

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

*You Must be Born Again!*

*“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.”*

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## *Getting the Great White Throne Judgment, Right*

*February 25, 2024*

**Sermon Text:** Revelation 20

**Scripture Reading:** Matthew  
20:1-16

I believe in God, the Father  
Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ,  
His only begotten Son, our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy  
Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was

buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose from the  
dead;

He ascended into heaven,  
and sits at the right hand of God  
the Father Almighty;

from there he shall come again to  
judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

.....

Rev 20:11-15 Then I saw a great  
white throne and him who was  
seated on it. From his presence

earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. (14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

If you have been following the mid-week studies in the book of Revelation, this subject will be a bit of a repeat for you, although in some respects we will be going into more detail here than we did last Friday.

I am re-visiting this topic this morning because I want to be

certain that all of us understand what is going to happen at the Great White Throne judgment on the Day when Christ returns. This is NOT a trivial matter. To the degree that your concept of that Day is not in accord with the Bible's teaching on this subject, to that degree your understanding of:

- Grace in Christ
- Being free from condemnation
- The very nature of justification by faith alone in Christ alone (ie, the gospel)
- What God thinks of you right now
- And more....

...to that degree, Satan is going to have a much easier time launching his missiles of accusation and blame and guilt at you.

Let me elaborate a bit more. I am speaking to the Christian here. To those of you who are born again.

***If you do not understand this:***

1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love,

but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

*...then your thinking about your relationship with God is messed up and you are suffering as a result. Your ideas about what the Lord has done for you in Christ are not in tune with Scripture and you are suffering as a result. You are suffering because to a lesser or greater degree you are still in bondage to the idea of acceptance by performance. Many people have had that thinking pounded into them by a parent whose love may not have been real love at all. So you are not a joy-filled person as the Lord intends for you to be.*

I hope that has your attention now. This is the subject at hand *and it relates directly to this doctrine of the Great White Throne judgment.*

### A Good Pastor and a Very Bad Mistake

You have often heard me quote from Pastor Herman Hoeksema

who was a pastor for 30 years and the longtime editor of *The Standard Bearer* magazine. He published a series of many messages in the Standard Bearer through the book of Revelation. We now have those messages in one volume entitled, Behold He Cometh. You can buy it now and I recommend it as a great Reformed study of Revelation.

But, none of us are without error as long as we live in this present world, and I found a serious error in Hoeksema's treatment of Revelation 20:11-15, the Great White Throne Judgment. Listen again to these verses:

Rev 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. **And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what**

**they had done.** (13) And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, **and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.**

(14) Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

(15) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, listen to Hoeksema as he expounds on the Great White Throne Judgment:

“The question may be asked, however: if all shall be judged according to their works, what will become of God’s people? They also have sinned; and they also would be condemned, would they not? To this question the text furnishes the answer when it informs us that not only shall “the books” be opened, but also another book shall be opened, which is the book of life. The book of life is God’s own record of His elect saints, the book of God’s election in Christ. It contains the names of

all His chosen saints. They are written in that book as redeemed by the blood of their Lord and Savior. Through that blood they were justified. By that blood they were also sanctified in Christ Jesus. This book is also opened. For when men are judged according to their works, the work of Christ for His people, in His people, and through His saints, the elect whom God hath given to Christ from before the foundation of the world, shall also be made manifest. This work of Christ for, in, and through the saints belongs to the works according to which they shall be judged. And therefore the saints can never perish in the judgment.”

[So far, not too bad. But, what follows here actually diminishes what he has just said....]

“Also God’s children, therefore, shall see their sins in that day of judgment as they have never fully seen them before. Everything shall be brought into remembrance and shall be seen in its true light. They shall see the corruption and filth of their sin in that day, and they shall

fully understand that even their best works were defiled by sin. They shall understand the truth of their confession that even the holiest of men has but a small beginning of the new obedience in this present life. But, thanks be unto God, we shall also understand as we have never perfectly understood before that we are in Christ.

Hoeksema, Herman. Behold, He Cometh: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation (pp. 569-570). Reformed Free Publishing Association. Kindle Edition.

This is not a minor error. It has serious damaging consequences.

We are Reformed Christians. We believe in the “solas” – Grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone. But we also stand firmly against *antinomianism* – which really is theological libertinism which says that the Law of God has no application at all to the Christian. We reject the widespread teaching and practice in so many churches today which winks at ongoing sin

in the lives of people who claim to be born again.

However, we must take care that we do not forget that in Christ the condemnation of the Law is removed. We have died to the Law which means that it no longer can be used by Satan to accuse us-

Col 2:13-15 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

*“....canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.”*

Do you begin to see why this claim of Hoeksema is so very wrong? He taught that at the Great White Throne judgment, this canceled

record of debt (of our sins) is going to be brought up once again. Covered by the blood of Christ to be sure, but nevertheless it will be brought up and displayed in ugly clarity as never before for us and the whole human race to see. *That is not going to happen, Christian.* Do you understand this? *That is not going to happen.*

I have no doubt that many Christians who struggle with depression and shame and gloom can trace the origin of all this to wrong thinking about what the Lord has done for His people in Christ. They have a faulty view of the cross, of salvation, *and whether they realize it or not, of the Great White Throne Judgment.*

What then about these statements here in Revelation 20 which state that all human beings, pagans and Christians alike, are going to be judged according to their works which have been recorded in their ugly fullness? Does the Scripture here not say that this is going to be what happens? NO! Let me show you why. Listen to Matthew describe the Great White Throne

Judgment -

Mat 25:31-46 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (32) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

(33) And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

(37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or



naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ (40) And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

(41) “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

(44) Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ (45) Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ (46) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Both sheep and goats are there from all the nations. Clearly this final judgment includes every human being who ever lived. Everyone. Christian. Pagan. Everyone.

Now, *is this a judgment of works?* Yes! But there is a glaring absence of that which Hoeksema says will happen. What are the works which the Lord will point to in respect to His people? *They are entirely righteous works which are the fruit of a regenerate heart. They are works worked out of love for Christ. What works are not even mentioned? Sin. Unrighteousness. The things which Hoeksema claims are going to be displayed in ugly clarity as never before and in front of the universe!*

Is this a judgment of works? Yes, but it is *a judgment of vindication, a judgment which declares, “You are Mine. Come and welcome to My kingdom prepared for you.”*

And what will the judgment of the wicked be? *A judgment of condemnation.* What is absent from

the Judge's decree in regard to them? *Any mention whatsoever of righteousness. None. Only guilt and condemnation.*

Hear it once more. *There is not a single word here in Matthew 25's account of the Great White Throne judgment displaying the sins of Christ's people in, as Hoeksema put it:*

“Also God's children, therefore, shall see their sins in that day of judgment as they have never fully seen them before. Everything shall be brought into remembrance and shall be seen in its true light. They shall see the corruption and filth of their sin in that day, and they shall fully understand that even their best works were defiled by sin.”

Let's think some more about this.

*When does the Great White Throne Judgment take place?* It is at the end of the 1,000 years (the millennium) – which we hold to be the entire church age, from the birth of Christ to His second coming). The GWTJ occurs at the

end of the church era when Christ returns. Upon His return, this happens:

1Th 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. (14) For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. (15) For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

(16) For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage one another with these words.



This is the resurrection of the righteous. It includes all of the Lord's elect, whether they be already with the Lord or still living upon this earth when He comes.

At the very same time, the wicked will also be raised – *bodily*.

2Th 1:5-10 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— (6) since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, (10) when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have

believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

This is the GREAT White Throne Judgment. Great in the Lord's glory, great because it's finality and completeness. Great in the multitudes of those judged, and great because of the Great King who judges from His throne.

Now, let's think this through very carefully.

1. When a believer dies during the church age, when you or I depart this life, what happens?

*To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. In an instant.*

2. Every single one of Christ's true people who have departed this life in ages past *are with the Lord in His glorious presence right now. They are with Him in glory and they are glorified. Absolutely sinless and holy.*
3. At the GWTJ, there is going to be a universal bodily

resurrection which fully and completely finishes the *glorification of the elect*.

*Christ has washed away*, are going to be brought up again as never before on the Day. That is what Hoeksema is teaching.

1Co 15:(42) So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. (43) It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.

Psa 103:8-12 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. (9) He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. (10) He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. (11) For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; (12) as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Alright then, let's work this out. According to Hoeksema's position, the saints in heaven who are right now glorified and who will, along with us, be absolutely glorified at the resurrection of their body, who are right now in face-to-face presence with Christ, are going to one day, at the GWTJ, have all of their sins in all of their ugly clarity and detail, rehearsed and displayed before their eyes so that they see the wickedness and depth of the sins they committed as never before. And that all of this promotes a better understanding of the grace of the Lord in Christ.

Isa 43:25 "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

ALL of the sins which we have committed *and which the blood of*

Jer 31:33-34 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(34) And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

1Co 1:7-8 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, (8) who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1Th 3:12-13 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, (13) so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

1Th 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But what of this? –

2Co 5:5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. (6) So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

In light of the Scriptures we have already examined, we must conclude that Paul is saying the very same thing John said in Revelation 20 and which Jesus said in Matthew 25 – namely, that this judgment seat of Christ will be, for His people, a judgment which displays to the universe the righteous works of His Church.

Finally, let's be certain to apply this to ourselves now. If you are a Christian, if you have been born again through faith alone in Christ alone, then you are a new creation, a child of God. It is a serious and damaging mistake for us to fail to see the greatness of this salvation. To fail to realize just who you are in Christ.

Jud 1:24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, (25) to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

We live in a world corrupted and fallen whose god is the devil. We are hammered on all sides that justification and worth are based upon our performance. But this is not how it is in God's kingdom. He gives His grace independently of our performance – by faith alone! If you are a person given to despair and shame and depression, yielding to perhaps even supposed “Christians” you have met in a church as they exalt themselves and put you down, then this is all due to the enemy's lies that your worth in Christ is still based up performance, and when Christ comes again you think that He is going to let you in, but quickly move you to the back row where no one can see you.