

“Eternal Judgement”
2 Thessalonians 1:6 – 10; Revelation 20:11 - 15

We’ve been tracking our way through Hebrews 6 which talks about the elementary or primary teachings of being a follower of Jesus.

We’ve looked at faith – faith; faith in God is absolutely precious, more precious than gold.

We’ve talked about baptisms.

We talked about the laying on of hands which has to do with affirmation and commissioning, with impartation and with healing.

We explored the question, as a Christian what happens after you die? And I said, that where I am up to is there is an immaterial part of you that contains your character and personality that survives death and goes to be with Jesus in Paradise.

It will be a place and a state of rest and refreshment, being held in the love of Christ is in the presence of God.

It will be amazing however paradise is not your final destination nor is it your final state.

It is intermediate life.

Ultimate life is to come.

So we also talked about the resurrection of the dead.

We will share in Jesus’ resurrected life.

At Jesus’ return believers – whether alive or dead – will receive new bodies.

These new bodies will inhabit a renewed earth, an earth will be cleansed and it will be purged and it will be washed and it will be made new.

And best of all the God will dwell with his people.

And alongside that something else will take place.

You know, the good news - the gospel - is about Jesus the King who died and rose again for rebels.

King Jesus who took on himself the sin of the world so that we could be forgiven and brought home.

He will return, and on his return, as we've heard, Jesus will gather to him those that are his.

And at his return there will also be a judgement.

When people hear that phrase their minds can go to all sorts of places. You know, they inch forward in their seats and become a bit on edge.

So as explore this area this morning, I do want to say I didn't write this. Don't stone the messenger.

It's my observation is that although is an elementary teaching, you don't hear much talk of eternal or final judgement today.

I mean it's found in our readings this morning but also all throughout the New Testament.

The Apostle's included in their preaching in Acts.

We read that the Apostles gave warnings about "the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord"¹, and pleaded with their hearers to "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."²

In Acts 17 chapter 30 - 31 we read:

"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

For he has set a day when *he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed*. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

The Apostle's Creed, the earliest statement of belief the Church has, states Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

So there will be a judgement.

"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."

Jesus will judge the world.³

¹ Acts 2:19 - 21.

² Acts 2:40.

³ See for example 2 Timothy 4:1:" In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, *who will judge the living and the dead*, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge."

This is a time when God will right the wrongs and it will be a time of justice. There will be a final accountability.

It will encompass the whole of creation.

That means there will be certain fallen angelic beings who have influenced the world towards evil and they will be judged.

Then when it comes to human beings the Bible uses a metaphor – Revelation talks of books being opened.

Every person who had ever lived will be held to account for the lives they have lived.

People will be judged, we're told, according to what is recorded in these books.

Then there is another book, the book of life:

“All whose names were not found written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire.”

So there will be two groups of people.

There will be those who will be welcomed into God's kingdom, who will dwell with God forever and inhabit the new heaven and new earth.

Their names will be recorded in the Lamb's book of life (the Lamb being Jesus).

So it begs the question:

“How do you know if your name is written in the Book of Life?”

To have your name written in the book of life has nothing to do with who you are and what you have achieved, how moral you have been *but it's to do with who Jesus is and what he had accomplished.*

All of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, who call him Lord and trust in his atoning death of the cross for their sins will have their names written in the Book of Life.

Anyone who has put their faith in Christ have already been justified and declared righteous.

In John 5 verse 24 we hear these words from Jesus:

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.”

Then there will be another group.

There will be those whose books show they consciously and defiantly wanted to have nothing to do with God and the things of God.

Those who have spurned His love; who deep, deep down, have rejected every advance and welcoming initiative and God will judge them.

Those who have said in their heart of hearts, I want nothing to do with you.

Those as 1 Thessalonians says, do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

God will say something like this: "While you were living you wanted nothing to do with me.

Before your death you wanted to have nothing to do with me.

Now, after your death, I will not force my presence on you.

I will honour your decision even though it saddens me.

You will go to the place of the dead and be there forever."

And of course there are people who say, **"I can't believe in a God of love who judges anyone!"**

How would you respond to that?

Tell the person next to you.

Some people have this view that God is just so laid back.

God is always even keeled, reasonable and never gets upset with people.

He's so tender, meek and mild.

I think that many, many people – including Christians – hold to a view of God being a God who is always cool, calm and collected.

Even some Christians picture a God who serenely stands there as we go headlong towards our own destruction.

He's so placid. He's easy going and mild-mannered and good-natured.

And some people say, "I can't imagine a God who would condemn anybody."

And I have to ask, "What God are you worshipping???"

God by His nature is perfect in His holiness.

God is just.

In Him there is light and no darkness at all.

He is artist whose work is displayed throughout creation.

He is and architect whose design is found all throughout the cosmos.

And He is also an ethicist.
There is right and wrong, good and evil, true and false.

A God of love cannot stand idly by in the face of the chaos and cruelty inflicted on others.

Think how we feel when we see someone we love ravaged by unwise actions or relationships.

Do we respond with benign tolerance as we might toward strangers?

Far from it. ... Anger isn't the opposite of love.

Hate and indifference is.

So His judgement is an aspect of His love.

It's love that changes its form but it is an aspect of His love.

We have to remember too there are some people who would rather have their freedom, as they define it, than salvation.

There is a sense that the God of love sends no one to hell.

Hell is a self-directed place.

People choose their own destiny.

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Now at this point people will ask, what does it look like?

What will the outcome be?

Well, we are not given as much information as we might think.

I mean, many of our ideas about eternal judgement come from the Middle Ages where people were not in touch with Scripture.

So you end up with these lurid images of a torture chamber in the basement of heaven, or it being a realm that Satan rules over.

And there are varying views among faithful, Bible believing Christians.

Revelation talks about a lake of fire.

Thessalonians talks of being punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord.

It is spoken of as darkness.

Whatever it finally looks like there are some people who won't get to experience the beauty of who God is and his power at work in the renewed world.

It will be awful.



Alongside this we also read the words from Romans there will be another judgement that will take place:

“We will all stand before God’s judgement seat...” and “we will all give an account of ourselves to God.”

Paul is speaking to Christians.
Christians too will undergo a judgement.

Now at this point you could thinking, “But hang on, aren’t believers those whose names are written in the Book of Life?
I mean, as we just heard, Jesus said, those who believe will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life?”

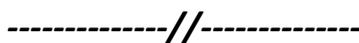
Here’s the thing: it will not be a judgement in terms of our eternal destiny – that has already been secured by Jesus.

Instead, this final judgment will be a time of Jesus conferring rewards. Jesus will look at all we have done over entire lives with him and bestow rewards accordingly.
We’re told for example there is victors crown for those who suffered and died for their faith⁴ - whether that’s figurative or not I’m not sure but they will be rewarded.

Although we don’t know exactly what it looks like it would seem that some will receive greater rewards than others.

We may ask, well will we feel discontent and dissatisfaction that some be given more than others?
Will there be disappointment and pangs of regret?
If that is the case, it will only be for a moment.
Why? Because the old order of things has passed away.
In the presence of God all of us will be entirely, perfectly content after the judgment.
In eternity there is be no envy or jealousy, no hurt feelings.
No disappointment or regret.
Not only that but God is good and just and whatever reward other we receive is perfect and what is deserved.

⁴ Revelation 2:10



So to finish, what are my takeaways?

For one, on the one hand, let's get all neurotic about hell, but not on the other hand, to put hell on the backburner as though it doesn't really matter.

When it's appropriate to talk about, if the question gets asked, we should talk and calmly that there are temporal and eternal consequences for our lives.

My other point is that it doesn't have to be that way.

We need to be conscious of God's heart toward people.

1 Peter tells us, God is patient... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

You know in Acts where the Apostles proclaim Jesus is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead, how does that passage end?

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."⁵

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

That is God's heart, his ideal.

He has made a way through His Son Jesus and this open to all.

There is always an invitation.

That invitation is extended to you this morning.

⁵ Acts 10:43