



## SERMON NOTES

“He Will Come to Judge the Living and the Dead”

John 5:21-29

This summer we're look at different sections of the Apostles Creed - named that not because the Apostles wrote it, but because it accurately represents their teachings. It's a statement of beliefs that Christians for 2000 years have professed

We're looking at the section “He Will come to judge the living and the dead.”

John 5:24, As I read, ask self, “What is eternal life?”... 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Alright y'all. Judgment time. Now, this is known as the “parousia” or the “second coming” It's also called the “Day of Judgment” or the “day of the Lord” and it doesn't always bring up pleasant feelings. As we talk about Judgment we often bring cultural assumptions and expectations to it.

In fact, the Israelites had certain assumptions about the Day of Judgment. In the Old Testament in the Book of Exodus, God rescues his people from slavery in Egypt, bringing judgment on the Egyptians with the 10 plagues. And the leaders of Egypt were eventually drowned in the Red Sea. This was known in Israel as “the DAY”. Judgment of God's enemies brought salvation for God's people.

As the OT unfolds, you have the prophets discussing this Day of Judgement/Day of the Lord. It's in Joel, Malachi, Isaiah, Amos our OT reading. You see Israel expected that when the Lord/Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ shows up, their expectations for the Day of the Lord or day of Judgment would be that God would destroy their enemies (aka Rome) and establish the Israelite Kingdom as rules amidst the nations.

But remember what Amos says, “Woe to you who want the D of the L! It is darkness and not light.” Why? Because they weren't living godly lives. They were exploiting the poor, engaging in idolatry and sexual immorality, greed. Day of the L they thought would bring salvation and triumph was actually a thing to be feared bc judgment was coming for them.

This is the world Jesus comes into. Here's the deal that as you wrestle with God's judgment you have to wrestle with the person of Jesus. In John 3:19 he says "This is the judgement, the light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead." And in John 5, our NT reading, makes it very clear the Father has made Jesus the judge of the world. 2 Cor 5:10 says "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" or Acts 17:31 Paul tells the Athenians that "God has fixed a DAY when he will judge the world in righteousness by a man he has appointed (JESUS!)." And then of course, in Revelation 19:11 Jesus is riding on a war horse going into battle it says "in righteousness he judges and makes war"...

So here's the point, if you have faith in Jesus, you have to reckon that he speaks almost more than any OT prophet about Judgment because he is the Judge of the world.

And we hear that and it's easy for us especially in America to Avoid this reality.

[JI Packer] wrote in Knowing God, "Do you believe in divine judgment? By which I mean, do you believe in a God who acts as our Judge? Many, it seems, do not. Speak to them of God as a Father, a friend, a helper, one who loves us despite all our weakness and folly and sin, and their faces light up; you are on their wavelength at once. But speak to them of God as Judge and they frown and shake their heads. Their minds recoil from such an idea. They find it repellent and unworthy. But there are few things stressed more strongly in the Bible than the reality of God's work as Judge." (P 138)

We like tolerance. We think judgment is gory bloodthirsty old testament style. Jesus is in the NT and he's a god of love. We're like Marcion, the early church gnostic who got the idea started that the OT God was a god of wrath and the NT god is a god of love. What do you do with John 5? Revelation 19? Or Revelation 20? We can't avoid this. Christians have proclaimed this for 2000 years. Why?

And so then some of hear Judgment and we're Afraid. We imagine him as an impassionate, stern task master with no joy. But if God is love which 1 John 4:8 says... then should we be afraid of divine love? Certainly as Proverbs says, Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But that kind of fear means reverence, awe respect. Much different than shaking in your boots terrified of the God who gave himself up for you in love.

Many of us here want to avoid talking about judgment or are afraid to talk about judgment, many Christians around the world LONG for judgment.

Psalms says "how long" 15x.

[Duke Simon Zimbabwe] A friend of mine at Duke knew a professor who was a Christian and had started a non profit for underprivileged children in Zimbabwe. They took care of their physical needs with food, shelter, water and clothes and also their intellectual and spiritual needs with education and he said his professor asked the children, now in high school their fav parts of Scripture and they all said the imprecatory Psalms. These are psalms which talk about God's judgment against evil and the wicked. And the professor asked them why, why do these children/youth love judgment psalms.

You have to understand, these children who were abused, mistreated, and taken advantage of, they said, "These Judgment Psalms tell us that God cares."

You see righteous, holy, Judgment, a Judgment that holds the world accountable for his evil and abuse gives the world hope and meaning because there is a God who sees and cares and will do something about it.

Judgment is God's way of remaking this world in love without sin, death, suffering and evil. And this is why Christians have proclaimed it for 2000 years.

A couple things we can say about Judgment from Scripture.

[MP 1] Judgment Exposes NOT Imposes

Judgment reveals, exposes - its not imposing something. It's revealing or exposing a self-chosen path/behavior/reality. We're used to this concept in life.

[Illustration] Show up for a test know this math concepts, you will pass. And if you haven't studied you won't. (Good teacher, no trick questions). Tells you everything beforehand. Let's say instead of studying you go to a Vols game, you watch shows or sleep. When you show up for the test and fail, are you mad at the test? Is it the problem? No, it simply exposes/reveals the truth of what you did in secret.

[Illustration] When I showed up to run a long race and I DNF, did not finish, because my body broke down and I couldn't make it. Am I mad at the race? No, the race revealed/exposed I hadn't trained enough.

This is what happens on the Day of Judgment. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says "God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

Or how about NT, with Jesus himself? Matthew 12:36, he says "On the day of Judgment, people will give account for every careless word they speak, and with your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Or Luke 12:2-3 Jesus says, Nothing covered up will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops." YIKES.

Judgment, is exposing. Revealing, it's not making things up or being harsh or imposing anything, it's simply revealing, separating what has been hidden, and making it known.

[Books of Rev 20] And this is what is happening in Revelation 20:11-15.. READ...12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

Books are opened, one is a book of Life and one is a book of our deeds, a book of accounting. As verse 13 says, We'll be judged by what we've done.

Now one thing we believe is that our salvation is completely by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and what HE has done for us. So what's going on here? One theologian makes it simple where he says that "Our deeds will always fall short but they reveal the index of your heart." Meaning, your deeds will not save you but if you trust in Jesus, then your belief in Jesus WILL change your behavior and how you live.

[Illustration] I can tell my wife I love her (which I do) and she's beautiful (which she is) but hypothetically what if I never take the trash out or do the dishes or fix the leaking pipe like I said I would? What does she look to to decide how much I love her? Took me many years to realize that my words don't matter if I have no deeds attached to them. This is all hypothetical of course... ahem... :)

You see Deeds reveal that we really believe. Your deeds or behavior is the most reliable indication of where your faith lies.

Your name is in the Book of Life because of what Jesus has done. We are not judged based on much we've done but, the Question is, is there any indication that our deeds are the fruit of a life changed by faith in Christ?

Here's the crux of Judgement exposing not imposing... it means that Judgment is happening now. Like today. Stay with me.

[RH] In Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve eat the fruit of which they were commanded not to eat, God said they would die. BUT they physically lived for like 900 more years. How? Because the Bible has this category of spiritual death not just physical.

We feel this. We know this. We've all had relationships that have died. Or experiences that we feel like "A part of me died that day"... Sin - trying to live life without God - leads to spiritual death. So the Bible claims, right now, among the physically living, there are those who are spiritually alive - in Christ - and those who are spiritually dead - in their sins. Ephesians 2 says "We were dead in our sins, in the way in which we used to walk... But God in his great mercy made us alive in Christ."

So the Bible says there's this way of becoming spiritually alive. How?

In John 17:3 Jesus saying a prayer and he literally says, "And this is eternal life... that they know you the only true God and Jesus Christ" WOW. Eternal life is knowing God through Jesus... which means if you trust in Jesus NOW, you have eternal life NOW

John 5! v. 21 For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (Raises those physically alive but spiritually dead to be have life in Christ!) 22 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ... 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me HAS eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Y'alL!!! If you trust in Jesus you have eternal life NOW! And when you serve and forgive and love and exercise self control as Jesus commands... you are participating IN ETERNAL LIFE. Your deeds are revealing the life of Christ that you have NOW. You don't need to be afraid of judgment, it's already happened - your name is written in the Book of Life NOW.

But the converse is true. For those who do not trust in Jesus. They are participating in death. Their deeds reveal that.

[HELL] This concept of judgment exposing/revealing what's already there - has really helped me wrestle with the idea of Hell. When the Bible discusses hell, it uses metaphorical language like fire and darkness to describe actual realities. In Rev 20 it talks about lake of fire. Fire disintegrates what it touches. And darkness is isolating and lonely. And hell is a place where without God, without his Life and participating in his Son, then we can't help but disintegrate and be lonely and isolated. Life apart from God becomes Hell.

But we can see now that hell is self-chosen, based on our own deeds. God's not refusing people or turning people away. He's not locking them down there and laughing like a tyrant. 2 Peter 3:9 says God is not slow to fulfill his promise, but he is patient, not wishing any to perish but all to repent!

No, you see, the day of Judgment reveals those who have chosen their own hell rather than God's heaven.

[Tim Keller quote] "Hell is simply one's freely chosen identity apart from God on a trajectory into infinity... In eternity, this choice becomes a disintegration that goes on forever. There is increasing isolation, denial, delusion, and self-absorption. When you lose all humility you are out of touch with reality. No one ever asks to leave hell. The very idea of heaven seems to them a sham" (p 81).

[CS Lewis - Great Divorce] Or how about CS Lewis in his book The Great Divorce.

"Hell begins with a grumbling mood, always complaining, always blaming others... but you are still distinct from it. You may even criticize it in yourself and wish you could stop it. But there may come a day when you can no longer. Then there will be no you left to criticize the mood or even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself, going on forever like a machine. It is not a question of God 'sending us' to hell. In each of us there is something growing, which will BE Hell unless it is nipped in the bud."

[Summary] You see, the Day of Judgment is simply exposing the reality of how we are living NOW. We are either trusting in Jesus and his grace and participating in his life OR we are dead in our sins and participating in death, and without Christ, will one day become Hell. And this list he point where we really don't like this. I hate this. And so I think It's also important to say that Judgment comes from love not indifference.