

The Word Today

#982—Judgment

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Some people who are Christians never want to discuss the difficult topics, the parts of the Gospel and of the Bible that others might not like to hear, things about behaviors that are sins. The fact that there is going to be a last judgment and in fact today we are going to talk about the last judgment. This is part of the teachings of the scriptures and whether it is popular or not, it needs to be dealt with; it needs to be understood.

In fact, if you spend some time in the Gospels reading the words of Jesus you will find that he has a lot to say about judgment. It has been said that one third of everything that Jesus said was about money. Well, I will bet that ratio is pretty close when you talk about Jesus' discussion of the judgment and about warnings of being cut off and cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. There are many, many warnings, especially in the New Testament about judgment and the potential for damnation to hell, so we need to deal with it.

In Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 there was a vision that was seen by John the Apostle and it goes like this, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and the books were opened. Another book was opened which was the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up

the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire, the lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, then he was thrown into the lake of fire."

This is what is known in many Christian circles as the great white throne judgment. It is the final judgment. It is the event that is referenced in accounts such as Jesus' discussion of the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 24 and 25 where he talks about the end. It is not comfortable to be told that your deeds are going to be recounted and two times here it says that everyone is going to be judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. It is obvious that the books are God's record, in other words, he knows precisely what you have done and there is no escaping it. Ultimately you will be held accountable whether you like it or not. Jesus gives the same impression in these stories that he tells about a king who goes away for an extended period of time and then when he returns the servants are held accountable for what they have done in the interim.

I use an analogy in order to show why God judges people. There is often times individuals with little faith, or they are agnostics, they are skeptics, many of these people fancy themselves to be terrifically generous and kind and there is a classic statement that is made out of disbelief. It goes something like this, "I think God will save everybody". Or a variant of it is, "I can't believe in a God who would put people in hell." You have heard individuals talk like this. Frankly it is a lot of arrogance and pride coming out and it also shows that they have very little understanding of the scriptures at all.

I am going to give you an analogy to explain why it is perfectly legitimate for God to judge humans. I call it the perverted babysitter analogy. Imagine for a moment that you and your wife are wanting your children to be watched for the evening. You are going to go out and for whatever reason need to leave your children in your home. Now, you could ask somebody in the apartment complex, or you could ask somebody who is a stranger in your village or someone in your town to come and watch your children. You don't know anything about this person, but even worse than just inviting a stranger; imagine that there is someone that is advertising themselves as a pervert, as someone who is a molester, as a person who is very confident of their evil and someone who practices this. And they now have taken out an ad that says they want to be a babysitter. Now, it would be absurd for you who want your children protected, to be kept safe and secure in your home, it would be sensible wouldn't it that you would never dream of letting a person like that come into your home. I mean would you willingly invite a person who is confident in practicing evil to come near your kids? No way!

In the same sense, why should God allow adamant, atheistic people who are steeped in their hatred of him, why should he invite them into his home? He won't. God is not going to tolerate sin. He is not going to put up with evil and corruption. This is the thing that I think most people forget is that God is not just kind and compassionate, but he is also powerful and just and he will judge sin. Hence, analogies like the great white throne judgment.

We have to talk about two books for a moment. The books, the accounts of our deeds, notice that those are used to judge the people. But, there is a second book

that is mentioned and this is critical; this book is called the Book of Life. What is that book and how do you get your name in that book? How do you get confidence that you are going to make it through the analysis of God's judgment and be forgiven and redeemed?

Well, in Revelation chapter 21, the very next chapter, there is a reference to the glory and beauty of heaven. It is seen as the New Jerusalem. It is an image of this new home of righteousness. As it discusses in verse 27 of Revelation 21, it says, "Nothing impure will ever enter it (that is the New Jerusalem), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." It is referring to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

How do you get your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? It is very clear; it is very simple. You put your faith and your hope in Him. You turn the reigns of your life, the control of your life over to the Son of God. You repent of your sin and you begin to live for Christ's glory and not your own. That is what it takes. It calls for surrender and calling Jesus your Lord. When you have done that, your name will be put in heaven's appointment book.

There is something else that is interesting too, and that is that our sin is completely forgiven and that now our deeds reflect the glory of God. We are now sober, not drunkards. We are now morally chaste and decent and not evil and corrupt. You see in heaven, only the righteous will dwell there and heaven is going to be very exclusive. This is something that people don't understand, is that God is going to ultimately have his holiness and his justice prevails. In the meantime as you

wait for heaven, the goal then is to produce fruit in keeping with righteousness as the New Testament says. In the Book of Galatians in chapter 5 it urges us to have the fruit of the spirit verses the evil deeds of the flesh.

You know, in one sense we should invite the judgment of God, we should long for it, we should ask God prayerfully to send it, the sooner the better. That sounds kind of strange in one sense, sort of like a person who is working a job, why would we invite the review, why would we want to have an assessment done. Well, it is because we are confident, not in our selves, but in the mercy and the forgiveness of Jesus. We have our sins covered; we are forgiven. We are not going to be condemned by the mistakes we have made in the past. This is why the invitation to come to Jesus Christ is so precious. If you have messed up, if you have blown it in life, there is still an opportunity, there is a chance to repent and this is always, stressed, always emphasized in the Gospel of Jesus.

It is time to conduct a sober analysis of your life, to ask yourself honestly, have I been missing the boat? Have I not received the Lord Jesus? If so, it is time to repent. Repent means to make an about face, to turn the other direction, to do the opposite. God does not want to cast you into damnation. God does not want to see his people suffering, but he wants you to receive the Lord Jesus.

Well, know for sure, you are going to stand before God's judgment and your deeds will be recounted. Perhaps it is time to repent of what you have done wrong and to plead for God for mercy in Jesus name. The time to do that is not later, the time to it is now, while you still can.

