

# The Great White Throne

by E.A. Johnston

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*The great white throne judgment is a courtroom scene where the judge of all the earth reviews the lives of all mankind and hands out sentences based on their works, with the hope of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and the warning of eternal torment for those who reject Him.*

**Duration:** 29:33

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:4, John 5:22-23, Acts 7:58, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Revelation 6:9-10, Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15

**Topics:** "Judgment Day"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Great White Throne Judgment, a solemn event where all of mankind will be brought before God for review. The sermon explores the judge who sits on the throne, which is revealed to be the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been given all authority by the Father. The sermon emphasizes the severity of God's holy law, which will be used to judge every person's life. Only those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and have been washed in His blood will escape the judgment and find refuge. The sermon also warns of the consequences for those who reject God and His Son, as they will face the judge and be condemned.

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## Transcript

The murder trial of O.J. Simpson fascinated me. I watched that trial on TV every day and closely followed the evidence as it was presented in that case. Soon after that trial, I had the opportunity to travel to Los Angeles with my wife, and we retraced the steps of that murder mystery.

We ate dinner in Beverly Hills at Mezzaluna Restaurant where Ron Goldman worked as a waiter. We then drove over to the condo of Nicole Simpson on Monday and walked up to the murder scene and looked at that courtyard where the gruesome murders took place. We then drove to Brentwood and looked at O.J. Simpson's mansion on Rockingham.

I even had the privilege the next day of playing golf at Riviera Country Club where O.J. had been a member. I even played golf with two of the members who were part of O.J. Simpson's regular foursome, and they told me stories about O.J. Simpson firsthand. It was a memorable trip, and I sat in stunned silence as the jury read the not guilty verdict, and he walked out of that courtroom a free man.

But there is such a thing as poetic justice, and she had her day, and he is now in prison for the rest of his days. But there is a courtroom scene on the coming horizon that will overshadow all others in history. This

courtroom scene will take place in the heavenlies at a throne of severe judgment for mankind.

This throne is called in scripture the great white throne, and on that throne sits the judge of all the earth. On that terrible throne, and it's a throne of holy justice, all of mankind will be summoned to that throne someday. Terrible sentences will be handed out for those Christless individuals who died in their sins.

They will be sentenced and cast into a burning hell where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Weeping speaks of great loss and grief, and gnashing of teeth signifies anger and regret. The unsaved on that day will regret the times they spurned the love of Christ and the invitations of the gospel.

When the Christian stands before Jesus at the review of their lives, live for Christ, it is called the beamless seat. Their sentences will not be handed out, but rewards. The judgment seat for believers will be more like a flower show at a county fair where awards will be handed out for excellence.

Believers will receive crowns for faithfulness and obedience in our service to the king of kings. But the great white throne judgment is a killing judgment because lost mankind will be held up against God's holy law, and His holy law will kill them. No one will be able to stand against that holy law on that day.

To get a sense of this, picture in your mind the scene in the Old Testament from Exodus where the people of God are gathered before Mount Sinai, and it is roped off because if anyone were to touch the mountain, they would be killed. The mountain begins to quake in smoke as God descends atop it, and the people tremble for fear of their lives. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Listen, it is a fearful thing, friends, to fall into the hands of a living God. How much more terrible will it be at the great white throne judgment which it is said it is so terrible that the earth and sky flee from its presence. There was an African tribal chief who was resisting the gospel witness of a missionary until he heard the missionary read from the book of Revelation about the great white throne and how earth and sky fled from it.

And the chief replied, you mean there is such a throne that earth and sky flee from it? Tell me more about that terrible throne. Well, there are some things in life that can't be escaped. Someone has said the only two things certain in life are death and taxes.

However, many rich men know how to avoid paying taxes, but no one knows how to avoid death. Death is a fact of life. Most of us someday will have a death certificate with our name written on it.

This death certificate proves to the world that we are gone and no longer have to pay taxes or settle our debts. But many will have to settle their accounts with God and there will be no escaping that. There is a coming day of judgment for all mankind.

My Bible says, and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. The Bible speaks vividly of this incredible event and the scene is described in the book of Revelation. This scene, this terrible event of God judging mankind is described in the following passage from Revelation chapter 20 and verses 11 through 15.

And I saw a great white throne and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the

books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works, and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

That incredible scene describes the final assize of all mankind. It is a courtroom scene where the judge of all the earth sits on a throne of glory. Cases are reviewed, books are opened, evidence is presented, judgment is proclaimed, and sentencing is carried out.

It is a terrible solemn scene. Listen friends, that great white throne is a terrible throne, for all of mankind will be brought before it for review. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord on that day.

Today we are going to study this great white throne judgment and look at the following. See the judge who sits on that throne. The holy law that will represent that judge.

The opening of the books where lives are reviewed. And the final sentencing of the damned into the lake of fire. Let's begin by looking at the one who sits on that terrible throne of judgment.

The Lord Jesus Christ sits on that throne. For all authority has been given him of the Father. He earned the right to that throne by way of a bloody cross.

He is sitting on a heavenly throne this very instant at the right hand of the Father. And every knee will bow to him on that terrible day of judgment. Books will be opened.

The small and great stand there and tremble before the King of Kings. His eyes of fire will test the quality of what is found in the books. Every word that fell from your lips will be reviewed on that day.

Every thought, every imagination, every deed done in the body, every motive behind the deed will be reviewed. There will be those individuals who believe themselves to be Christians standing there. But on this day they learn they were deceived and now are damned to hell.

Jesus spoke of this. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of my Father in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Cast out demons in your name and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Can you imagine the reaction of the church member on that day? Who believed that he or she was going to heaven and now they stand condemned before the judge of all the earth.

Jesus plainly states that only those who do the will of the Father will enter heaven. Many will attempt to defend themselves with their accumulated religious works, which they have performed while on earth. But their works won't save them.

Only those individuals who are under the blood will pass the test on that day. So the judge who sits upon that throne is so awesome that even the earth and sky move at his command. This brings to mind the

account from the Gospel of Mark where on the Sea of Galilee, the storm arose and threatened the disciples who were frantically rowing while Jesus soundly slept.

They awoke him and he calmed the sea with his command. Peace, be still. And the text says, and the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

One who has authority over heaven and earth will sit on that great white throne and no one will be able to stand against him on that day. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The one who sits on that throne is the judge of all the earth.

Now we will look at the law, which represents that judge. If you break the law in your city, you will be arrested, tried, and sentenced. A judge will preside over your trial and evidence will be presented for review.

At the great white throne judgment, every person who ever lived will be held up against the utter severity of God's holy law. If you were standing there in your own merit, you will fail that test because the law of God is perfect and God demands perfection. And you are not perfect, but a sinner and you will be killed with the law on that day.

The ones who will escape that law on that day will be the ones who are washed in the blood and born of the Spirit and who rest on the merits of Christ and Christ alone. People today don't live in obedience to God and His holy law. Most people don't live in obedience to that holy law.

They are a law unto themselves. Even in our churches today, we have the biggest bunch of lawless church members who defy God by living unto themselves in lies of sin, believing because they are saved by grace they can live any way they please. Today, we want to preserve self instead of crucifying self.

We are into self-preservation rather than self-annihilation, which is what the Christian life is. Jesus was a crucified Savior who has crucified followers, but we want to hang on to our self-life and pamper it. Listen, in Great Britain and America today, the vein of the church is self-indulgence, self-preservation, and self-centeredness.

The gospel message is all about us served on a man-centered platter at a sumptuous banquet table laden with delicacies. Other generations knew the price of discipleship and the cost of following a crucified Savior. John the Baptist had a platter, but his head was upon it.

Stephen was baptized with stones as he saw Jesus rise from his throne. Paul finished his ministry, not with accolades and applause, but with a fallen ax. The blood of the martyrs cries out against the self-absorbed church of this generation.

Listen, friends, on that day only those individuals who have a substitute will survive against the utter severity of that holy flesh-killing law. We are big sinners and we need a substitute and his merits to escape the awful sense of that day, for God is holy and he hates sin. The Bible declares a last sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.

They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel. People who have spurned the love of God and have rejected the Son of God will face the judge of all the earth on that day.

They will stand before the great white throne and tremble as the books are opened on their lives. The word of God has a clear warning to those individuals who refuse to repent and seek God. He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Oh, friends, there are accounts of people who, after having rejected a clear gospel invitation, have gone out and suddenly been killed in a tragic accident. Each day is a gift from God. The obituary columns are filled daily with both old and young alike.

Death is no respecter of persons. The rich die as well as the poor. Death can come suddenly without warning at any moment how dangerous it is to spurn the pleas of the gospel and to refuse the Christ of the gospel.

Your life will be an open book on that day, and all evidence from your thoughts, words, and deeds will be presented as a testimony against you as you are held up against the utter severity of God's holy law and are killed by it. But our trouble is we can't see ourselves in a bad light. We have too good of an opinion of ourselves.

We don't consider ourselves big sinners, but nice little people who don't need to forsake sin. There is a story about George Whitefield, the great British evangelist, as he stood on Boston Common in 1740 amidst a great revival. He knew full well how wicked the heart of the sinner was, and as he stood in the open air before his audience of 20,000 hearers, he cried out, Listen, sinners, you are monsters, monsters of iniquity.

You deserve hell, and the worst of your crime is that criminals though you bend, you haven't had the good grace to see it. If you will not weep for your sins and your crimes against the holy God, George Whitefield will. I'll weep for you, and that dear man would throw back his head and sob like a baby for them.

He knew the wicked windings of his own heart, and he knew he needed to repent, be saved, and it grieved him to see so many not aware of the sinfulness of sin and the deceitfulness of the human heart. Can you imagine the contents of the books which are opened on that day of review? Every thought, every word, every motive, every action will be examined under the scrutiny of the judge of all the earth. Every time you use God's name as a cuss word, every filthy thought you relished, every sin you took pleasure in will be reviewed on that day.

No one will stand against that holy law of God and the judge whom that law represents. The Bible says the dead stand there, small and great, those whose lives passed unnoticed by the world, and those who lived in great fame in the world, the rich and poor of each generation. Those billionaires of each generation who made money their God will stand before the God of all the earth.

Kings and queens and presidents stand there. The mass murderers stand there like Hitler and Stalin. The Roman Caesars stand there.

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah stand there. All of mankind from every generation is brought before the judge sitting on that great white throne, and not one of them can stand without their knees buckling under them. As the books are opened and cases reviewed and sentences handed out, degrees of punishment will be made.

Not all will have the same punishment. Your lost next-door neighbor will not have the same sentence as a Hitler or a Saddam Hussein. The native in the jungle who never heard the name of Christ will not have the

same sentence as the one who heard the gospel and rejected it.

There is a difference between a non-believer and a non-believer. But I must say this, I say it carefully, there is no hope for you, Christ-rejecter. My Bible says you are condemned already.

So there will be degrees of punishment meted out according to the things written in the open books. But there is another book there, and it is the most important book on that day. It is the book of life.

Our text reads, And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Not found? Written in the book of life? Those who have no substitute for sin, they have died in their sins and stand condemned. O friends, how would need a substitute for sin? This reminds me of the story of the man who was passing through St. Louis on a Sunday morning, and he decided to visit a local church.

He parked his car behind a downtown church and went inside and took his seat in the back of that church. Once inside, he realized he was the only white person in that black church. The pastor was an older man who wore suspenders, and he hooked his thumbs under the straps of his suspenders as he walked about the platform.

He was speaking on the subject of heaven that particular morning, and this is how he described heaven. Some folks say heaven is Abraham's bosom. Other folks call it paradise.

I like to think of heaven this way. Here is Jesus entering heaven back from his earthly ministry and the victory of that bloody cross. Gabriel greets him at the pearly gates, and Gabriel says, Hello Jesus, sure is good to see you.

We missed you up here, Jesus. We sure are glad you are back again. But wait, who is that with you, Jesus? Who is that? Is that that thief from the cross? Now, we can't have any thieves up here in heaven.

No sir, we can't have any sinners up here. Just then, Jesus wrapped his arm around the thief and hugged him, and told Gabriel, Never you mind, Gabriel, never you mind. He's with me.

Oh friends, is that not what Jesus has done on our behalf? He has taken the penalty for our sins. He suffered shame for our sins. He paid the price of our redemption with his blood and by his death.

Our only hope of escaping the fire of hell is being under his blood and under his merits. But for the poor souls outside of Christ's blood, there is nothing but doom and misery for them as they face their final sentencing and are cast into the lake of fire. And this is hell reserved for the devil and his angels.

This lake of fire is the final abode of all who perish outside of Christ. Whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. That fire is eternal.

It burns forever and ever. It is an everlasting flame of torments. Once you are cast in there, friend, it is too late to change your mind about Christ or accept him as your savior, for he is not your savior on that day, but your judge.

You will know what the prophet Jeremiah meant when he said, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. There is a story about D.L. Moody, which I can't get out of my mind. Moody was in Chicago preaching to his congregation, and he ended the service without giving a public invitation.

Rather, he told them to go home and think about it, and they would pick up the topic of the gospel again next week. But that terrible evening, the city of Chicago faced disaster as the entire city burned to the ground in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Listen to his words about his deep regret of not giving a gospel invitation that terrible night.

What a mistake! I have never dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation since. If they were lost, they might rise up in the judgment against me. I remember Mr. Sankey singing, and how his voice rang when he came to that pleading verse, Today the Savior calls, for refuge fly, the storm of justice falls, and death is nigh.

I have hard work to keep back the tears today. Twenty-two years have passed away, and I have not seen that congregation since. And I will never meet those people again until I meet them in another world.

I have asked God many times to forgive me for telling people that night to take a week to think it over. And if He spares my life, I'll never do it again. One lesson I learned that night, which I have never forgotten, and that is, when I preach, I press Christ upon the people then and there.

You see, friends, Moody's congregation got burned up in that great Chicago fire. It was too late for them to do anything about it. And in hell, it will be too late for you to do anything about it.

Your cries of regret will crackle into flames of remorse. Once you stand before that great white throne and the book of life is opened, and your name is not written in it, your heart will sink like a stone, and all your pleas will fall upon deaf ears as you are cast into that lake of fire. But listen, the gospel has both hope and warning for the sinner.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life. That's the hope. Now, here's the warning.

And he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. There is hope for those individuals who savingly come to Christ and seek refuge in Him and His blood. But for those individuals who spurn the gospel and the Christ of the gospel, they will suffer eternal punishment and a burning hell forever and ever.

God's word declares, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. And God declares, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Bible tells us to exercise repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the one who sits on that heavenly throne, and He will either be your Savior on that day, or He will be your judge who sentences you to that lake of fire and torment. Listen, friends, that great white throne is a terrible throne, for even earth and sky cannot stand before it. Why would you think you could flee to your only refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ, become a seeker of Him? Listen to the pleas of the gospel.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God, and there is none else. But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.

And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. O friend, if you are outside of Christ, and you are weary and hungry and thirsty, come to Him, and He will satisfy.

Listen to this promise of the Lord Jesus as He invites those thirsty ones to come to Him and drink. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

O friends, don't go to hell over some two-bit sin. Give it all to God, and turn to Him in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus came to save His people from their sins.

Salvation isn't just going to heaven. It's being saved from sin. Christ never preached a sin in religion.

Rather, He said, Those seeking Him, go and sin no more. You cannot hang on to your sins and hang on to a hope of going to heaven. Salvation, friends, is this.

It is a dethroning of self and an enthroning of another. While there is time and while there is breath in your body, repent and seek Christ now. Throw down your shotgun of rebellion and come to the King and glad surrender.

For all who come to Him, He will no wise cast out. The great white throne and the book of life, you must stand before the one and be written in the other. When the books are opened and your life is reviewed, if you are found outside of Christ, you will be cast into the lake of fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

But listen, friends, if your name is found written in the book of life, you will possess life and have it abundantly. Let me ask you a question. Are you in the book of life? For those redeemed blood-bought individuals, Jesus gives you this promise.

Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

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