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**Great White Throne
Revelation 20:11-15**

Pop rock singing Cindy Lauper was quoted saying, "I can't wait to go to hell. All my friends will be there and we will party with the devil day and night." Is that what hell is going to be like? Just one Friday night high school party, one after another filled with booze, drugs, sex and rock and roll...dancing with the devil to dawn? I hate to disappoint you this morning, but hell will not have anything that resembles fun on this earth. The Devil will not rule in Hell. He will be stuck down in the deepest parts of hell and all the demons will be dumped on top of him. Hell will be filled with greedy, selfish people that have lost any capacity for kindness, patience, goodness, self-control, love. There will be no pleasure in hell. Why? Because that evil sensuous pleasure in this world are merely perversions of God's greatest gifts. Satan can only pervert God's best gifts. If there are no gifts to pervert no evil pleasure will be found. Cindy Lauper is looking forward to promiscuous relations and wild times? Nope. Won't be there. That is a perversion of one of God's greatest gift to married couples. Since there will be no gifts from God in hell, there can be no perversions of those gifts. What about drugs and alcohol. Nope. They won't be there. God gave us gifts of food and medicine, there will be no blessing of provision by God therefore no way pervert God's gift of food and drink.

A few weeks ago I saw a milk commercial. Presumably this young man had died and he was a bit surprised to find himself in a white, clean and bright room filled with oreo cookies everywhere. Heaven? He thought? He'd made it! After munching on a few cookies he opens the refrigerator only to discover all the milk containers are empty. The words "Got milk" appear with flames at the bottom of the TV screen. Hell is a place where none of your deepest longings are fulfilled. Nothing can satisfy your wants or needs. All of God's gifts are nowhere around. Therefore, none of the perversions of God's gifts either. No relationships, no pleasure, no purpose, no satisfaction. Totally and wholly separated from God and

all the good gifts He gives man. Do you still want to go to heaven and party day and night with the devil?

I do not enjoy preaching on this subject. But it's in the Bible and I must. Jesus, the most compassionate man to ever walk the face of this earth, talked three words about hell for every one about heaven. If Jesus warns of hell. If Jesus describes hell. Then I am in pretty good company. If it scares you into heaven, then good enough. Fear can be a healthy motivator if it directs you to truth. It is wise for a parent to yell out to a three year old, "Get out of the freeway!"

Turn with me in your Bibles to the last book in the New Testament, the book of Revelation chapter 20. Things have been moving fast and furious in our study of Revelation it is easy to lose the sequence of events. Christ comes back to meet believers in the clouds, ala I Thessalonians 4. This is the rapture of the church, dead believers first and shortly after those who are alive and remain. This ushers in the tribulation where the Anti-Christ or beast empowered by Satan rises to power to establish a one world government. For a couple years the world will experience peace and be enamored with the one who appears so Christ-like. Things soon go bad and it turns into a bloody tyranny. Two witnesses that preach the gospel to millions and many come to Salvation and belief in Jesus are protected from harm until the mid-point of the seven tribulation, or at 3-1/2 years. Many believers who refuse the mark of the beast are killed and at the middle of the Tribulation the two witnesses will be killed and then resurrected into heaven. This ushers in the second half of the tribulation also what is called the Great Tribulation. God sends out His terrible judgment of wrath. The seal judgments, the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments. Sometime during this tribulation period, there will be the judgment of Christians in heaven at the Bema seat. This is a judgment of believers not to determine salvation, but to decide reward. I Corinthians 3. In fact, all the final judgments for believer and unsaved are based on works for reward or punishment not to decide on where they will spend eternity. In addition to the judgment seat of Christ for rewarding believers there will also occur in heaven during the tribulation the marriage supper of the lamb. Christ then returns riding a white horse leading white robed army of saints in His Second Coming to earth. The Beast will gather the

rebellious nations of the world and will be soundly defeated in the battle of Armageddon. The Beast and False Prophet will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, or hell. Satan Himself will be chained up and tossed into the Abyss which is sealed for 1000 years. This will usher in a time a great peace, prosperity, purity, sheep and lion will lie down together. No war, no sickness...for Jesus will be king of the world. Unlike some of the politicians today, He will rule in righteousness and truth. This is referred to as the millennium as Christ has set up His kingdom on earth. At the end of this 1000 years Satan is let out of the abyss for a short time to deceive people. Amazingly even in a perfect world with perfect government, the heart of man and nature to sin is still wicked...millions rebel against Jesus and mass in war against Him. They are soundly defeated. Satan himself now is cast into the lake of fire or hell with the Beast and False Prophet. Next the final or second resurrection of the unsaved dead are raised out of death and Hades to stand before the Great White Throne in judgment, not to decide whether they belong in heaven or hell, but to punish them based on their deeds. At this point, it seems the gigantic universes clock runs out of time, for in the very first verses of the next chapter describes a new heaven and new earth.

After Jesus has dealt with the Beast and the false prophet it is quite natural to deal with Satan. After Satan Jesus must deal with his followers. All those who refuse Jesus offer of paying their sin debt and spending eternal life in heaven. Verses 11-15 describe what happens to the unsaved dead. READ

Look with me at verse 11. Here is the Great White Throne judgment. There is great fear of anyone or anything who dare come near it. "whose presence earth and heaven fled away" Where is this throne? Some believe this Great White Throne is somewhere between earth and heaven. Why? As we read through these verses it is obvious that the ones being judged are not believers. Unsaved believers are not allowed in heaven. When we read the first verse of the next chapter it seems as though all earth and heaven are destroyed and a new one is created. So this Great White Throne of judgment appears to be found somewhere between heaven and earth. It brings great fear to all who come near.

What happens to believers when they die? A believers soul and spirit goes immediately to be with Jesus and at the rapture, a believers

body is reunited with His soul and spirit. Absent with the body is present with the Lord. I Thess. 4. Just as Jesus was resurrected into a physical but glorified body. He proved this by eating fish and bread with His disciples after the resurrection. So believers in like manner will be raised and given a body. We will need something to put all those fine linen robes on. What will it be like? I'm not sure but it will not have the limitation our current earth suit has. It will be a body crafted perfectly for heaven, it seems quite probable that all the identifying marks, the essence of who we are will be encapsulated in that body, soul and spirit so we will be able to enjoy each other.

Upon death the unsaved, go immediately to a place called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament. This is a place of conscience torment but it is not eternal hell, but kind of a hell in waiting. The eternal hell is the Lake of Fire also described as Gehenna elsewhere in the Bible, this is where unsaved will be sent after standing before the Great White Throne Judgment. Hebrews 9:27 "It is appointed unto man once to die but after that the judgment."

I am often asked whether or not the saved or unsaved dead can see us or communicate with us. The Bible doesn't say a lot about that. In Luke 16:19-31, there is a story of a rich man tormented in Hades pleading that a beggar he remembered seeing on the streets, Lazarus, be allowed to visit him with just a finger tip full of water to cool his tormented throat. He is told that there is no going back and forth. He then pleads that someone be sent from the dead back to tell his brothers of the reality of hell. The rich man is told that they have the truth clearly outlined in the Bible. If they refused the witness of the Word, sending a dead man back to them will not help at all. They will find some way to explain it away. Miracles rarely produce a strong and vital faith.

Can dead loved ones see what's happening here on earth? I don't know? Sometimes I hope they could. I like to think that Mom could listen to me preach, or watch the boys ball games. Other times I hope Mom is not looking down at me. Hebrews 12 talks about a great cloud of witnesses that seem to be cheering us on and encouraging us to finish strong for God. I like that picture.

So back to Revelation. Sitting on the Great White Throne to judge is God in the person of Jesus. II Timothy 4:1 identifies "Jesus as the One

who shall judge the quick and the dead." John 5:22 says "god does not judge anyone but all judgment is given to the Son." Remember all through our study in the book of Revelation it was Christ who opened the seals of judgment.

Its' important to remember that the Great White Throne judgment is not for believers. They have already been judged according to their works at the Judgment seat of Christ, or Bema Seat. Here in v.12 we see that the unsaved too will be forced to give an account of their deeds while here on earth. It is not in order to determine whether they can go to heaven or hell based on their deeds. Where you are headed is all determined before you die. These final judgments are for giving out degrees of reward and punishment. The great and small will stand before the throne. The kings and the paupers, the Owners and the box boys. The Throne is the great equalizer of power and prestige. For none of it will matter any more. We know from Ephesians 2:8,9 that we are only saved by grace through faith and not of works lest anyone should try to brag about it.

Books are opened, These books that record good and bad deeds. Possibly notes of the different times the gospel message was presented to the unsaved and they rejected it. It's all there in the books. All very clear for you to read. Those standing there had decided wrongly that they would get into heaven just because they were pretty good guys, that they would be judged based on what they did or did not do. So that is how they are indeed judged. Not to gain salvation. That was decided by their rejection of Jesus before they died. The issue here seems to be in the degree of punishment. Some people will spend eternity in a hotter place of hell then others. Luke 12:47-48 Just as there will be varying reward for believers based on their deeds and what they did with what was given them. So also there will be varying punishments for unsaved based on their deeds and what they did with what was given them. I think that those who have sat in church and heard time after time the gospel message and continued to reject its truth will be spending a hotter time then the Indian in the jungles of Africa who had only the witness of God's creation to lead him to obedience. Don't get me wrong, Romans 1 tells us the witness of creation is plenty for us to understand and worship

God...so we are without excuse. But to those who are here and been given much, much will be required.

Most Dictionaries list the names of famous people. the editors must make difficult decisions about whom to include and whom to exclude. Webster's New World Dictionary, for example includes Audrey Hepburn but leaves out Spencer Tracy. It lists Bing Crosby, but not Bob Hope; Willie Mays but not Mickey Mantle. Executive editor Michael Agnes explains that names make the cut based on their frequency of use and usefulness to the reader, but contemporary entertainers are not included. So you will not find Elton John or Michael Jackson in the list, but Marylin Monroe and Elvis Presley are there. The book of Life is far more important. In this names are included and some are excluded listing only those who will enter the glory of heaven and eternal life. The sole criteria for getting in the book; a sincere faith in Jesus Christ.

The book of life has only has names in it. Written in it are all those who have put their trust in Jesus for Salvation, by grace through faith. Some believe that originally all the names of the living, all who were born were entered into this book, and then as people died having rejected God's free gift of salvation, their names were blotted out, or scratched off the list. Others think that once a person accepts Christ as their personal Savior then their name is written down in this Lambs book of life. Whatever way, what is contained in this book of life are only those who have chosen Jesus and chosen eternal life in His Son.

Verse 13, the sea gives up its dead. Death and Hades gave up their dead. Death claiming the physical body part and Hades claiming the soul. This all points to existence beyond the grave. All judged according to their deeds. V. 14 Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second or final death. In v.6 we read that this second or final death had no power over the believer, they only have to die once possibly in physical death. but here the unsaved are subject to spiritual death. Ultimate separation from God forever.

If it is not clear by now, it should be, Anyone whose name is not found in the book of life will join who their leader Satan in the Lake of Fire. It will be a terrifying picture or horror as our unsaved friends must stand before this mighty and huge Great White Throne. Jesus will turn the pages of the book of deeds with his nail scared hands assigning a

place in hell. The book of life will then be given to him. He will read through each page, but person after person the answer will be painfully apparent. No, your name is not found here. Matthew 25:41 'Depart from me you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angels.' Jesus must say "I never knew you" And I'm glad that there are no believers around because I don't think it would be possible to stand having one of our unsaved friends or family turn to us look at us with tears and terror and say. "Why didn't you ever tell me about this moment? Why didn't you ever help me understand what would happen in the end? Have we told our friends the real rest of the story? Is your name written in the lambs book of life? John 5:24 says that "he who hears my word and believes on Him who sent has eternal life and will not come to judgment but has passed from death unto life.

Folks you may have felt God tugging at your heart this morning. He is saying to come home. In a moment I am going to give you an opportunity to respond to Him. I'm going to ask the deacons to come forward and anyone who wants to pray with a deacon, maybe wants to find out more about true life come and pray. Don't put it off there may not be another chance. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of salvation.

Several weeks ago we read in the newspapers about the tragedy of Alaska Flight 261 and a faulty jackscrew. An Alaska Airlines pilot involved in the investigation has listened to the cockpit voice recorder from the downed plane and he reported that for the last 9 minutes of the flight, the wife of a pastor from Monroe, WA can be heard sharing the Gospel with the passengers over the plane's intercom system. Just before the final dive into the Pacific Ocean, she can be heard leading the sinner's prayer for salvation. That same prayer that I will lead you through in just a moment.

The pilot also reported that the flight data recorder from the plane indicated there was no good explanation for how the plane was able to stay in the air for those final 9 minutes. But it did stay in the air until the pastor's wife had a chance to share the Gospel with a plane full of very attentive passengers...and quite possibly lead many to salvation in Christ. Amazingly 90 people had an extraordinary opportunity to get right with their Maker just prior to meeting him. Is this your

extraordinary opportunity? Is today the day you bury your pride and come to Christ. Come to Him today. Pray with me.