

I.N.I.

Third Sunday in Lent
March 3, 2013
Rev. 20:11-15

In Christ Jesus, the Judge of the living and the dead, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What is the most famous courtroom scene in the history of the world? In the 1920's there was the Scopes (monkey) trial between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow, pitting evolution against creation which in essence determined what should be taught in the public schools.

In the 1930's there was the famous Bruno Hauptmann trial. He was charged with the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh's baby.

In the 1990's there was the O.J. Simpson trial played out before the world on T.V. Soon there will be the Oscar Pistorius' trial. The world class Olympian, known as "the Blade Runner" who is accused of killing his girlfriend in South Africa will go on trial this summer. All of these trials made and is making headline news around the world.

But none of them comes close to the greatest courtroom scene. That took place almost 2,000 years ago. We read of it in our Savior's Passion History. Why is this courtroom scene the most famous? Because it affects the lives of every individual who has ever or will ever live.

In this courtroom scene of Jesus standing before the Sanhedrin we find Jesus' enemies sitting in judgment of Him. There was absolutely no justice to be found in this trial, for the Jewish leaders had no desire to seek for the truth concerning Jesus and thereby establish His guilt or innocence. Their only intention was to find something that they could use against Jesus, so as to condemn Him to death. The Sanhedrin brought in false witnesses to lie about Jesus. But their testimony did not agree.

When this did not work the High Priest took matters into his own hands and demanded that Jesus testify if He were the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus confessed the truth; He was the Son of God, the Messiah. The Sanhedrin charged Jesus with blasphemy and judged Him worthy of death.

Although Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing and was whom He said He was, Jesus patiently endured this sham of a trial. He permitted Himself to be put to death on the cross as a common criminal so that He might give life and salvation to a world which was dead in trespasses and sins and was doomed to suffer eternal damnation.

But there will be another trial that will be even greater than this one. It will be the greatest of all time. It will be witnessed by all people of all time. It will occur on the Last Day.

While Jesus allowed the Jews to sit in judgment on Him during their mockery of a trial, Jesus declared that one day the tables would be turned, and they would see Him coming in power and glory. On that last day of the world, He, Jesus, would be sitting in judgment over them and all people of the world.

This courtroom scene is pictured for us in our text. John's vision in Rev. 20:11-15 is in striking contrast to the one in the High Priest's palace. We read again verse 11: **THEN I SAW A GREAT WHITE THRONE AND HIM WHO SAT ON IT, FROM WHOSE FACE THE EARTH AND THE HEAVEN FLED AWAY. AND THERE WAS FOUND NO PLACE FOR THEM.** We know that this person sitting on the white throne is Jesus, for Scripture clearly tells us in Matt. 25:31: **WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE HOLY ANGELS WITH HIM, THEN HE WILL SIT ON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY.**

The fact that the earth and the heaven flee in His presence may indicate the destruction of the heaven and the earth on Judgment Day through fire, or it may symbolize the awesome majesty, power and glory of Jesus, greater than the world had ever seen.

We read in verses 12-13: **AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STANDING BEFORE GOD, AND BOOKS WERE OPENED. AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE. AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, BY THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS. THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHO WERE IN IT, AND DEATH AND HADES DELIVERED UP THE DEAD WHO WERE IN THEM. AND THEY WERE JUDGED, EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS.**

What an awesome sight! What an all encompassing, truly world-wide event. No one will miss it. John is here speaking only of the resurrected dead. We know that those who are alive on the Last Day will also be there to be judged. Notice, **ALL** the dead will be judged, both the **SMALL AND GREAT**. It is a universal judgment. No one is so great and powerful that he can escape the judgment, and no one is so insignificant that he will escape the notice of the Lord Jesus.

In Matt. 25 we again read **ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM...** In John 5 we are told **DO NOT MARVEL AT THIS; FOR THE HOUR IS COMING IN WHICH ALL WHO ARE IN THE GRAVES WILL HEAR HIS VOICE AND COME FORTH**. The Apostle Paul wrote in both Romans and I Cor. that **WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**.

How does the trial proceed? We are told **BOOKS WERE OPENED**. What are these books? These are the books in which are recorded all the deeds of all people. The books of the Law requiring of everyone perfection and holiness and recording all deeds ever done. We read again, **AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, BY THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS**.

But there is another book. This is a different kind of book in which is written only names. This Book of Life is found spoken of 7 times in Revelation.

So what does all of this mean? It is very important to note that there are two sets of books, one containing a record of all the deeds of each individual person and one in which are only names. The one book is an historical account of all the words and deeds of every individual. How frightening that could be! Could be? Yes, could be.

How frightening it will be to all who have not clothed themselves in Christ's robe of righteousness. Every evil word, every selfish, sinful action and every lustful, ungodly thought will be revealed and convict every unbeliever of breaking God's Law. There will be no defense! The evidence is overwhelming. Guilty as charged will be the verdict and the sentence will be **CURSED TO EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT CONTINUE IN ALL THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO DO THEM**.

To them the Lord Jesus will declare, **DEPART FROM ME, YOU CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS: FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME NO FOOD; I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME NO DRINK; I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU DID NOT TAKE ME IN; NAKED AND YOU DID NOT CLOTHE ME, SICK AND IN PRISON AND YOU DID NOT VISIT ME**. What a horrible decree of judgment!

But what about us, those who believe in Jesus? My book of thoughts, words and deeds is no better, probably even worse than theirs. "Lord, don't open it before me and show me all my sins."

The Good News is that

JESUS IS THE LIFE GIVER

I: JESUS' PERFECT LIFE OF OBEDIENCE IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jesus clearly told us in Matt. 5:17 that He had come not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. The law demands that a person must keep all of the commandments in perfect thought, word and deed in order to be saved. Jesus did not come to set aside this requirement and change it to **TRY YOUR BEST, or DO AS GOOD AS YOU CAN**.

No, He kept all of the commandments of His Father perfectly as our Substitute. By believing that, Christ's obedience becomes our own, so that we can say that in Him we have fulfilled the perfect requirements of the Law. Paul tells us in II Cor. 5:21 **FOR HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM**. In God's book of our life all of the Savior's righteousness is credited to our account.

That is why the Savior will say to all who believe in Him on Judgment Day: **COME, YOU BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD; FOR I WAS HUNGRY AND YOU GAVE ME FOOD; I WAS THIRSTY AND YOU GAVE ME DRINK; I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU TOOK ME IN; I WAS NAKED AND YOU CLOTHE ME; I WAS SICK AND YOU VISITED ME; I WAS IN PRISON AND YOU CAME TO ME**.

Christ's righteousness is our righteousness and therefore everything that we do in faith is well

pleasing to God because of Christ. Jesus said in John 15:5 **I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES, HE WHO ABIDES IN ME, AND I IN HIM, BEARS MUCH FRUIT; FOR WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.** In Hebrews we read, **BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD.** The presence of good works in the life of the believer gives evidence that he has true saving faith in Jesus in his heart.

But there is more.

JESUS IS THE LIFE GIVER.

II: JESUS' SHED BLOOD BLOTS OUT ALL SINS EVER RECORDED.

I John 1:7 reads, **THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.** In Isaiah our LORD tells us; **I, EVEN I, AM HE WHO BLOTS OUT YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS FOR MY OWN SAKE; AND I WILL NOT REMEMBER YOUR SINS.** David writes in Ps. 103 **HE HAS NOT DEALT WITH US ACCORDING TO OUR SINS, NOR PUNISHED US ACCORDING TO OUR INIQUITIES. FOR AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGH ABOVE THE EARTH, SO GREAT IS HIS MERCY TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM; AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US.** The prophet Micah declares; **WHO IS A GOD LIKE YOU, PARDONING INIQUITY AND PASSING OVER THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE REMNANT OF HIS HERITAGE? HE DOES NOT RETAIN HIS ANGER FOREVER, BECAUSE HE DELIGHTS IN MERCY. HE WILL AGAIN HAVE COMPASSION ON US, AND WILL SUBDUE OUR INIQUITIES. YOU WILL CAST ALL OUR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA.** And in Hebrews we read, **WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD THERE IS NO REMISSION.**

Even as Jesus' redemptive work (His perfect obedience and His shed blood), is a determinate factor in what is found in the many books of our lives on Judgment Day, the same is also true with the other book, the Book of Life. The Apostle Paul says that **GOD CHOSE US IN CHRIST BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.** Rev. 13:8 says the names of God's elect were written in the Book of Life even before the beginning of time in view of and on account of Jesus' work of salvation. That's our third point.

JESUS IS THE LIFE GIVER

III: GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST ALONE HAS RECORDED OUR NAMES IN THE BOOK OF LIFE.

God did not write your name or my name in His Book of Life because He saw something good in us. We aren't in the Book of Life because of our merit or worthiness, or because I am a pastor or because you are a member of Peace Thru Christ, or even because God looked into the future and saw that we would come to faith in Jesus, but only because of God's undeserved love in Christ. Jesus is the **LIFE GIVER.**

Jesus says that He gives life to this world and that He is the Beard of Life. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said, **I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME, THOUGH HE MAY DIE, HE SHALL LIVE. AND WHOEVER LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE.** And again in 14:6 **I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER EXCEPT THROUGH ME.**

The reason that our names are written in the Book of Life is pure grace---God's undeserved love in Christ. The reason that some names are not written in the Book of Life is not because God didn't love them, or predestined some to be damned, but solely because these have rejected that grace; rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior and their deeds of unbelief will be recorded and remembered before the great white throne on Judgment Day.

Thank the Lord Jesus that He allowed Himself to be judged guilty both by man (the Jews and Romans) and by God (the Father). He suffered death and damnation as payment for our sins so that on Judgment Day we will be judged innocent, having Christ's righteousness covering us and His shed blood blotting out our sins. We can look forward to the Judgment because—

Jesus our Savior is the LIFE GIVER!

Amen.