouble. Nobody who is going to heaven stands at the great white throne. I am not sure whether even we Christians, who are in on seeing everything that goes around in that tribulation era, as we are the consort of our bridegroom, Jesus Christ, are going to be permitted to see the great white throne scene. It is going to be a terrible heart-rending event, horrible to look upon. And it's bad enough for us to try to conceive of it.

Now John comes, and he says, "I see a great white throne." And God the Holy Spirit uses this Greek word "horao," which is the word in the Greek for seeing in a vast vista panorama. So, it's not just his focusing on the little throne. He's seeing a majestic scene before him. Right away, he is impressed. The phrase "And I saw," as we have pointed out before, is used repeatedly in the book of the Revelation, and it is a technical expression which signals that a new segment of prophetic revelation is being introduced to John.

So, we're starting a new segment and there's a very dramatic one. What does he see? He sees, first of all, something which is called great. The word here indicates something of infinite proportions. It is white, which signifies here divine holiness, which means absolute righteousness and perfect justice. That's what constitutes the holiness of God. Then it's a throne, which means a place of imperial sovereign authority. The throne of God is first referred to in the book of the Revelation in Revelation 4:2. Then it is referred to again over 30 times. But this throne is distinct from all those thrones of God which previously have been referred to in terms of God's place of royal authority in heaven. The great white throne is distinct from these usual references.

John observes that there is one who sits upon this throne. The occupant of the great white throne is not identified, but it is clearly deity. I think we must probably conclude that it is deity at this point in time, because this is the final big judgment of unbelievers. It is deity in terms of the whole Godhead. It is deity in terms of the Trinity itself: the Father; the Son; and, Holy Spirit. However, we do know from Scripture that the visible member of the Godhead is Jesus Christ, and He is the one who is the contact point as spokesman. So, specifically, while the Trinity is there, Christ is the representative.

In John 5:22, for example, we are told: "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son." The great white throne is a place of the judgment of lost sinners. This has been delegated to Christ the Son. So, we may expect Him, who is the visible member of the Trinity, to be the one who is the spokesman in charge.

In Matthew 19:28, we have indicated to us that Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of judgment someday. Matthew 25:31 indicates that part of the glory of Christ is His imperial authority as the King from His throne.

The throne duty of Jesus Christ, of course, is going to include the judgment of Christians at one point. That point will be following the rapture of the church. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, we're told of this judgment: "For we Christians must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad." 1 Corinthians 3 talks about receiving rewards or losing rewards, on the basis of what we have done with our lives as believers. So, we too will come to Christ on His throne as our judge in our sovereign authority. But this is a different judgment here for Christians.

There are no Christians involved at the great white throne judgment. The throne of Matthew 25:31, referring to the great white throne, is on earth. The 2 Corinthians 5:10 throne is in heaven.

So, the great white throne is an awesome sight, and it fills the whole field of John's vision. One thing to note is that there is no rainbow above the great white throne. There is a rainbow in Revelation 4:3 above the throne of God. A rainbow signifies hope and promise. Here at the great white throne, there is no hope, and there is no promise of a future. Anybody who stands there is silent and doomed.

**Earth and Heaven have Fled Away**

We also read at this moment in time that the dramatic presence of the Godhead on this throne, and Christ the judge acting in behalf of the Trinity, causes a reaction in nature. We're told that: "From His presence, earth and heaven have fled away. No place was found from them." The word "presence" there is the Greek word "prosopon." "Prosopon" literally means "face." It signifies the countenance of the occupant of the great white throne. What it literally is saying is the part toward the eyes – eyeball-to-eyeball. So, here you have a face-off with Christ Himself, the visible member of the Godhead. This refers to an awesome confrontation with the Son of God. And on this face-off, it has an effect upon the planet earth, and it has an effect upon what is called here "the heavens." This, of course, is referring to the first heaven.

Planet earth is surrounded by a covering of the atmosphere. This atmosphere is the first heaven; interstellar space is the second heaven; and, the throne room of God is the third heaven. The Bible is very explicit about these segments. It refers to the third heaven, and the first and second are below it. So, when it speaks about heaven being destroyed, it certainly is not up in the throne room of God, and not the interstellar spaces, but what has been specifically contaminated by sin – the planet earth and the first heaven which surrounds the earth.

We are told that the earth and this first heaven fled away. This refers to the destruction of the earth and the atmospheric heaven. Genesis 3:17 makes it clear that the earth was the scene of human sin. That's where the sin took place in the Garden of Eden.

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that the air that surrounds the earth is the area (the realm) of the authority of Satan: "In which you formerly walked, according to the course of this world; according to the prince of the power of the earth, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Satan is the prince of the power of the earth. What is he talking about? He's talking about the atmospheric layer around the earth.

So, earth and heaven have been obviously contaminated by angelic and human sin. This destruction of the earth and the heaven have been predicted in the Scriptures. Let's just look at one of them. Matthew 24:35 has predicted the destruction of the earth and the heaven: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Words shall not pass away." To that you may add Luke 16:17 and Hebrews 1:10-12.

So, the current evil sin-contaminated earth and heaven are actually going to be vaporized at this point in time before the great white throne, as that judgment is about to take place. It disappears from the majestic presence of the face-to-face confrontation of the triune God and the specific person of Christ.

**Evil will be Forgotten**

Furthermore, we're told that when this happens, what once existed in that sin-contaminated fashion form will be forgotten. Isaiah 65:17 refers to this: "For, behold, I created a new heaven and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. They're not going to remember the old things & how things were. You see why it's wrong for you to watch TV talk-programs which center on teaching you about things that are evil. The Bible says, "You are not to learn about evil, but you are to learn about good. You were to be innocent, Paul says, about evil, and wise about what is good.

God is even going to go one step further. He's going to rub it out of memory. You won't even remember the evil that you once were acquainted with, and that you once knew. Best of all, you won't remember your own evil. As God has forgotten it, you will have forgotten it. Maybe best of all, I should say, is that the people who know you will forget your evil. It's all going to be gone.

I grew up in a religious denomination which taught me that there was going to be one big judgment day, and that judgment day was here at the great white throne. And we were going to be standing there, and the door was going to open, and God was going to come out. He was going to say, "Sheep – go over here on the right. Goat – go over here on the left." And we were all going to find out what the results were. I was in a denomination that said, "You can't really be sure you're going to heaven," even though it taught justification by faith, because it also thought that if you're bad (if you sin), you're going to lose it. Consequently, I was never sure when I was bad enough. I was seldom bad. I was mostly good. But the problem was that I didn't understand human good. Here I am, coming along in a religious group. I'm an eighth-grader, and I'm not saved. But I am a good kid. But I didn't know that human good was evil, and that every good thing I did for my old sin nature was putting another nail in my coffin of judgment with God.

So, it's going to be great to know that when God is finished, because grace wipes out all the memory of the evil, He takes care of the whole thing. And there is no memory of it at all. In that denomination, I was also taught that we would stand there, and that there would be a movie screen on which all of our past sins would be shown. There are many people, when they featured theirs, that I was interested in viewing at the time, and I thought I would find that rather interesting. But I hated to think of being the feature of film myself. That's so crazy.

That's what religious people make up when somebody hasn't taught them doctrine, and they don't know how the system is put together. That's an insult to the grace of God. But the grace of God is the thing that people understand the least. That's what makes people so nervous here at Berean Church. Our visitors talk to me about it: "You don't pass an offering plate?" That's because one of their places of making points with God is that offering plate going by and putting that offering in.

I was reared in a denomination that taught that. And one time, when I was caught away from my parents, who had forgotten to give me my little money for the offering plate, I just pretended to put something in. I couldn't let it go by without making a motion. And the usher looked at me because he thought I took something out. I mean this is a human viewpoint evil, and an insult to the grace of God.

Well, it's all going to be forgotten. It's all going to be rubbed out. ... The elements are going to be vaporized. 2 Peter 3:10-11: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the elements (the fundamental components of what all material things are made of) will be destroyed with intense heat (vaporized). And the earth and its works will be burned up." That includes everything you have that's on it: "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?"

These elements are to be destroyed, and man's works along with them – burned up and disintegrated. The purging in this way of the corruption of sin and the removing of the divine curse from the earth, that Romans 8:20-22 looks forward to, is what is in view here. Earth and heaven disappear in an explosion of light, sound and heat. This is not a mere purification of this old sin-contaminated earth and atmospheric heaven. The whole thing is literally uncreated by the Word of God. God, who created by His Word, is going to reverse the process, and uncreate it.

**A New Heaven and Earth**

The present heaven and earth are actually acting like a spinning top. They're gradually running down; and, in time, they will stop. So, what God is planning to do is replace the whole system with a new uncontaminated heaven and earth. Revelation 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea." So, that's what God plans to do is reproduce a perfect environment once more. This is required for a sinless eternity. A field of divine energy from the great white throne sweeps clean the old contaminated creation.

Also, we're told that no place was found for them. There was no future place in eternity for the earth and atmosphere contaminated by sin. There was total destruction, and there was no place to flee for all that is associated with that contaminated earth and heaven. In Psalm 139:7-12, David has that poignant examination of: where could he go and escape from the presence of God?

So, with that kind of destruction, that tells us that the great white throne has to be set up out in space. Indeed, that's where it is. It will take place at the end of the millennium. This is the final judgment. The millennial believers on earth will be removed, of course, before the destruction of that earth. They probably will be transferred up to the new Jerusalem, which will be hovering over the earth.

**The Second Resurrection**

Then, in verse 12, things really begin to get serious. For John says, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small." The word "dead" here refers specifically, in terms of the great white throne, to those who are unbelievers. It refers to the fact that they are physically dead. Their souls have been alive in the holding pen of Hades while their bodies have been dead in the grave. The time is at the end of the millennium when the second resurrection takes place, and the second resurrection consists only of unbelievers.

We've looked at that previously in Revelation 20:5-6. After it talked about the first resurrection of believers, starting with Christ the firstfruits, verse 5 says, "The rest of the dead (referring to the unbelievers) did not come to life until the 1,000 years were completed." This is the first resurrection of believers: "Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death (casting into hell) has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with them for 1,000 years.

So, the dead here are those who are unbelievers. They've been in the graves for a period of time, and some of them from the time of Adam. Now they're raised, and they are raised as part of the second resurrection, and all who are in the second resurrection are destined for the second death – eternal separation from God, Revelation 20:14: "And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death" – the lake of fire.

Please remember that I pointed out to you that the word "resurrection" in the New Testament is used only of the restoration to life of a dead human body. It is never used to refer to spiritual regeneration. It is never used for salvation. I stress that to you because the amillennialists and the anti-dispensationalists have a big problem here also, because you have a first and second resurrection. And if you don't have a 1,000-year kingdom separating them, them what could possibly be the point of a first and second resurrection? And what could possibly be the time scheduling of something like that.

So, what do they do? They say, well, the word "resurrection" means spiritual regeneration sometimes. No, it doesn't. The first resurrection is when you're born-again. The second resurrection is when your body is brought back to life. That's how they get around the Word of God again in its literal meaning, trying to evade the fact that some people (believers) are raised at the beginning of the millennium, and unbelievers are listed in their graves.

**Great and Small**

Now, the people who are there are great, and they're small. Great minds that they are the prominent and powerful people of the world society. The small are the common folks (least influential people) of mankind. The term "great and small" is used to signify, in the book of the Revelation, a cross-section of world society. We've had that in Revelation 11:18; Revelation 13:16; and, Revelation 19:5-18. They use this term "great and small" as a cross-section of society.

God is no respecter a person's. So, you can be a famous king, but if you're without Christ, you're going to stand at the great white throne. You can be a little nobody, but if you're without Christ, you're going to stand at the great white throne. No believer is included in this vast company of resurrected people. That believer's destiny was settled on earth, and he does not face judgment.

John 5:24 says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death unto life." So, it's very clear that we Christians never face a question about whether we're going to heaven or not. The great white throne is the judgment of resurrected people who do face the judgment of where they're going.

John 5:29: "And shall come for those who have done the good deed to a resurrection of life (and the good deed is trusting in Christ), and those who committed the evil deeds (beginning with rejecting Christ), to a resurrection of judgment. There are two resurrections very clear in the Bible: one to resurrection of life; and, the other a resurrection of judgment. When we get to Revelation, we find that they're separated by 1,000 years. That's where prophetic Scriptures help us to put the Bible together without distorting its meaning.

You'll notice that these people are doing something significant. They're standing. They're standing before the great white throne. That signifies and signals to us that here you have a group of people who are on their feet upright, standing before the throne, because it is a place of judgment. When a judge starts pronouncing sentence, that's what you do. You stand. And you stand before the judge's bench, and he looks down upon you, and he proceeds to pronounce the sentence. Here's this vast multitude of humanity from Adam on, who are unregenerate, and who stands silently before Christ the king on the great white throne, who is about to pronounce judgment on them. The great white throne is not a trial to determine your moral guilt. That has been done by dying without salvation. The destiny of eternity in a lake of fire was decided on earth while the person was alive, and chose to reject Christ as Savior. The great white throne is simply the official judicial sentencing to the lake of fire by God.

It is, in fact, however, also the final verification of the moral guilt of those standing before the great white throne. They truly do deserve to go to the lake of fire because some of them may want to raise a voice of objection to go to this place that Matthew 25:41 described as the lake of fire created for Satan and his angels. What is happening at the great white throne for these unbelievers is Hebrews 9:27 being fulfilled: "And inasmuch as it is a point for men to die once, and after this comes judgment. This is the final judgment of the great white throne. So, no believer stands at the great white throne to determine his destiny because his destiny is secure. He does not face any kind of judgment.

Jesus Christ promised believers that they would not face judgment for their sins (John 5:24, John 3:18). The second death, therefore, has no authority over those who are part of the first resurrection. We've already read that in Revelation 20:6, where it said, "Blessed is the one who is part of the first resurrection." The second death has no power over him. Everybody standing before the great white throne is under the power of the second death. They are going to experience the second death – eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The great white throne judgment is for those who have died in Adam without having been made spiritually alive in Christ.

**Books were Opened**

Now, in order to have the evidence without question, God then brings out the books. The book is opened, we're told: "And standing before the throne, books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life." There is a record in heaven of every unbeliever's life – all of the works which he has committed: the record of sins, to establish his moral guilt; and, the record of his human works which he has offered for his salvation. All the works, however, of an unsaved person are the product of the sin nature. Therefore, they are all evil before God.

**The Old Sin Nature (the Flesh)**

We cannot go into this in detail, but let's have a brief review. The old sin nature has within it certain characteristics. Some people are very legalistic. They are ascetic. Hebrews 6:1 speaks of that. They project a good image. Some unbelievers do this. Others have a very wicked nature, and lasciviousness is their characteristic; that is, sensuality. Ephesians 4:19 and Jude talks about that. There is also the characteristic that the old sin nature has an area of production of sins. Well, we all know that, and that was borne by Christ on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), which is why we say sin is no longer an issue with God. It's whether you accept Christ. That's the issue. This is an area of weakness in the old sin nature (Hebrews 12:1, Mark 7:21-23) – this area of producing sin.

On the other hand, the old sin nature also has an area of strength. Isaiah 64:6 calls it your filthy rags of righteousness, and this is human good. This was rejected and condemned by God at the cross. Titus 3:5 indicates that.

So, here you have the condition concerning whatever you do as an unsaved person. And one of the prophets of the Old Testament talked about plowing your field as an act of sin. Anything you do as an unbeliever is the product of your sin nature. So, all of this compassion in our society; all of this human good spewed out by human government; and, all of the things that people do in order to get favors with God, and think they're going to make it into heaven – do you realize that every act of human good as an unbeliever is going to add to your punishment and eternity? Eternity has punishment commensurate (the Scriptures indicate) to your deeds. The more evil you are guilty of in the way of sin, and the more evil you are guilty of in the way of human good, the worse it is. Do you see what I'm saying? Your sins and your human good are with God, evil. That's what the word "evil" means in Scripture.

Consequently, all the secrets are revealed (Luke 8:17, Romans 2:16). Nothing is hidden. And these records will answer any human challenge that anybody has about the fairness at the great white throne of being sent into hell. Our old sin nature produces nothing but evil.

Also, how much did you produce determines how much suffering you'll have. Luke 12:47: "And that slave who knew his master's will, and did not get ready, or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes. But the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging will receive few. And from everyone who has been given much, shall much be required. And to whom they entrusted much of him, they will ask all the more."

If you don't want to attend a church like Berean, where you are instructed in the deep things of the Word of God, and then thumb your nose at it, you should stay home. God is going to hold you accountable for the information you've receive. If you're an unbeliever, you will be held accountable for the information of salvation. Your human good is not going to make it with God because it's tainted with the sin nature. It is something that you produce. The only divine good for which God rewards is what God the Holy Spirit produces through a believer who is in temporal fellowship.

But then we come to the most sobering, final condemnation of these people that will silence them forever at the great white throne. And that is that another book is open. The Greek word shows that it's a book similar to the book which had been opened before, but it's a book of the same kind, but of a distinctly different purpose. Now we come to one of the most sobering revelations of the Word of God. We shall look at this other book next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

[**Back to the Revelation index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/revelation.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)