

Away Day 2022 Talk 2: What will we be judged on when Christ returns?

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[0 : 00] So the reading is Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46 and that's on page 1002 in the Bible I've got.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

And he will place the sheep on his right but the goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, come you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me.

I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him saying, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink?

[1 : 14] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the king will answer them, truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

Then he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry and you gave me no food. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me.

Sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison?

I did not minister to you. Then he will answer them, saying, truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.

[2 : 20] And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. Thanks so much for having me today.

I've actually been a shoot off very quickly after this session. So I'm really sorry I couldn't stop and speak to more people. It's been so nice to see so many people I recognise. Lots of new people.

Do you know what, it's a sign of a healthy church when, you know, you still, guys, you still meet in your school, right? And there you are, you've got people that have been going along for 10, 15 years.

It's still going and lots of new people joining, lots of little ones. It's a sign of a really healthy church. I would love our church to be like yours as it goes on. So I'm very encouraged. Can I make one quick advert before I start?

And it's this, is that I'm part of a group of churches, just a small group of churches in North Croydon. And we're putting on a big evangelistic event next Friday. So Friday the 23rd of September.

[3 : 21] Gavin Peacock used to be a footballer who played for Chelsea and he did Match of the Day as well. He was very, very eloquent. And he is a Christian and he gave up Match of the Day to become a pastor.

He went to Canada actually because he wanted to go somewhere where he wasn't known and famous. Somewhere he could be anonymous. And he's coming over to do an evangelistic talk at Crystal Palace, South Park, the stadium, Friday evening next week.

And so it's an evangelistic thing. It's called A Game of Two Halves. So, you know, classic. So the first half will be football and the things I've done when I was a footballer and on Match of the Day.

And then the second half is why did that bloke then become a pastor and say the gospel. So it'll be a really good evangelistic event and it's on Friday evening on the 23rd. So I think if you know someone who likes football, it doesn't have to be a man.

It can be a woman as well. It's both. It's an easy invite. And I think there'll be a few ex-pros there and possibly one or two current pros. So I think that'll be quite cool.

[4 : 26] And I don't think it won't be the whole stadium. You know, it's like it'll be a couple hundred people, that sort of thing, with a Q&A; afterwards. So that's Friday next week.

So a brilliant, brilliant, easy invite for people who like footy. Why don't we pray as we begin? Let's pray. Our dear Father, thank you that you're always with us and that you love us and that you love to do good to us.

And that you love to speak to us and do good to us as you speak. So please would you speak to us. I pray that your Bible, your word would be really clear and helpful and cutting.

I pray you'd encourage the people that need to be encouraged and challenge the people that need to be challenged. And I pray all of us would hear your word and be changed for good because you are good.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So I've got one recurring dream. I can't ever remember dreams. But I have one recurring dream as an adult.

[5 : 28] And maybe, I know other people have had it. Maybe you've had this one. And it goes like this. I'm in an exam hall. And you know the sort of thing, school hall, where you meet, basically. Imagine it. And then you've got one of those desks and you're sitting there.

And whoever it is at the front says, okay, you may turn over your paper. And you turn over the paper. And you look at the paper and think, I haven't revised any of this.

Has anyone else had that dream? Right, okay. I think it's a, I don't know why, it's a random sound dream. And it's that dreadful sinking feeling of, oh, I'm going to totally fail.

I can't, I don't know any of this. And then I genuinely, the moment you wake up after that dream, is genuinely this feeling of, oh, yes. It's not real.

It's a real feeling. I have a genuine feeling of joy. Now, I want to talk to you today about an exam that we've all got coming up. Everyone has one big exam.

[6 : 32] And do you know what? It's the most important exam of your life. In fact, it's the exam of your life. Because coming up one day, every man, woman and child will have to stand before Judge Jesus and give an account for what they did in their life.

Now, in my dream, the whole point, the terror of the dream is, I've turned up to the exam, I didn't know what was on the paper. I've got it wrong. And there will be people who turn up for the exam of your life, and they didn't know what was on the paper.

And the thing about this paper, and we'll all have it, there's only one question on it. It's a gift, really. And if you knew what that one question for, I mean, imagine you're doing an exam and you knew there was only one question.

You would, you would cinch it because you could just go away and just really, really revise that one question. And you'd come with the model answer. So here's my question for you.

I mean, just the initial question is, for the exam of your life, do you know what the question is? Because Jesus is going to tell us today.

[7 : 52] So this is really important. And I'll tell you what, he's, in many of the parables, he's, you've got to work it out. It's not clear what does this mean. There's none of that in this one.

It's really clear. It couldn't be more crystal, this parable. Of course, the context we've been looking at is all of these are about the return of Jesus. Like I said earlier, you can fall off either side of the horse.

You can expect him to come back miles and miles off and therefore do nothing or expect him to come too soon and not be ready. We want to be people who are ready for Jesus' return every day of all of our lives.

However long our lives are. We want to be always ready. And being ready, we saw in the last parable, meant making a profit. So that when your Lord comes back, whom you serve, you can say, see Lord, I made a profit.

And the obvious question is, but what does that mean? And that's what this parable nails really, really clearly. And it gives us the one question.

[8 : 56] Let me read from verse 30. Let me start from verse 31. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

That's not like King Charles at his coronation. This is Judge Jesus sitting on his judgment throne with all the angels in glory and power. This isn't gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

This is Judge Jesus. This is the Jesus we talked about earlier that you have great respect for. And in his judgment, he says, verse 32, he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

You know, sheep and goats, they kind of look the same, but fundamentally they're not the same. And they'll all be gathered together, just like imagine all of us, we're all gathered together. And it will be...

Divide. One group. One group. Well, how did that happen? Why am I on this side? Why am I on this side and not on that side?

[10 : 05] And Jesus gives the reason. He will place the sheep on the right, but the goats on the right. Verse 33. Then the king will say to those on his right. And here's the reward.

Come, you who are blessed by my father. Come, you who are blessed by my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Now, the emphasis we're going to hear in this parable is on this idea that we will be judged on what we did.

But notice how we got in. Notice how we got in. How did the sheep get in? Why are they there? Because they are inheriting something that was separated or set aside for their inheritance from the foundation of the world.

So notice we're not. They're not saved by what they did. They're judged on what they did. But they're saved because before the foundation of the world, at the very beginning of time, before we've done anything, God says they will inherit.

So this is always born by grace. People are in heaven by grace and not by works. We'll talk about works today. But the reason sheep are in heaven is because of grace.

[11 : 19] And notice he says they're inheritance. The thing about inheritance that stands out is an inheritance isn't something you earn. You gain inheritance purely by virtue of your mum or dad being related to you.

That's how you inherit something. The person who lives next door can live the perfect life, but they don't inherit. You inherit and you could have lived a shocking life, but you inherit because dad is dad and mum is mum.

That's why you inherit things. God, because of Jesus Christ, has adopted us into his family. And he decided that from the beginning of time, from the foundation of the world, that we might inherit.

So what we are given, the reason we're there, is because of grace and grace alone. And hallelujah, praise the Lord, isn't he kind. And yet, there are some who are on the left and some who are on the right.

And it will be on account of what they've done, what we've done. Because those who are true sons and daughters of God, who truly inherit, it will cash out in life.

[12 : 24] They're not there because of, they haven't earned their way, but their life will show that they are sons and daughters of the living God. And their life will show that they're not sons and daughters of the living God, even if they turn up at church and they read their Bibles and they do Bible studies and they learn lots of facts about Jesus.

The key about what we've done is that it's evidence of the grace that God has given us since the foundation of the world. So what we've done really matters.

Why? What's the reason? Why are some on the left? And we have this pantomime thing that happens a couple of times where there's a long, elaborate question, a long, elaborate reason, and a long, elaborate question than an answer.

And it's hammed out, if you like, in a pantomime way so that we get the point. The reason, verse 35, he says is, For I was hungry, you gave me food. I was thirsty, you gave me drink. I was a stranger, you welcomed me in.

I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. The judge rewards those, and this is key, those who are good to him.

[13 : 39] I was hungry, you gave me food. I was thirsty, you gave me drink. Because you were kind to me in a relatively small way, I reward you with something far more wonderful.

It's what you did to me. We talked about this a bit in the first session, didn't we? It's that how they related to the master was what drove what they did. Here we said it's what you did for me, literally me.

But that invokes surprise. And this is the pantomime bit. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when do we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you?

And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? Is we hand out, when did we see it? When did we see it? When did we see it? You can imagine the surprise on their face. But the whole point of this big hand up surprise is the punchline in verse 40.

And the king will answer them, Truly I say to you, As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.

[14:42] When you become a Christian, you're not just a follower of Jesus, a lover of Jesus, a servant of Jesus. You are one with him. You are united to him like a man is united to his wife. And so what you've done to my wife, you've done to me.

What you do to one of my people, you did to me. Do you remember when the apostle Paul is accounted on the road to Damascus? Do you remember? And what did Jesus say to him?

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute? Me. And Paul could have said, I've met you. Who are you? I'll be persecuting these Christians. Me, because they are me.

Jesus identifies with us as if he is us and we are him because we are one. And so the way we treat other Christians, this is one of the things that bothers me about Christians on Twitter, when they snag each other off.

You're snagging off Jesus when you do that. Because we are him. And I know this takes a bit of game thinking, but if you were to look around the room right now, what are you looking at?

[15:47] A bunch of people you go to church with? No. You are looking at the brothers and sisters of Jesus, who are Jesus. He identifies identically with us. And he rewards those who treat others because we're treating them as Christians.

That's the point. Because they are him, we are treating them well. And that's the explanation. I don't know if you've ever thought of other Christians like that. The fail.

Fail is the second point. The goat's on the left. So it's the same pattern you get. Instead of the reward, it will be punishment. And then the reason, then the surprise, the explanation, the whole pantomime. So verse 41 is the punishment.

Then he'll say to those on the left, depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. I think many people assume that hell, it doesn't exist.

Or if it does, then it's a fun place where you can have a laugh with your mates. But Jesus is so clear. We've talked about outer darkness.

[16:53] We've talked about weeping and gnashing of teeth. Here he talks about the eternal fire. It's not just a medieval picture invention.

Fire is actually one of the most common metaphors used of hell. And the reason for that is it's not just a place of terror out of darkness, a place of weeping, a place of gnashing of teeth of angst, but a place of physical torment.

It's agony. That's what fire is. And it goes on and on. If you look at verse 46, the very last line, these will go into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

See the mirror. Life, punishment. Eternal, eternal. Eternal, punishment. Some Christians argue that you just die because God wouldn't. It's very clear.

Eternal punishment. Agony. What will it be like to have suffered wracking pain and torment for year after year after decade, knowing that there is no end coming and no hope of relief?

[18:10] Now again, Jesus doesn't say this because he's some sadist. He is wanting to warn us. The Christian that looks carefully at hell, who wants to do that?

Nobody. It's the person that knows clearly where they really don't want to be. And the Christian that just kind of fobs it off, they're the ones that are going to be naive.

We need to look at that. What's the reason? Verse 42. Here's the pantomime. For I was hungry and you gave me no food.

I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me. Sick and imprisoned and you did not visit me. You know where this is going. In the last parable you had the wicked, lazy servant.

He buried that money given to him in the ground. But in that parable it wasn't 100% clear what that meant. I can't think that this could be any clearer, this sentence here. It means to live a life, technically as a servant of the Lord, but not bothering to feed, clothe, care for other Christians. [19:20] There's no interest in other Christians. Because it's no interest in the Lord and they are him. And again you get the tragic surprise, verse 44. Then they will answer, pantomime, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn't minister to you?

And the shock this time is one of the shock horror. Again to emphasise the punchline, verse 45. Truly I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, my brothers, you did not do it to me.

Every time, they were much more interested in themselves and therefore didn't bother to feed or clothe or care for any other Christian, they're just looking for themselves frankly.

Jesus regards it as if they hadn't bothered doing it for him. The tragedy is, these people thought they were Christians.

They thought they were following Jesus. They assumed they were going to heaven. And yet without thinking about it, they spent their whole lives in the presence of Jesus.

[20:38] He was right there sitting next to them every Sunday. And they didn't bother with him because they were doing it for themselves. Now let me say something quickly, very quickly about social action.

Jesus isn't saying that you shouldn't love everybody. Someone was asking about that earlier. The parable of the Good Samaritan would say that you should, who should you love? A foreigner that you should hate.

Everybody. Absolutely right. And yet, is there something especially different about Christians because of who they are in relation to Jesus? So a lovely verse that sums it up well in Galatians 6, verse 10, therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people especially those who belong to the family of the things.

So do you see that, so don't limit this as a, don't see Jesus ring fencing the only person you should be nice to as Christians. It doesn't mean that at all. But especially. Because when you do that for those who are his, you do that for him.

You know the story of Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol. Do you know that story?

[21:58] Remember that? Scrooge is a horrible old whatnot and you've got Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim and he treats them badly, doesn't he? And then he gets visited by the three ghosts.

Do you remember the story? The ghost of Christmas past, the ghost of Christmas present, the ghost of Christmas future. And the idea is the ghosts are showing him the particular past and the present. See what you've done to this poor man and his kid.

And it doesn't really move him all that much. But it's the real punchline is the ghost of Christmas future. Because the ghost of Christmas future is the one that makes him realise.

Do you see the path? Do you see where this is going? Do you see what will happen to you? And actually it's the ghost of Christmas future that arrests him and totally transforms his life around.

Because he can see where he's going. Now that's what this parable is. That's the point of this parable. One day we're going to have to sit an exam. You will.

[22:55] Could you imagine it? The exam of your life. And the shock of seeing what could happen with a fail, just like my dream, is enough and should be enough, I hope, I pray, for some to wake up and do a scrooge and change what could have been.

If I said to you, there is an exam and there is one question on the paper, what is that one question? Would you know what the answer to that is?

Do you know what the one thing you need to revise for for the most important exam of your life?

The question is essentially, Jesus will ask, what did you do for me?

In other words, what did you do for my people? Because what you did for my people, you did for me. what would you say?

Let me tell you some of the things which are not in the exam of your life. Your marital status is irrelevant.

[24:15] The number of children you have is irrelevant. How outstanding your children are in education or music or sport is not on that exam.

Your status at work, how important you are, how much you've achieved in business will be irrelevant. How big or attractive your house is and how good the decor is will be utterly irrelevant. How good-looking or popular you think you are will be irrelevant. How talented you are at music or sports or languages however many countries you've been to or however many experiences you've had will be of no use.

However many achievements you've accomplished whether you've climbed Mount Kilimanjaro or been knighted it will not be on the paper. How much money you have will be irrelevant.

It's not on the exam. You've revised the wrong thing. You've spent your life studying for the wrong paper. The only question on the paper is what did you do for me by what did you do for my people who are me?

[25 : 37] Do you know what I mean about it being a clear parable? I mean it's so crystal isn't it? So let me ask you what are you working so hard for in your life?

Many people most people I could say all people are essentially working for themselves my work my family my wealth my status my experience but Jesus rewards those who deny my and live for him to serve him and we principally do that by doing for his people listen to the ghost of the Christmas feature when judge Jesus says to you what did you do to serve me what would you say let me give you a few applications I'm sure you can think of some because the spirit convicts us each individually you know but let me chuck out a few thoughts let me say something about serving at church I know there will be people in this room because I'm at church I know this works who are absolutely exhausted because you're serving really hard at church maybe it's the tots maybe it's the kids maybe it's getting up early to lock up and open up and maybe you're putting out chairs or building sound desks or coffee rota or whatever it is picking songs or writing sermons or whatever you do and you're just exhausted and I just say this because it keeps me going what we do for other people precisely because they are Jesus' brothers and sisters we're doing it for him so if you're flagging keep going you'll be so glad you did it's the only thing on the paper let me say something about spiritual gifts do you know do you

I mean this is just a wisdom thing do you understand what gifts the Lord has given you by his spirit so that you can serve other people well it's good to know that do some spiritual gift surveys or find out from leaders or spouses or whoever it is you know because the more you know your spiritual gifts and the more you ask for others because they're gifts you can have other gifts means that you are going to be able to be better at serving and let me say to you if you do know what your spiritual gift is I mean if I asked you right now what spiritual gift gifts do you have do you know the answer and if yes then let me urge you with all of my soul maximally do lots and lots and lots and lots of it whatever it is if you're an evangelist get on with it if you're a prayer set aside time to pray if you're someone who has the gift of service serve with all of your heart if you're a teacher maximize your teaching whatever it is because that's all that's on the exam paper let me say something about prayer do you pray for each other

I don't just mean in the slot you're supposed to do at the end of the growth group every week I mean do you pray each other for the week do you have a sense of what other people because your prayers are your work and your effort for one another there will be people right at the front in heaven who you didn't even know because they were praying all the time for people and they didn't give up maybe you're in bed late because you're tired and you didn't want to get up early get up early do it you'll be so glad you did and one last thing which is a bit of a vicar nag thing to say but get yourself to church get yourself to growth group you know don't go to the social event or the sports thing that's going on or whatever it is the silly things that don't matter because when you get yourself to church you're not just ticking a box done church or I feel like

I've attended some sort of register I'm at church because I'm at church because of him and because of her and because what I can say and what I can do to encourage him and her that's why I'm going along every time we attend or don't attend we're making a choice of priority and the only question on the paper is what did you do for my people you've got the whole of your life however long or short it is to prepare for one question what will your answer be why don't we just have a moment of quiet and why don't you pray to Jesus about that and then I'll pray our good

[31 : 08] Lord Jesus thank you for dying for us that we might inherit eternal life because of your abundant grace and goodness we know we were your enemies and yet you saved us as you had planned from the foundation of the world thank you thank you so much for your outstanding amazing grace but Lord Jesus you've called us to be your servants you are our Lord our master and

we want to follow you in your kingdom both in this life and for the rest of eternity we want to please you and serve you like those wise and faithful servants and we know that we do that by serving your people thank you so much for the gifts you've given us by your spirit you're so generous to us please give this church more gifts gifts which are wonderful encouraging and helping and building up others in their faith and in their love and please

I pray for each of us here and I pray for myself our Lord Jesus never stop nagging us and encouraging us and exhorting us to live for you by living for your people to love them with all of our heart soul mind and strength and to do it to please you for your well done good and faithful servant I pray for those who don't know how to serve encourage them and build them up so they can do that better I pray for those who lack confidence give them confidence and strength I pray Lord Jesus I pray for those who are doing it that you give them wind in their sails so they keep going and do it more and greater with more love and more energy and more genuine prayer and I pray for those who are feeling like they don't and don't know want and don't possibly don't want to our Lord Jesus I pray you would turn their hearts for your glory and for their good we pray all these things with great confidence hope thankfulness and expectation in you
Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen