

IN THE PRESENCE OF A HOLY GOD
Easter Sunday –April 5, 2015 –Revelation 20: 11-15
The Church of the Covenant

How can we as flawed, sinful, unholy and imperfect people ever hope to stand in the presence of a Holy, Holy, Holy thrice Holy and perfectly Holy God? One day we will all pass away and stand in God's presence, and be in the heavenly throne room before as our scripture says, the "*great white throne*" (Revelation 20: 11) and "*books will be opened*" as it says, the book of our life and the Book of Life, and we will be judged. So what will that day that we will all face one day, what will that day be like?

I sometimes reflect about a time when I was serving a church up in Michigan and had just been called to serve a church here in the Pittsburgh area. The moving van was coming on Friday and I was called for jury duty on Thursday; had to report in. If I chose not to show up they told me they would issue a bench warrant for my arrest. So there I am sitting in a large courtroom, hearing the very stern judge issue even sterner *voir dire* instructions, about how jury duty was our civic and patriotic duty, the whole of the jury system relied upon us sitting in that courtroom on that day, etc., etc., etc. But the packing boxes and the moving van coming was calling to me, so I went to the bailiff and very politely asked, if under the circumstances, I could exit. He got quite exercised at this request and said to get back into that courtroom and await the judge's return. About 15 minutes later the judge re-entered the courtroom in his robes and said, "Mr. BRO-berg, would you please approach the bench?" And then he began his diatribe by saying: "And what part of my jury instructions DIDN'T you understand?" The judge way up here on the high elevated bench; Stu way down here and getting smaller and smaller by the second. Then he proceeded to give me a tongue lashing, questioning my patriotism, intelligence and integrity and then asked, "Any questions?". And I knew in that moment if I even so much opened my mouth he would throw me into jail for contempt of court. So I said as meekly as I could, "No, your honor." Because I had no desire to call my new church on the phone and tell them I wouldn't be there for church on Sunday because I was in the slammer! But I think a lot of people's view of that day when we die and stand before the great white throne and give an account for our lives are probably a lot like what happened to me up in Michigan. But maybe its not that way...

Being trained as an attorney before I was called to be a pastor I thought I would unpack what happens before the Great White Throne of Judgment from BOTH an attorney's perspective and also a pastor's. And perhaps have a little bit of fun with it. The "*small and the great*" will all stand before the Great White Throne of Judgment and as it says, "*books were opened*". (v. 12) These books contain the testimony of our lives. There is also the "Book of Life" that is there and IF our name is written in the Book of Life then we get to go to heaven. I like to think of the devil as being the prosecutor, inasmuch as he is referred to in scripture as the "*accuser*" (Revelation 12: 10) and I like to think of Jesus as being my defense attorney because Jesus is referred to as the "Advocate", advocate being another name for attorney. "*We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*" (1 John 2: 1) It is comforting to me to think about Jesus advocating my case before the Great White Throne.

So the accuser puts me on the witness stand and begins hurling many, many questions at me. "I see from the book of your life, Stu, and may I call you, Stu?" Certainly. "I see from what is written there that you did a lot of bad stuff; is that true?" Yes, that's true. "Furthermore, I see that even with the good stuff that is written there that it is nevertheless still tinged with sin, and self-will and pride and hubris and seeking to be in control, is that true?" Yes, there is no such thing as a self-less, pure and holy act done by a human being. "So, Reverend BRO-berg, you would agree then that you, like everyone else, have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? I mean that's what the Bible says, doesn't it?" Yes, you are right again. "And it is true, isn't it, that to get into heaven you have to be just as holy as God is and just as perfect as your heavenly Father is? I mean, that's what the Bible says, doesn't it?" True again. "So just because you've done a few more good things than bad things, and admittedly even those good things were nevertheless still tinged with self-will and ego, you really don't deserve to get into heaven, do you Stu, or may I call you, The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, B.A., M.Div., D.Min., D.Lit., right?" Sounds like you have it right, Mr. accuser. Sounds like you know your Bible better than most. "So then shouldn't the HOLY, HOLY, HOLY God cast you

into the lake of fire, shouldn't you experience the second death, the death of your soul as well as your body? Don't you truly deserve that, Stu?" Yes, that is what I deserve; that is what I have earned by measure of my own will." The devil says, "He has admitted his sin and deserves death. The wages of sin is death. I rest my case."

And then Jesus gets up as my Advocate and says just one simple thing –"Your honor, I have paid already this man's debt. I have died already that he might live. And it is my holiness and my imputed righteousness which I freely give to him by which he is saved and goes to heaven and is able to stand in the presence of a Holy, Holy, Holy God. You honor, I rest my case."

The Bible says as saints we will stand in the presence of a Holy God in "*white robes washed in the Blood of the Lamb*". (*Revelation 7: 14*) Those robes will not be blotted with sin or stained with ego or self-will. They will be washed clean by the one sufficient holy and perfect sacrifice, the one pure act, done by our Savior, Jesus Christ, for us on our behalf. So when the Holy, Holy, Holy God looks down at us from the Great White Throne in that day, He doesn't see us, He doesn't see our sins of omission and our sins of commission, He doesn't see our failings and our failures, our fallen-ness and our flaws. No, God sees only the blood of His only begotten Son standing before Him. He's sees our white-washed robes, not our blackened sin. Our Advocate takes off His own white robe washed in His own blood and places it around us. It is imputed to us; it is not our robe; it is Jesus' white robe. God sees Jesus. And He writes our name in the BOOK OF LIFE and when He opens that book He sees that, because of Jesus, we receive, not what we deserve, we receive what Jesus deserves –to live with His heavenly Father forever.

Oh, and by the way, Jesus is the judge of the quick and the dead as the Apostles' Creed attests. He is the One who will judge us and say we are quickened by the power of the Holy Spirit within and so receive LIFE...or receive the second death, not only the death of our bodies but also the death of our souls. So let's recap this –Jesus is the Advocate as well as being the JUDGE. Jesus has already paid the price, He has already served the time in jail for us. His sentence sets us free from ours. He is Messiah and King. He is Judge and Jury and Advocate. He is perfect SACRIFICE and has paid every just penalty the law may require. Mr. Broberg, what part of my instructions DON'T you understand???

I attended a large meeting with several thousands of people and at the end of the meeting we were invited to come to Jesus and live and to enter into God's presence. And thousands of people got up and started moving to the front. The way the great hallway was illuminated the light was coming from the front and all the other lights in the auditorium were out. Where I was seated there was a long, unbroken, seemingly endless line of people streaming down out of the stands and up onto the floor and heading toward the light. I couldn't see who they were; the light was from the front and the rest of them was in darkness. I thought, "Its like they're entering into God's presence before the Great White Throne". And as they made their way into the light and closer to Jesus and into the presence of a Holy, Holy, Holy God, I thought to myself, "This is the way its going to be someday. A long line of people entering into the presence of a Holy God. The countless host, singing glory to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. I will be shocked in that day some of the people who WILL BE THERE. And I am sure I will be even more shocked in that day some of the people who WILL NOT BE THERE. Too many people try to enter into the presence of a Holy God on their own, seeking to justify themselves they miss what Jesus wants to do for them...they rely on themselves...instead of relying on Jesus...

Then I saw the great white throne and Him who sat upon it...And I saw the dead, both small and great, standing before God and books were opened. And another book was opened which is the Book of Life...Friend, make certain JESUS is written in the Book of Your Life TODAY. And Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*