



THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

**END OF THE AGE SERIES
VOLUME IX**

Gordon Lindsay

The Great White Throne

by Gordon Lindsay

END OF THE AGE SERIES VOLUME IX

Published By CHRIST FOR THE NATIONS Dallas, Texas The Year
1975 All Rights Reserved

Contents

[Introduction](#)

Chapter I

[The Great White Throne Judgment](#)

Chapter II

[The Resurrection of the Wicked Dead](#)

Chapter III

[The Dead Stand Before God](#)

Chapter IV

[The Books Are Opened](#)

Chapter V

[Who Will Judge the Wicked at that Last Day?](#)

Chapter VI

[The Book Of Life](#)

Chapter VII

[Eternity Begins](#)

Introduction

When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9).

The Great White Throne Judgment toward which the unsaved, living and dead, are hastening is the last and final judgment involving mankind. It will occur at the close of the Millennium, which means that it is at the end of the world.

During past human history there has been a series of notable judgments, beginning with the one pronounced on Adam and Eve after they had sinned in the Garden of Eden. Later came the judgment of the flood which brought to a close the antediluvian era and ushered in this present age. Significantly these judgments occurred in a remarkable pattern of 450-year intervals — 450 being the number of judgment (I Kings 18:19, 40).

The 12 Earth Judgments

First Judgment—The Edenic Judgment

Second Judgment—The Flood

Third Judgment—Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

Fourth Judgment—Extirpation of the Canaanite Nations

Fifth Judgment—Extirpation of the Amalekite Nation

Sixth Judgment—The Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities

Seventh Judgment—The Judgment on Christ—This 450-year period ended at the advent of the Messiah who took on Himself on the cross the judgment of the believer.

These judgments continue through the present dispensation and include

(8) the ravages of Attila, “the scourge of God” who visited retribution on the Roman Empire;

(9) the black death, an epidemic which almost extirpated mankind during the Middle Ages;

(10) the Napoleonic Woe, which turned Europe into a bloody battlefield; and (11) the judgment of the Day of the Lord which occurs at the end of the age—the headwaters of which are now upon us.

The twelfth and last is the Great White Throne Judgment which will come at the end of the Millennium, and will mark the completion of man’s 7,000-year period and the end of the world. The first eleven judgments are not a subject of this present volume. (Their story is told in the book *God’s*

Plan Of The Ages —The Wonders of Bible Chronology). The reader may note (by referring to the chart) that these judgments fit into a symmetrical pattern in which the captivities that ushered in the times of the Gentiles mark the center of the judgment pattern.

The Seventh Judgment Which Fell on Christ

While we cannot take note of these 450-year interval judgments at this time, we would pause to note briefly the seventh judgment which fell on Christ at Calvary, for this event is closely related to our subject. Extremely significant is the fact that the world was spared a judgment at that time. *Simply stated, it fell on Christ!* Barabbas—a type of the guilty sinner—was spared, and the judgment fell on the Innocent One. He who knew no sin was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). He took the believers' sins and stood in our place in judgment. On the cross Jesus paid the price of our redemption and blotted out the ordinances that were against us. At the same time He triumphed over Satan and the principalities. He defeated the devil so that he has no legal hold on the believer, but by reason of His great redemption man becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Summed up, Christ has taken away our sins, has suffered in our stead, and has taken the judgment which was due us. Therefore, the believer will never stand in peril of the Great White Throne Judgment.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

There is a judgment which every believer must face, however, and that is the one at the judgment seat of Christ. This is a most important matter indeed, one which has been dealt with in a separate volume. We shall therefore consider it only briefly here. Certainly it is a matter which deeply involves the future of every born-again believer.

This judgment of believers occurs shortly after the first resurrection and pertains to rewards. It is a time when each believer's works will be tried as by fire to see whether they will endure as being built on gold, silver, and precious stones, or on hay, wood, and stubble, which will be consumed by the fire of that searching judgment:

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? "(I Cor. 3:13-16).

This judgment of the saints' rewards occurs *before* the Millennium. The Great White Throne Judgment takes place *afterward*. To this latter subject we now address ourselves.

Chapter I

The Great White Throne Judgment

What a solemn event! A Great White Throne appears in space, and He who sits on that throne causes both the earth and the heavens to flee away! Then before the throne appears a vast concourse of people, not spirits, but living human beings—and the time is the end of the world!

This throne which John sees in Revelation is a sharp contrast to the one he saw in chapter 5. That one had a rainbow over it, indicative of promise. In contrast, the scene of the Great White Throne is naked and without a rainbow. It portrays only the greatness, the majesty, and the immeasurable power of Almighty God. Its appearance shows that there is nothing gracious or remedial about this judgment. It is retributive and final. The day of probation for the human race has passed.

On this throne sits deity, the eternal Godhead. No attempt is made by John to describe the One who sits on the throne, except to say that before His face, “the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Rev. 20:11).

“The dead small and great stand before God!” This vast concourse of people has just been brought up out of hades, the abode of the dead, the place where the rich man was of whom Jesus spoke in Luke 16: 19-31. For thousands of years he and other inmates of this subterranean prison have looked forward to this day, not, however, with any happy anticipation but with deep foreboding. They knew they would receive their mortal bodies again, but only for a brief time, and without any hope of eternal life. Their thoughts, therefore, are only of impending judgment, and of their fate which at this time is to be eternally sealed.

And so that day has at last arrived! In an instant they come forth from the dark corridors of hades to stand before the blazing light of the Great White Throne. These are the unnumbered millions who have lived during the successive periods of history, but who shared no part in the first resurrection. They are of the second resurrection. The totality of the event is seen in that not only is it said that hades gives up its spirits, but the sea also gives up her dead bodies. Regardless of where death may have terminated

man's earthly existence, the God of all flesh knows where and how to recover both the body and the soul. And at the time appointed He will bring forth the person to stand at the bar that renders eternal justice. So on that day will come forth the princes from their rich mausoleums, as well as the mouldering occupants of unmarked graves: yea the rich and the poor, the noble and the base, the learned and the ignorant, the small and the great. They all shall come forth to stand before God and hear the final verdict, one which man's conscience has already given him.

They stand in stark contrast to that multitude described in Revelation 7:9-14 which no man could number. They wear no white robes. They have no palms of victory. There is no singing —only the awful hush of anticipation of the solemn events to come, when each individual in turn shall hear the divine sentence that will spell out his eternal destiny.

This then is the setting of the Great White Throne Judgment.

Chapter II

The Resurrection of the Wicked Dead

The second resurrection which includes the wicked dead of all ages will be a physical resurrection. The human spirits that were made discarnate by death once more will be clothed with human bodies. This, it will be noted, is the third major transition of their existence. The first was their life upon earth in the human body. The second stage began at the time of physical death. There in the regions of hades the person found himself an unclothed spirit. The third stage occurs at this second resurrection when he again receives a mortal body, not an immortal one.

There are various circumstances to note in considering this event. One thousand years earlier the righteous dead received their glorified bodies. That was the first resurrection. In an instant, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye that event took place. We may assume, therefore, that the wicked dead at the second resurrection will also receive their bodies in the same lightning transition. Their old bodies will be restored to them with their former physical faculties operating again to the full extent. These people are breathing, living human beings. While the spirit without the body (as was the case of the rich man in hades) has faculties and emotions corresponding to those of the physical body—hearing, sight, taste, feeling, memory, desire, remorse—yet the restoration of the body greatly increases the powers and the capacities of the individual—either to enjoy bliss and happiness, or conversely to experience mental anguish and despair.

Thus the second resurrection will have the effect of quickening the faculties, making the individual again aware of his former possibilities and potentialities. But with this awareness comes the awful realization that these powers are lost to him forever.

Perhaps in the dark recesses of hades he may have been able to somewhat forget his fate. But now restored to the body, the realization of his awful doom floods his consciousness with overwhelming force, causing him to suffer in agonizing despair.

The wages of sin is death. And sin has accomplished its work. Having rejected during his lifetime the redemption provided by Jesus Christ, man

finds as a consequence that his nature has become irreversibly evil. For unless he is redeemed, man must finally become incorrigibly wicked. This is not surprising when we observe how depraved men can become in their few years of living upon the earth. Obviously the thousands of years spent in hades can only result in the completion of the processes of evil. The despair of the wicked, therefore, arises not only from the fact that they have rebelled against God, and thus forfeited their right to eternal life, but even were this not so, they realize that they have become an unholy being. Their perverted nature now instinctively revolts against God's holiness; for this reason they could not be happy beings were they permitted to dwell in the white purity of God's kingdom.

Yet they have one thing fully in common with the righteous. They retain the capacity to long for and desire the bliss and happiness of the redeemed that they know must forever be denied them.

Obviously the judgment of the Great White Throne would have no purpose unless those who stood before the bar retain memories of the past. One can understand the torment of that memory which recalls the events of a wasted life. The doomed will gnash their teeth in vain regret as they remember a life that they lived so casually, so carelessly, so utterly indifferent to all that pertained to their future welfare. The wicked cannot blot out or forget their past deeds, those they have injured, their evil conversations, their profaning of the name of God, their shady business deals—legally permissible—but morally wrong, their mockery of religion, their persecution of God's people.

Although man's conscience told him there was a God in heaven with whom he must someday reckon, and though he knew that life was short and death was certain, he continued in his ways, perversely indifferent to the fact that "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). And now at last he has come to the time of reckoning. Perhaps for a moment he could imagine himself back in the days of his earthly life when salvation was so freely offered. How easily he could have then yielded to the voice of conscience. Then how different his case would be. But alas, it will be too late, too late!

Perhaps he can recall the time when he was almost persuaded, when he actually thought seriously of becoming a follower of Christ. Felix heard Paul preach and trembled, but he told him, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). The opportunity passed, and the

convenient season never came. King Agrippa heard the apostle's tender appeal and said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Almost persuaded, but that was not enough. How the soul must accuse itself for so willfully turning from light to darkness and from life to death. And now it stands hopeless at the judgment bar of a holy and offended God.

The most painful circumstance is that the conscience of man must side with God. It must concur in the just judgment of the One who sits on the throne. Sin is of such a nature that it not only offends God, but it offends man. Of course, while people are engaged in sin, it does not seem repulsive. "Everyone is doing it," they reason to themselves. But sin viewed out of its alluring setting is revolting and loathsome. At the Great White Throne, the transgressor who once justified his course does not do so on the day of judgment.

Satan's Doom

Satan's doom also comes at this time.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever"

(Rev. 20:10).

Though long delayed, and though this archenemy of God has put up a desperate battle to evade his doom, he must have realized that his fate was inevitable (Rev. 12:12). Once he was a holy being who stood high in the counsels of God. The Scriptures refer to him in Ezekiel 28:12-13, 15 saying,

"... Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the Garden of God... Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

Here was eternity's first tragedy. We today are preoccupied with the results of sin upon the human race, so that we have not taken full notice of the catastrophe that occurred in heaven in the distant past. Lucifer, the son of the morning, was at that time without fault. A holy righteous being, he was a close confidant of God and acted as vice-regent of His kingdom. And yet he fell, and in his fall he was changed from a beautiful, benign creature into a loathsome, wicked, and malevolent being, whose whole intent is now to despoil and overthrow God's kingdom. To this end he has sought to frustrate the plan of God and to seduce other creatures of the universe to rebellion and translate them into his own satanic image. It all came about

because Lucifer allowed pride to enter his heart when he coveted and sought to exalt himself into the position the Son of God was to hold:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isa. 14:12-15).

Such is the consequence of sin and of the exaltation of self. Satan and the angels which followed him could have been happy beings, messengers of light, and a blessing to God’s universe, but instead they chose the way of rebellion. It is a mystery that would be difficult to understand, were it not for the fact that millions of human beings likewise endowed with the power of choice are following today the same path of self-will as did Satan.

We need not suppose that in the beginning Lucifer thought to become the wicked, despicable creature that he now is. At the time of his fall he was guilty of one sin, the desire for self-exaltation. He thought he knew better than God as to how to set up a kingdom. He would build an empire more magnificent than that of the Lord. But once he cut himself off from the Creator, the forces of degeneration came into operation, and when they ran their full course, the once angel of light became the monstrous creature of evil he now is, fit only to be destroyed.

Now the verse speaking of Satan’s doom comes just before the passage that relates to the Great White Throne Judgment. Presumably this event occurs first, although conceivably the wicked dead who have chosen to become followers of this enemy of God will be permitted to witness his end.

One thing, however, is certain; no judgment tribunal sits for Satan. His judgment has long since already taken place. God has, however, for a purpose allowed him his liberty for a long season. Although Satan has sought in every way to frustrate the divine plan, his evil activities have only succeeded in helping to bring that plan to fruition.

The Time of the Great White Throne Judgment

The time of the Great White Throne Judgment can be fairly well fixed. Man’s time since the creation of Adam has been approximately 60 years in length. Bible chronology shows that approximately four millennia, or 4,000 years elapsed from Adam’s creation until the coming of the Messiah. (The original creation of the universe of course took place long before Adam.) Since the days of Christ nearly 20 years have elapsed. We are now

at the time we write in A.D. 1973. There is little doubt that within the next three decades we will see the consummation of this age. Although this is clear to those who observe the fulfillment of the prophecies, scientists and statesmen reading the signs of the times apart from the Scriptures also give the present civilization only a few more decades to run before its collapse. They say that due to earth pollution, the population explosion, nuclear warfare, etc., mankind in the next generation will destroy itself. In this the Bible and science are in complete agreement.

So we have 4,000 years before Christ and approximately 2,000 years after Christ, making a total of 6,000 years of man's week, according to God's reckoning, which considers a thousand years as a day.

"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8).

Then comes the Millennium of a thousand years in which the saints rule and reign with Christ. Thus we have, including the millennial sabbath of 1,000 years, a total of 7,000 years. Since the Millennium must begin about 2001 A.D., the end of the Millennium will be a thousand years later. We understand, therefore, that the Great White Throne judgment must occur at the end of the third Millennium after Christ.

Chapter III

The Dead Stand Before God

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God...”
(Rev. 20:12).

What a mighty concourse it will be! It was estimated that a crowd of about four million gathered at Cairo for Nasser’s funeral—probably the largest gathering of its kind in history. But this great audience of which we speak must include billions of people. Only God knows the exact number. The great of earth have boasted of their social distinctions, but all are of one size here—kings and queens, princes and potentates, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the great and the small. Their former standing has lost all of its meaning now.

These are the dead! Strange that they are spoken of as the dead, for they are also spoken of as the living. Revelation 20:5, looking forward to this hour says, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished...” The wicked dead are referred to as *living* again. The meaning is clear. There are many people “living” today who are dead, even while they live. Paul spoke of certain women who were dead even while they lived. “But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (I Tim. 5:6). Of the backslidden church at Sardis the Lord charged that it had “a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev. 3:1).

How can a person be dead while he lives? Man was made in the image of God and is a triune being—body, soul, and spirit. Although he has a body, that is not the highest department of his being. The body merely houses the spirit which among other things has the wonderful faculty of being able to commune with God. In this respect man differs fundamentally from the animal kingdom. In his spirit he has a God-consciousness which the animal has not. The animal possesses certain of the lower faculties of the human being, but not God-consciousness.

An animal eats, drinks, sleeps, mates, and is able to engage in various activities which involve the physical senses. Many people live almost entirely in the same sensuous realm as the animal. They eat, drink, and have no higher ambition than to enjoy the animal pleasures. They expect to die as an animal and suppose that will be the end. They apparently know nothing

of the meaning of Christ's words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Having starved their spiritual nature, they live as the beast lives, entirely in the physical. In other words, their spiritual nature is dead even while they live.

So it is that in one sense, the dead which come up out of hades to stand before God live again. They have been resurrected; they again have physical bodies. But their spiritual nature is dead. Therefore, they are still spoken of as "the dead." How awful to contemplate the terrible truth that though these people live again, they are still considered "the dead."

The Remorse of the Wicked

That they are members of so vast a concourse can give no comfort to the wicked dead who are now resurrected. Sinners often comfort and reassure themselves with the thought that although their conscience tells them they are doing wrong, nevertheless a multitude of others are doing the same thing. How often when the invitation is given to sinners to accept Christ as their Saviour, their reply is, "I am all right," or "I am as good as others." But those who stand at the Great White Throne realize only too well they will not be justified on the basis of what others have or have not done, but they will be judged on the basis of their own deeds.

The universal emotion that dominates this vast concourse of the dead must be remorse. Remorse is not repentance, but rather hopeless regret because of the consequences. An example of this is the case of Esau, who sold his birthright without a second thought, but "afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:16, 17). As Jesus said, "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," by the lost (Matt. 8:12).

One of the false premises of certain penologists is that it is of no use to attach a stern penalty to the breaking of the law, since the average criminal, even though he knows the penalty, will pay no heed to it.

This of course is sophistry of the worst kind. Many tempted to do wrong have been restrained from committing the act because of their knowledge of the penalty: and thereby society is protected.

It is true of course that there are some who are not restrained by the fear of consequences because they delude themselves into believing they are smart enough to outwit the law. It is an amazing thing in conversing with those in prison to discover the number of those who say they gave no

thought whatever to the penalty when they committed the crime. There is an analogy between these foolish men and those who will stand before the Great White Throne of judgment. They had read about the judgment, and perhaps even heard it preached—but despite this, they gave the matter no serious heed. Now as they stand before the bar of eternal justice, they are moved with bitter remorse. But alas for them, as with Esau, there is no place for repentance.

They Stand Before God

What power of force brings this great multitude together before the White Throne? They are said to be standing and not sitting. The prisoner in an earthly court when he hears his sentence pronounced is required by the court to stand, and so it will be on that great day. What power causes the multitude to appear before the great throne is not difficult to understand. It is the same force that keeps the planets in their respective orbits about the sun, or the stars in their courses. The dead have no choice in the matter; the power that raised them from the regions of hades irresistibly sets them before the throne of judgment. From this there is no possible escape. Nor will any hope to escape it.

Every Knee Shall Bow

Although the dead stand before God, there is also the moment when they will bow the knee. In the divine counsels it has been determined that every knee shall bow before the Lord Jesus Christ, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. This was first referred to by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 45, verse 23. The apostle Paul mentions it in Romans 14:11 and in Philippians.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

Now the wicked in their earthly pride had disdained to bow their knee to the Lord Jesus, and it was their privilege to do as they saw fit. But whether or not they deigned to recognize Christ as Lord of all on earth, the hour now is at hand when they are forced to do Him homage. This includes things in the earth and things under the earth—a reference to those who had abode in hades. These spirits from hades who are now brought up out of that region for judgment, will now bow the knee before the Lord Jesus.

Among these will include the great conquerors, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, the wicked Hitler, the proud Mussolini, the atheists in the Kremlin. They will include Herod the Great who sought the Christ-child's death, Herod Antipas who mocked Him, the men who condemned Him to the cross, Pontius Pilate who delivered Him to death. For every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord.

Chapter IV

The Books Are Opened

That heaven has its records and its archives is a subject which is not too often considered by either saints or sinners. Nevertheless, nothing is clearer in the Scriptures than the fact that God keeps books. Indeed we are told that our very words are recorded. It is relevant at this point to quote the words of Christ in Matthew 12:36-37:

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

We are thus informed that all that we speak, all our words are being taken down as if we had an electronic recorder beside us all the hours of our life.

Consider the awe of the sinner who stands before the blazing light of the Great White Throne. The angel turns on the recording of his life, and he hears his past conversations, his cursing, his words of contempt and disregard for the good and the holy. The man needs no prosecutor to pronounce him guilty; his own words condemn him. Science tells us that deep in memory there is an indelible record of all we have said and done. However, at the Great White Throne there will be no legal technicalities, no shyster lawyers to distort or make a mockery of justice, no loopholes to thwart justice.

The words and deeds of men, all of which are faithfully preserved in heaven's books, will be the basis by which they will be judged at the Great White Throne. Daniel the prophet refers to this great judgment scene and the time when the books were opened:

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Dan. 7:10).

Judged by Their Deeds

How long will the Great White Throne Judgment last? It is not necessary for us to establish the length of time, but obviously the judgment will not take place instantly. Each man will be judged. The text does not explain the details or the arrangements. We may be sure that the solemn

procedure will be efficiently carried through. Each individual will be judged by what is written in the books. A transcript will be presented. Many a dark deed long forgotten will be brought to light. Even as Christ said: “For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad” (Luke 8:17).

The Man’s Dream

A man once had a dream that the judgment day had come and he was standing before the Great White Throne. He had attended gospel meetings where the invitation to accept Christ had been given and been pressed upon him. Nevertheless, despite strong convictions, he had not answered the call. And now in his dream it seemed he was standing at the Great Throne of Judgment. In mingled feelings of awe and fear—for he knew he was not ready to meet God—he watched the solemn proceedings. Suddenly a man’s name was called out; it was not his name, but the name of a person whom he knew. That man had led a sinful life for many of his years, but in the latter years of his time on earth he had accepted Christ as his Saviour, and from then on had led an exemplary life.

The man in his dream wondered how the case of the redeemed person would be dealt with before the bar of the great court. Since he had once been a great sinner, would therefore the deeds of his sinful years be revealed before the vast audience?

Speechless the man watched as the drama continued to unfold. Suddenly the man’s name appeared on a huge screen. The recording angel turned the pages of a large volume. Finally he paused. Then on the giant screen flashed the words, “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin!” And the man, his face shining with triumphant joy was ushered into the regions of light.

But now it came the turn of the one who had the dream. His name also appeared on the screen. His destiny was now to be declared. The angel again turned the pages of the book—and having found the place, he again paused. In the next instant the great screen lit up, revealing the deeds of his past life. And then the words, “The wages of sin is death!” The horror that swept over him was sufficient to awaken him from his dream. And so relieved was he to find it was all a dream that he hastened without further delay to give himself to Christ.

Nevertheless, someday for many this drama will be more than a dream.

Will the Righteous Stand at the Bar of the Great White Throne?

The above incident would imply that both the righteous and unrighteous will stand at the bar of the Great White Throne. Now we know that the righteous dead of past ages will be resurrected before the Millennium. Those who were martyred for Christ will reign with Him during the 1,000 years of the kingdom age. They had their part in the first resurrection. On the other hand the wicked dead will not live again until the 1,000 years be finished:

“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:5-6).

So from this it might appear that only the wicked dead will stand at the Great White Throne Judgment. However, there is a statement found in Revelation 20:15 that we must give consideration. It says: “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” This Scripture declares that everyone not found written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire. Does it, therefore, imply that there will be some whose names are found in the book of life?

What about the righteous who die during the Millennium? Now we know that no one who has rejected Christ will be given a second chance. There is the weight of Scripture against this. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Not a second chance. Nevertheless, there are certain circumstances which require our attention. What about the righteous of the earthly race who live and die during the Millennium?

It is clear that death will not be fully conquered during the thousand years of peace. We refer not to the glorified saints who were raised at the first resurrection and reign with Christ during the Millennium, but to those who are born and who live on earth during that time. People will live and die then, though longevity will be extended apparently to that of antediluvian days. As we have seen, he who dies at the age of a hundred will be considered as a child. Natural lifetime will extend to many centuries—even as “the days of a tree.” Unfortunately, there will be some who will choose the evil during the Millennium. They will come under divine curse:

“There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; *but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be*

accursed... They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands” (Isa. 65:20,22).

It is apparent from this passage in Isaiah that the Millennium is not the perfect age. The righteous who do not have glorified bodies will live for hundreds of years, but eventually they will die. Both the righteous and sinners will live and die. But since it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment, therefore, will not these who have died during the Millennium, both righteous and unrighteous, stand before God in the judgment? If so, then those who are righteous will certainly find their names written in the book of life.

What About Those Who Never Heard the Gospel?

In asking this question, we are not speaking of those who have had opportunity to accept Christ but passed it up, but rather the heathen who have never heard. The question is often asked, what about those who in their lifetime never heard the message of Jesus and the cross? Will their misfortune of never having had a chance to accept the gospel condemn them to everlasting night? Regardless of what answer we give to this question, we must agree that multitudes who have lived and died never heard the story of Christ.

What then will be the basis of their judgment at the Great White Throne? As was said of old, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). We shall not attempt to solve the problem involved; it is a complex subject. But we shall note certain Scriptures that evidently bear on the matter.

Paul tells us that those who have not had the written law shall be judged by the law that is written on their conscience. Those who have sinned without law shall perish without law, and those which have not the law, but do by nature the things contained in the law are a law unto themselves. Is Paul here stating a principle of divine justice? Let us quote the whole passage.

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law are a law unto themselves” (Rom. 2:12-14).

There are two disputed passages in I Peter which many Bible students believe have a bearing on the dead who have not heard the Gospel:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (I Pet. 3:18-20).

“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Pet. 4:6).

It would seem that these Scriptures teach that Christ after His death went to hades and preached to the spirits who lived in antediluvian days. It is also pointed out that Noah, the only preacher of righteousness, could not have possibly preached to the millions then living.

Of course there are other interpretations. Some believe the above passages mean that Christ did not actually preach to these spirits at the time of His death at all, but preached to them through the Holy Spirit in the days of Noah. To be honest, we feel that such an interpretation is strained and hardly does justice to the plain statements of the text.

It would not be contrary to reason or to God’s Word to believe that God has made provision *for every man to have one chance*. John the Baptist said that Christ is “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). However this will be fulfilled, we do not know. This we know: there is hope for the man who accepts the light when it comes, but there is no hope at all for him who rejects it.

It appears that God reckons judgment on the basis of the soul’s response to light when it comes. All who would be saved must accept the grace of God through Christ and His shed blood. There is no other name under heaven whereby men must be saved. Christ made three statements concerning this subject which are well worth studying. They evidently have a bearing upon how God will judge man in the final reckoning:

“Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth” (John 9:41).

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin” (John 15:22).

“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father” (John 15:24).

God has not called us to speculate on these matters. We know His judgments are perfect. We also know that today is the day of salvation, and those who put off accepting the way have no hope of another chance in some far-off tomorrow.

Chapter V

Who Will Judge the Wicked at that Last Day?

Deity sits on the throne at the great day. And before his “face the earth and the heaven fled away” (Rev. 20:11). Although the Father sits on the throne, He does not personally participate in the judging. Christ, speaking of this in the Gospel of John says, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father...For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:22-23, 26-27).

Although Christ is the judge who will supervise the judgment of the last day, His is not an arbitrary judgment. No decisions will be made at the time that are not already made. Only the sentence remains to be pronounced. The sinner is condemned already; he is already lost. Only those who accept Christ as their Saviour are saved. There is no other way of escape. That way is clearly shown in John 3:16-17.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

If the sinner fails to accept the way of escape, there is no hope for him because he is already under condemnation:

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:18,36).

At the Great White Throne there will be no jury deliberating the case to determine if the defendant is guilty or not guilty. The sinner’s sin speaks of his guilt. There is nothing more needed to determine his doom. The words that Jesus spoke judge him. Christ came into the world not to judge the world but to provide a way of salvation. Christ does not pass a personal sentence on the guilty one as an earthly judge might do after he hears the verdict of the jury. *The words that Christ spoke while on earth will judge the man.* This He made clear in John 12:47-48:

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth

him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

Christ Is Man’s Saviour Today—His Judge Tomorrow

Nevertheless, Christ will preside over the judgment at the Great White Throne, and in that sense He will be the judge.

A story is told of a man who was drowning. A spectator who saw him going down hastily threw off his outer garments and jumped into the water after him. He reached the drowning man just before he was about to go down for the last time. In serious peril to himself the rescuer by strenuous effort managed to bring the man ashore, and after working with him for a while was able to restore breath into him.

The man who had performed the act of heroism was a judge. Some years later, a defendant was brought before him to be judged. The evidence showed him to be guilty of committing a crime against society. When the man stood before the judge, he recognized him as the one who years before had saved his life. And he cried out, “Sir, do you know who I am? I am the man you saved some years ago. You risked your life to draw me out of the water.” The judge looked at the prisoner and recognized him. But he replied, “Yes, sir, I do know you. On that day I was your saviour. But today I must be your judge.”

Truly this incident illustrates well the relation of Christ to mankind. Today He is their Saviour. But tomorrow He will be their judge. And so speaking of the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked, Christ says:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

There resurrection of life will include those who have accepted Christ. They will never come into judgment. There is also a resurrection of judgment which will be the lot of all who reject Christ.

No Change of Law at the Judgment

As we have seen, neither the Father nor the Son actually judge the wicked at the Great White Throne Judgment. The words of Christ, spoken long before, judge the sinner. This is wise and merciful. It would not be altogether just if men were to face some future judgment and not know on

what basis they were to be judged. This is a great principle of justice adopted by Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. Our own forefathers in writing the American Constitution specifically embodied in it a provision forbidding any ex post facto laws to be passed in the various states. That is, no law may be passed that should be retroactive in its application or its penalty.

On that Great Day there will be no new laws affecting sinners; there will be no surprises at the Great White Throne Judgment. God has already revealed all His purpose in His Word. The words spoken by Christ and recorded in the Gospels will judge the sinner at that day. It is true that many people ignore the Word that is written, but that is their fault. As Abraham said to the rich man in hades, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31). And how true! Jesus died, and rose from the dead on the third day. But many will not believe, though the evidence be overwhelming.

Chapter VI

The Book Of Life

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

The book of life is referred to early in the Scriptures. Although that exact term is not used in Exodus 32, there is no doubt that this is what is meant. Israel had committed a great sin and Moses was pleading with the Lord to spare the nation. He said that if it were not possible to do this, then let his name be blotted out of the book. It is a beautiful illustration of self-effacing intercessory prayer, and we quote the passage:

“And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the Lord said unto Moses, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*” (Exod. 32:31-33).

Of course, the Lord refused to blot Moses’ name out of His book as that would be contrary to His divinely established principles of justice. Indeed, Moses’ intercession availed to spare Israel the fate of extinction. Actually the mercy of God, which is one of His great attributes, “sought for a man to stand in the gap,” so that His wrath might not be poured out on Israel (See Ezek. 22:30-31). He found such a man in Moses.

And may we add that God is looking for such intercessors today. Surely the solemnity of the Great White Throne Judgment which the sinner must face should impel all believers in God’s Word to give themselves as Moses did to intercession. The point is made that sin is of such a fearful nature that though a man’s name is in the book of life, if he turns from God and does not repent, it will cause him to lose his place.

A minister friend of the writer was once approached by a backslider who began telling about the years he had served the Lord and of the wonderful experiences he had had, but alas he had grown cold and was now backslidden. The preacher interrupted him and said, “Sir, it looks very much like someone else has gotten your place.” Jesus said, “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). He also said, “No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

What the Bible Says About the Book of Life

Because of the importance of the subject, let us notice what the Bible teaches about this book of life. We have seen that God would not remove Moses' name from the book, because he was under the covenant promise. Earlier, Moses had failed to circumcise his son, which was the seal of the covenant, and on the eve of delivering Israel, he nearly paid a serious penalty for his neglect (Exod. 4:24-26). But after fulfilling the rite of circumcision, Moses came into the covenant relationship. As Christians we, by accepting Christ as Saviour, also come into the covenant relationship—through the new covenant of His blood (Matt. 26:28).

Psalms 69:25-28 has special reference to Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:25). Of Judas and all who follow his example verse 28 refers: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" (Psa. 69:28). We may reasonably believe this means that Judas' name was not written in the book of life.

Daniel 12:1 speaks of the children of Israel who came into the time of the Great Tribulation that "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." From this we may understand that those who will be delivered from the great judgments at the end of the age will have their names written in the book—meaning the book of life.

The Apostle Paul saw no mystery about believers' names being written in the book of life. He mentions Clement and "other fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3), which shows that we do not have to wait until that great day to discover whether our name is written there. All who wish can know for a certainty. Indeed Christ gives the same promises to those who overcome that He gave to Moses, saying, "... I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:5).

Of Those Whose Names Are Not Found Written in the Book of Life

Jesus, in relating the story of the rich man in Luke 16:22-23, says, "...The rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes..." (We call him the rich man for identification, but he has lost all.) As Jesus describes the remorse of the rich man, we perceive that the condition in which he found himself in the nether regions came as a shock to him. He realized that he was a lost soul. Yet in his desperation he grasped

as for a straw, hoping for some alleviation of his misery, for some ray of hope, yet finding none. In the thousands of years that have elapsed since that time, there has been no change in his lot as far as the Scriptures are concerned.

Yet at the time of the second resurrection involving the wicked dead, there will occur a dramatic change in the location of the rich man's confinement. “.. Death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them...” (Rev. 20:13). The rich man will suddenly find himself drawn out of hades. Once more his physical body will be restored. But it will be far from a happy moment. The human spirit desires to be clothed with a body. But though the rich man will have regained his body—all is by no means well. A thousand thoughts race through his mind —of life on earth, of his youth when he received his father's inheritance, and of the days when he lived in luxury. But now how different are his prospects. He passed thousands of years in hades with other lost spirits. He is familiar enough with the Scriptures to know that judgment lies ahead, though he paid little heed to the warnings while on earth (Luke 16:31).

But the climaxing moment of his despair is yet to come. The human heart tends to hope against hope, even when all reason for hope is gone. Does the rich man entertain a hope that he will be numbered with those who are granted life? Did he not entertain a hope in hades that somehow at least one prayer of his might be answered? Now as his turn comes to stand before the Great White Throne to hear the final verdict, does he yet have a secret hope, faint as it might be, that his name would somehow be found on the pages of the book of life?

Silently he waits as the finger of the recording angel runs down the pages. And then as he sees the angel solemnly shake his head, despair in the ultimate form seizes him. His name is not there! Alas, like his five brethren who had the law and the prophets, he did not believe their testimony. And the unbelieving can have no part in the regions of light; for them is reserved only the second death (Rev. 21:8).

True, the rich man was a son of Abraham after the flesh, for he called him “father Abraham.” But by his unbelief he was not the seed of Abraham by faith (John 8:39,44). The fate of the rich man is described in Matthew 8:11-12:

“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

And so as the doomed rich man beholds the salvation of some who were not of the seed of Abraham, he realizes that though he is of that seed, he is a castaway. And thus with him are fulfilled the words of Jesus: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," an expression which describes the final emotion of despair. For the lost there is no future.

We have used the rich man as an example of the lot of the wicked dead. His story is repeated numberless times.

The lost apparently catch a brief glimpse of the lot of the saints of light (Luke 13:28-30). Before they descend into regions of eternal night, they witness the bliss of those who chose the way of holiness and life. They perceive the glorious future of the righteous. They have opportunity to ponder God's great plan and the joys of those who now participate in the activities of the unfolding ages to come. At last they are able to weigh the consequences of their folly. What self-incriminations, what remorse, what despair as those lost souls now perceive that their rejection of God's Word and their determination to follow a course of self-will, now dooms them forever.

Is it all a nightmare to awaken from and forget? Alas, it is only too real. The kindest lips that ever spoke have told it to us as it is:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

And so for the lost the endless night of eternity begins.

Is Punishment in the Lake of Fire Eternal Physical Torment?

From Revelation 20:10 it is concluded by some that punishment in the lake of fire is eternal physical punishment. From this, medieval theologians drew monstrous pictures of physical torment beyond anything conceived by human imagination. This conception of punishment of the wicked is not correct. In the first place both the body and soul will be destroyed in Gehenna, which is the lake of fire. There will be, therefore, no physical suffering:

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Gehenna)" (Matt. 10:28).

We see by this that both the soul and body are destroyed, and only the spirit is left. Total extinction or annihilation is not implied, however, as Christ in Mark 9:43-44 says when again referring to Gehenna speaks of "the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the

fire is not quenched.” The implication is that consciousness is retained. *This warning takes on increased emphasis by Christ’s repeating it three times.*

The eternal banishment of a human being is indeed a fearful thing to contemplate. Yet it would be infinitely worse if God were to give these wicked spirits freedom and license to inhabit and to infect God’s kingdom, which they would surely do if they were permitted entrance. Sin is the violation of the law of being. And willful sinning is certain to bring anguish and suffering upon those who persist in it.

Chapter VII

Eternity Begins

How long is eternity? Christ in several places in the Gospels promised eternal life to those who believed in Him:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:27-28).

The word “eternity,” however, is mentioned but once in the Bible, and it is found in Isaiah 57:15:

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Here the Lord God speaks of Himself as He “who inhabiteth eternity.” He refers to Himself as dwelling in the high and holy place, but also with him who “is of a contrite and humble spirit.”

The new heavens and the new earth usher us into eternity— time without ending. How long is eternity? The human mind is utterly unable to comprehend its meaning. Every attempt to measure it falls far short of the objective. Eternity is infinite, and man has no means of calculating or estimating the infinite. Certain pictures have been drawn to give us some idea of its vastness, though even these are quite inadequate.

We are told to imagine the earth to be a great ball composed entirely of minute grains of sand. Every thousand years a bird comes by and removes one grain of sand. Again and again after each thousand years another grain is removed in like manner. Consider the incredible lapse of time that must pass before the entire earth is removed. Nevertheless, when this is finally accomplished, that would be only sunrise in eternity.

Or consider the sun, a great ball nearly a million miles in diameter, finally dying in the billions of years ahead and turning to cold stone. And then imagine another bird flying by once every thousand years and sharpening its beak upon it. When at last after an incalculable lapse of time the whole was worn away, still eternity would only have begun. Crude illustrations? Perhaps. Certainly they fail to begin to depict the length of eternity.

The New Heavens and the New Earth

We shall make a few brief remarks concerning events that follow the Great White Throne Judgment.

The 7,000 years are now complete: the judgment of the wicked dead is over, and they cease to have any further part in future events. But the great unfolding of God's plan has scarce begun as eternity is measured. Paul in writing to the Ephesians speaks of the saints' being raised to sit in heavenly places, whence God "in ages to come" will reveal "the exceeding riches of his grace."

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6-7).

The old earth and heavens have served their purpose. The earth even today is showing signs of exhaustion of its resources (Heb. 1:10-12). God in His generosity is providing a new home which shall endure for eternity. Men today, by means of nuclear agencies, have within their power the means to destroy the earth (Matt. 24:21-22). They have learned to split the atom and by means of chain reaction can produce explosions of almost unlimited power. Great as will be the devastation during the Great Tribulation, man will not be permitted to destroy the earth. It will remain after the judgments of the Great Day of the Lord to be the home of the people who inhabit the earth during the Millennium. When, however, the 1,000 years have run their course, the elements will melt with a fervent heat (II Pet. 3:10-12). They will not be annihilated, however, and in some way not yet revealed, a new earth will take the place of the old.

The former things are now passed away, and shall be remembered no more. The past is blotted out. Out of heaven will come the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ. The Church shall inhabit the city and God Himself will dwell with them. The communion the Lord had with man in the Garden of Eden will be fully restored. The nations that inhabit the earth will have access to the New Jerusalem, but their dwelling place will be upon the earth (Rev. 21:24-26).

What Shall We Say to All This?

Surely we must declare the tragedy of those who choose to die without Christ, to go to a Christless grave, to a Christless eternity. What a fearful, irredeemable mistake to allow the precious years to slip by, with no preparation made for the world to come. At death there will be no angels to welcome the one who dies without Christ. As in the case of the rich man

who opened his eyes in hades, so it will be. The inevitability of death! The irreversibility of death! Once in hades the gates close shut, never to be opened outward until the White Throne Judgment. Then the prisoners to be released are brought to stand before an offended God on that great day to hear the fateful verdict, “Depart from me...”

But this need not be. The gracious invitation is to all who will to “drink of the waters of life freely.” Those who accept may have their names written now in the Lamb’s book of life. For such a man there is no judgment, for Christ has stood in the penitent sinner’s place. The Apostle Paul tells of His work on the cross:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:14-15).

Time holds before men two alternatives. It is life or death, heaven or hell, salvation or judgment.

Moses in giving his farewell message to the children of Israel said that he had set before them life and good, death and evil—therefore, choose life.

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil... I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deut. 30:15,19).

And Christ said to the people that the narrow way leads to life and the broad way leads to destruction.

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

Therefore, God grant that we may choose life.