

# THE TERROR OF THE WICKED

by Ron Harvey

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;*

Revelation 20:11

## INTRODUCTION 1

Jesus is the most loving, compassionate and forgiving man that ever lived. If you were caught in a gross sin, you were far better off being thrown at the feet of Jesus, than being dragged into human courts. Human judges were likely to sentence you to death by stoning. But Jesus was more likely to say, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

Jesus had a very soft heart – so willing to forgive – so slow to condemn. He opened up his arms to the whole world of sinners and said, "Come unto me all ye who labor and who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Jesus was so tender hearted that he wept at funerals.

He was also tender-hearted toward sinners. One day he looked out from a hillside over Jerusalem and just wept like a little baby because he would have gathered them in like a hen gathers her chicks, but they would not come.

Jesus was a tender man full of tender acts of kindness. After his crucifixion and before he ascended to heaven he found his disciples off the shore fishing. They had had a hard night with no success. Jesus called out, "Cast your nets on the other side of the boat." When they did, the fish filled the nets and they knew it was Jesus. When they made it to the shore, do you know what Jesus was doing for them? Jesus was cooking them breakfast. These were the same disciples who had forsaken him in Gethsemane, denied him at his trial and still doubted him. And yet, tender-hearted Jesus never stopped loving them.

But the message today is about another side of Jesus. And, that is his fierce anger toward the wicked.

Some claim that Jesus is so tender-hearted and loving that he could not possibly send men to hell to suffer continually, day after day, with no rest. And, they say, surely he is too kind to punish men eternally, that is, time without end.

And I will agree with them that we cannot fathom the great extent of the love and mercy and compassion of Jesus. But you see, there is a time for the display of his grace and there is a time for the display of his wrath.

*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.  
A time love, and a time to hate.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1,8

And this day that we live in is the great season of the love and grace of Jesus. In these times that we live in, Jesus has his grace on display for all to see. Look around and see how his goodness is poured out on all. See how he provides for the little sparrow and consider how much more he cares for you and me. Look how long he suffers and forebears with us. In this age of grace, He opens his arms and welcomes sinners and says, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden."

In this season that we live in, his grace is like the waters of Niagara Falls that wash over us with such overwhelming power. And they wash away our sins. And we rightfully sing the song, Grace greater than our sin. In this day and age he is willing to forgive the grossest sins and the vilest of sinners and he is very tender-hearted toward us. This is his time to love and the Bible calls this time the last days.

You see, there were the former days, the days before Jesus came in the flesh. And then, there are what the Bible calls the last days, the days following the coming of Jesus in the flesh. In the Scriptures, there is the one great division of days. There are the former days and the last days. We sometimes call them the "Old Testament" (the former days) and the "New Testament" (the last days). This whole period of the New Testament is called the last days. It is the season for the pouring out of God's love and grace on the world -- and, how fortunate we are to live in these last days.

Salvation was minimal and grace was restrained in the former days because you see, "to every thing there is a season." And, in the former days it wasn't the season of God's grace. But, when Jesus came in the flesh it was the season of his grace and he was so tender toward sinners. Everywhere Jesus went he tenderly touched sinners and healed them and saved them. God has saved millions and millions of sinners during these last days. He saved 3000 on the day of Pentecost and his grace has never stopped flowing since that day. He has saved his elect from every nation. He has saved infants, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly. He has saved barbarians and the civilized. His grace has flowed to the wise and to the unwise. In the season of his grace, there seems to be no end to the love and grace of God.

Now there shall never be an end to this immutable attribute of God. He will always be loving and tender-hearted and gracious. But there will come an end to the time that is specifically set aside on this earth for its display. After God has fully displayed his grace in this age, and after the whole universe has witnessed this display, these last days will come to an end. Then, it will be the time for God to demonstrate his justice and yes, his wrath. You see, "to every thing there is a season . . . A time to love, and a time to hate."

Remember the days of Noah. God was longsuffering and kind for a season and he invited all who would to come into the Ark. But they wouldn't come in. And when the season of his longsuffering was up, he brought the flood and he locked and sealed the Ark and the season of his wrath was at hand.

We live in the season of his grace. But soon the open door of grace will be shut and sealed, and those who would not come in will be rained on with the flood of God's rage. There will be an open display of God's wrath and all creation will glorify God not only for the previous outpouring of his grace during the last days, but also for the outpouring of his wrath after the last days have come to an end.

And, should we expect anything less from God. What should we think of a God who would not ultimately punish the wicked? If there were no day of reckoning, what kind of God would that be? If wrongs were never righted, if the blood of the saints were never avenged, if the tongues of blasphemers were never stopped, what should we think of God? Why, he would not

be a just God at all. But everywhere in the Bible it attests to the truth that God is just and he does hold men accountable. And there will be an ultimate accountability for the ungodly. And all creation shall praise God when his justice is manifested, just as all creation praised him when it was the time of grace.

The message this evening is a solemn message and it is not pleasant to think about. Nevertheless it is a true message and one that must be told. And the title of the message is, **THE TERROR OF THE WICKED**. A great terror will fall on the wicked when the day of grace is over. The Bible says God's elect will be gathered up into the Ark, that is, into the loving and safe arms of Jesus, and the wicked will then, finally, be exposed to the unrestrained rage of God. And this evening I will try to describe the great judgment that shall befall them.

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away;*

Revelation 20:11

### **THE TERROR OF THE WICKED**

There will be a day of judgment when the wicked man will stand trial before Jesus.

And, I want you to see first,

#### **I. THE TERROR OF THE THRONE.**

**Example:** Now, I am an attorney and I see how nervous and anxious people are when it is their day in court -- even when they are in court to fight over a few hundred dollars. There is something about court that makes a man anxious. There is even something imposing about the building -- the statues, the steps that you must climb to go inside. When you enter the building, there are marble halls and tall ceilings that echo with each footstep. And, I've noticed that people feel very uneasy even in the outer halls.

And when they enter the courtroom, they see the Bench -- that place where the Judge sits. It is an imposing place, the Bench. It is raised above everything else in the room. All the seating in the courtroom faces the Bench. There is an aura that surrounds it. There is a reverent and nervous hush in the courtroom. People seem to understand that here the fate of men is decided. There is a natural nervousness, even a certain amount of fear, when one sees the Bench.

The Bench, where the wicked will be finally judged, will be much more terrifying. It is called the "Great White Throne." (Revelation 20:11)

*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; . . .*

Revelation 20:11

This judgment Bench is a terrifying place. It is called great because it is imposing beyond imagination. It is great in size – larger than life. It is apparently larger than heaven and earth, for heaven and earth flee from the throne. But it is also great in majesty. It is the throne of the great God and our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is so great that it strikes terror in all who approach it. It is the place, not where petty differences are judged as in human courts, but where the everlasting fate of all men is pronounced and from where it is executed.

But notice, this is not only a great throne, but also a white throne. God's final judgment of the wicked shall be pure and perfect without any hint of injustice, because it shall be administered by the Righteous One himself. He will make no mistakes because he has perfect knowledge of all things. He cannot be bribed because he needs nothing. His judgments shall be true. There shall not be one iota of injustice performed at this throne. This throne is white because the judgments of God are brilliant in their perfections. He knows every idle word ever uttered by every man. He knows every lie and every evil deed. He knows every lust of the heart and every evil thought. This white throne symbolizes the perfect righteousness and wisdom of the great Judge who is Jesus.

**Example: In the Bible, Paul, in one of his sermons, spoke of this judgment to come. And, one of the men who heard Paul that day was a Roman official named Felix. Now Paul was the greatest of preachers, with special revelation and insight and I'm sure he was able to describe the throne with great detail. And when he described it, the Bible says that Felix trembled. And well he should because the final judgment will be unthinkable in its horror.**

Now this great white throne is the famous place where Jesus is now enthroned and where all sinners must appear.

Cain shall appear there – the one who killed his brother Abel. And, Cain's heart will fail when he sees the throne.

Joseph's evil brothers, who in jealousy sold him into Egypt, will be there if they never repented of their sins.

The men of Sodom who circled Lot's house and demanded to have sex with Lot's visitors will be there.

Ahab -- that wicked King of Israel who murdered Naboth -- and his utterly wicked wife Jezebel, who led him into much evil, will be there.

Judas Iscariot must appear and give account of his evil deeds.

Those who spat upon Jesus will appear.

Those who drove the nails in his hands and feet will appear before the throne.

All those who have persecuted God's people shall appear. Those who stoned Phillip must come to this throne of judgment -- but not Paul, who was saved by the grace of God.

All the Jews who trusted their own righteousness and rejected the Righteous One must finally come to this terrible place.

All those who thumbed their noses at the good gospel of the Lord Jesus must come.

All the proud and the mighty of this world, they must come.

All those who would not confess their sins must come.

Those who would not repent must come.

Those who would not believe must come.

Now, this great white throne is the place where Satan himself must appear. Satan and all his henchmen will appear before this Throne. And Satan, the most fearless of all rebels, shall himself finally tremble and quake before the great throne of God.

They will not come willingly to this Throne, but will be dragged there against their will, for no wicked sinner would come voluntarily to this place of judgment. When they are brought here they will be paralyzed with terror. Multiply the fear of a human courtroom by ten million, no, by a hundred million, and you still cannot describe the terror of this Great Throne.

It will be such a one-of-a-kind day that Jesus simply calls it “that day.”

*Many will say unto Me in **that day**, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Matthew 7:22

The Bible also calls this day “the great and terrible day of the Lord.” (Joel 2)

In what sense will it be a great day? It will be a great day of triumph for the justice of God. Truth and justice will prevail at last. All the wrongs perpetrated by the wicked in this life shall be avenged. All the hidden sins shall be uncovered. All the wickedness performed in dark corners shall be exposed under the brilliant light of the knowledge and the righteousness and the wisdom of the Lord Jesus. And so this will be a very great day. This is the great day that the martyrs have wished for when they cried,

*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

Revelation 6:10

But I want you to notice that this day is called a great and a **terrible** day. And, for the wicked, this shall truly be a terrible day.

You see, at the last day, the heavens are going to open up and wicked men are going to look up and see this throne of God. Listen to the Scriptures and see the reaction of the wicked:

*And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?*

Revelation 6:14-17

You see, it will be a terrible day. It is the great day of his wrath. Paul calls it “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” (Romans 2)

It is the day that God has appointed to display his fierce wrath and his great power. He has been longsuffering to the wicked for ages on account of the elect, but when all the righteous have been brought into the fold, and the sheep have been separated from the goats, the longsuffering of God will come to a sudden end. And God's awesome rage against the wicked will be on display for all to see.

You see, God is not just interested in displaying his love. God is also very interested in displaying his justice and his righteous anger. The Bible says that God is angry with the wicked every day. (Psalm 7:11) And when he finally terrorizes the wicked, he will make them a public display.

The Bible says that God *endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction* in order to *shew his wrath, and to make his power known.*

Romans 9:22

Just as they made Jesus a public spectacle when they hung him in shame above the earth, God will make a public spectacle of all the wicked.

So, be afraid, be very, very afraid, all you wicked, for the Great White Throne of God has been installed in the heavens and it looms in the near future for you.

So, we have seen the terror of the Throne. Now we see:

## II. THE TERROR OF THE ONE SITTING ON THE THRONE

If the throne is terrifying, the One sitting on the throne is 10,000 times more terrifying. Be terrified all you wicked ones.

### **Be terrified first because of who He is.**

He is the Ancient of Days. He is the Almighty. He is called the Highest. He is the great I Am. He is the Creator of all things. He is the sustainer of all things. He is the King of all Kings.

The strongest of the strong in this world are weaklings before him. The wisest of the wise are but ignorant compared to him. The armies of the wicked are but grasshoppers to him on the battlefield. He flicks away his enemies like we might flick away a lady bug. He tramples the wicked under his feet. He sneers at them in derision. They gather in hordes against him and he laughs at them in the heavens. This is the One sitting on the throne. Be terrified all ye wicked because His power is immeasurable and irrefutable.

But let terror now be multiplied to the wicked.

### **Be terrified because this one sitting on the throne is offended.**

He is the one they rejected. He is the one that they spat upon, the one they beat with rods. They made fun of him. They made light of him. They stripped him and tore his flesh off his body and they thought to humiliate him. They put him to a shameful death, a death reserved for criminals. They mocked him even as he was dying by scripting on his cross, "King of the Jews."

But now, terror of terrors, this crucified Man sits as Judge on the great white throne. And his countenance is not pleasant toward the wicked. This Man, so wronged by the wicked, so offended by their rebellion and by their many sins against him – he has, not a look of anger, but a look of rage. His eyes are aflame with fire. If the throne itself is imposing, this offended warrior sitting on the throne is 10,000 times more so.

But now let terror reign in the hearts of the wicked even more.

**Be terrified because the one sitting on the throne is bound by his very righteousness and justice to administer the full penalty for sin.**

**Example: In December I finished the fall semester at the University where I teach a required course for Journalism students. And it never fails there are always a few students who don't make the grade. And, they email me. "Please, Professor Harvey, just give me a C so I don't have to take the course again." And I add up their scores again and find that they didn't earn a C. They earned a D or an F. But they want me to give them a C.**

At the great white throne there will be pleas for mercy. "Give me heaven, though I don't deserve it." But God, who at one time was rich in mercy, will then be obligated by his own justice. You see, God can only do right. He cannot do wrong. He can only do what his justice demands. And since the names of the wicked are not written in the book of life, since they are not hidden in Christ, not forgiven in Him, and since they are sinners, God's justice demands satisfaction.

And, no one will have a valid argument on that great and terrible day.

All the sins ever committed shall be exposed, both large and small. Not one shall be overlooked. Jesus said:

*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.*

Matthew 12:36, 37

Now we have seen the terror of the throne and the terror of the One sitting on the throne. That brings us to:

### III. THE TERROR OF THE PENALTY

First we saw the terror associated with the Great Throne itself. The throne itself will make men tremble. But, then the terror of the wicked is multiplied when they see the one sitting on the throne. But, now, when the sins of the wicked are exposed and the judgment is pronounced, it shall be time to show the wicked the penalty that shall be exacted -- the penalty that is described as eternal death.

And so, I suspect Jesus will instruct his angels to draw back the curtain and let the wicked see their eternal destiny. We don't know exactly what the punishment shall be, because it is both

a physical and a spiritual punishment. We can't comprehend that spiritual realm yet, but one day we will. Right now the wicked can't comprehend the exact nature of hell, but one day they will.

**Example: A condemned man's thoughts often turn to the terrors of the electric chair, but he will never understand fully until he is marshaled into the room and he sees firsthand the cold, instrument of death itself. He will never fully know the fear that will grip his heart until the time has come and he enters the room.**

And so, the wicked shall never fully know the terror of the Lord, until the angels draw back the curtains and the fullness of hell in its reality is revealed. And then they shall know in its fullness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when it is revealed. And then there shall be many pleas for mercy. But there shall be no mercy when the gates of hell are opened up and the sinners of all ages shall see the awesome terror of the Lord.

Shall I give you a glimpse this evening of what hell will look like when the curtain is drawn? I can only describe it as it is described in the Bible. I can only give you word pictures. I can only describe it in earthly terms, although the full force of hell shall be let loose in the next world. Our senses can only understand this world, so hell is described in terms that we can understand.

## **THE LAKE OF FIRE**

When the wicked stand finally judged and condemned, the Lord's soldiers will march them to the precipice of hell and the angels shall draw back the first curtain to reveal the terror that shall be imposed on the wicked. And they will see for the first time the great Lake of fire. (Rev.20:14)

When they were back on earth reveling in their sin, rejecting every invitation of mercy, they supposed that the Lake of fire was not a reality at all and they comforted themselves in that false supposition. But now they see that it was real after all. There is a reality in the next world that corresponds to the earthly misery of burning alive. And now they see firsthand. And they will cry, "Oh no!" They will feel the intense heat lapping at their feet and legs and they would do anything to avoid this pain.

**Example: There were awful videos of the burning buildings at the Trade Center after they were attacked on September 11. And it took a while for the drama to unfold. But, as people were trapped on the burning floors of the building, they climbed out on the windowsills to avoid the intense heat. They waited as long as they could, and hoped for some miracle rescue. But when the flames lapped at their bodies and began to burn them and there was no escape, they began to jump to their death and the bodies began to crash into the concrete below. You see, burning is about the most intense pain that can be imagined. And human beings will choose to jump from the 100<sup>th</sup> floor of a building rather than burn to death.**

And when the wicked see the Lake of fire, they would choose any other torment if they had a choice. But they will have no option. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire where there

shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now the Bible describes hell in other terms.

### **THE BOTTOMLESS PIT**

When the second curtain is drawn, there will appear a great pit. This pit is prepared for Satan, his devils and all the wicked. And the wicked, in utter terror, shall lean over and peer down into this pit.

**Example: Now Joseph was thrown into a pit by his evil brothers and they would have left him for dead. But this pit was only deep enough to keep Joseph from climbing out. By God's providence Joseph was rescued from the pit and sold to Egyptian nomads. On that great and terrible day, Joseph's brothers will be thrown into a pit (unless they were saved by the grace of God). And, there will be no chance of rescue for them.**

There is no floor to this eternal pit. The Bible calls it the bottomless pit. The wicked shall be thrown down into this pit and they will never find any foothold whatsoever. They will freefall forever -- which I think is a picture of total abandonment. There shall be no hope, for this is a bottomless pit. They never come out the other side. They fall deeper and deeper and there is no hope of rescue. There is no one to hear their eternal screams. Their utter loneliness echos for all eternity in this hell hole. And there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### **THE GARBAGE DUMP**

But wait sinner, there is yet more of hell for you to see. And the angels will pull back curtain number three and the stench of a garbage dump will cause them to turn their heads away in disgust. Just to be there for a few minutes would be unbearable, but this will be their permanent and eternal abode. And they will lie down every day with dead carcasses and maggots and worms that never die. Just as their sin was a stench in the nostrils of God, this awful place will stink and fill their nostrils forever. And there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

### **CONCLUSION**

I could tell you more about hell if time allowed, but I feel more inclined to remind you of the goodness of God rather than his severity. It is true that God hates the wicked and I hope this message has impressed on you the horrible severity of the punishment which will befall the wicked.

But it is not yet the season of his great anger. Jesus is still tender-hearted toward sinners. Tomorrow he will hate them with an everlasting hatred. But, today, thank God, mercy may still be found if you want it.

We've seen this evening the awfulness of hell. But, I remind you that Jesus has prepared a wonderful place for those who would come to him for forgiveness.

*In my father's house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also.*

John 14:2, 3

John the Baptist warned the Pharisees to flee from the wrath to come. And so I warn each and every one of you this evening to flee. Let me tell you a sad story.

**Example: Early one morning fire broke out in a house. The alarm was sounded by a policeman on duty. Soon, flames were leaping high into the air. Suddenly a young man appeared at an upper window in his pajamas. Firemen quickly placed a ladder against the burning building. But to their dismay he refused to come down, shouting back that he had to get dressed first. The firemen pleaded, "Come as you are! Come as you are!" but he hesitated and he wouldn't come. They tried to go up the stairs to save him, but were turned back by the flames. They tried to enter through a window, but the heat and smoke forced them away. Suddenly the stairs gave way and the roof fell in and it was too late. The man had waited too long and was burned to death in the ruins.**

Let me say that if you are still numbered among the wicked, there is a fire raging around you even as I am speaking to you this evening and it is about to consume you. It is the fire of God's wrath. His wrath is kindled against the wicked. And, you must flee immediately. You may ask, "To where do I flee?" And I say it is not to where you flee but **to whom** you flee. There is yet a tender-hearted Jesus waiting with arms outstretched and you must not tarry any longer. There is not time to wait and there is no other way of escape from your sins and from the wrath to come. You must fling yourself as a last resort into his strong and merciful arms.

If you wait, the season of God's mercy will come to an end and the wrath of God will come crashing down around you and it will be you weeping and gnashing teeth for all eternity.

May God impress upon you the great and yet terrible truth of this message and save you from the wrath to come.