

The Judgement

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn again to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and reading again verse 10, page 966 of our church Bible.

2 Corinthians 5 verse 10, where we read, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Now, maybe some of you are thinking, what's the minister doing preaching a sermon and judgment on the first Sunday of Advent? Isn't that just a little misplaced?

I mean, after all the traditions, the practices in so many churches, and the first of the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas, there's a recognized church calendar, and usually at this time, maybe the first Sunday of Advent, you know, the preparations or, if you like, the prophecy of Christ to come, is the service or the sermon that's preached on this Sunday.

But why? Why are we preaching on judgment on this particular Lord's Day evening? Well, I'm going to give you two reasons why we're preaching judgment on this Sunday.

[1 : 18] So one is maybe a slightly less important than the other reason that I'm going to give you, but we've been looking at a mini-series on Sunday evenings on the whole matter of the Christian, Christian in death and after death.

We've been looking at the Christian in her experience after death, the soul immediately passing into glory when the believer dies.

We were looking recently at the last Lord's Day evening, the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and last Sunday evening we alluded to the fact that Christ will come as judge, and we left room to develop that for this evening.

But I think there's something else that we have to say. And that's in keeping with the whole theme of the advent of Christ.

This morning we were thinking of Christ's first coming to earth. And if we're thinking of Christ's advent, His coming to earth, His arrival after the promise, the centuries of promise, then we can't dismiss Christ's second advent.

[2 : 29] Because the coming of Christ to earth can't just be locked in Bethlehem. You've got to see the bigger picture. You've got to remember that the Christ who came to earth in human form as Saviour, the same Christ will come to earth a second time.

And in that second advent, come as judge. Because, you know, if all we're talking about at this time of year is the first advent, the first advent of Jesus, then logically we have to speak of a second advent.

You know, even in human language, if there's a first of anything, well, it presumes there's going to be another. And, you know, even in the first coming, the first advent of Jesus, it's crucial to remember that the Lord Jesus who came to bring peace, who came to bring peace to His own, the same Lord Jesus came to bring division.

He came to reveal those who'd be condemned. Because they would not and did not believe in Him as the Christ, as the promised Messiah.

Listen to the words that Jesus said as we find them in Matthew chapter 10, 10 verse 32 to 34. Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who's in heaven.

[3 : 55] But whoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven. And in these words, Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth.

I've not come to bring peace, but a sword. These are serious words. Jesus has come to reveal division. Those who are His by faith, as opposed to those who have rejected Him as Lord and Saviour.

So, there's every good reason to follow on in our thoughts on the Christian after death. As we come to the whole matter of judgment.

Because Christ, as Lord Jesus has promised, to come again and to return on that day of days when He comes in judgment. And so, we might say this, maybe a little trivial, but we might say this, Keep one eye on the first advent, but at the same time, keep your other eye on the second advent.

And keep your eyes on what, how the two, as it were, come together as it were. And how you and how I must respond to Christ's first advent by considering the promise of Jesus to return again.

[5 : 11] So, what do we find here, as Paul writes about the judgment to come? Well, you know, before we even come to verse 10, you'll see that verse 10 is preceded by nine previous verses.

So, obviously, Paul is coming to a particular point in his argument that sort of is clinched in verse 10, and certainly the first part of verse 11. What's he saying up to this point about judgment?

Well, if you look at the passage, what's Paul speaking of? He's speaking about the reality of death. I mean, he knows that at some point, he's going to have to give up his earthly existence, his earthly tent, as he calls it.

And, you know, using the same metaphor, he knows he's going to be clothed with an eternal existence, a heavenly dwelling, the eternal being that he'll be when the soul passes into glory.

And it's his, although it's his heart's desire to be at home with the Lord in glory, to be in the glory of heaven, he doesn't lose heart that while he's away from heaven, while he's away from that heavenly home, he's still on earth.

[6 : 26] And, yes, he has that utter confidence that there's going to be a day of judgment when he and the rest of humanity are going to have to give an account of their life lived in their earthly existence, in their earthly body.

And judgment's anticipated. But while he's in the body, while he's on earth, he's going to live by faith and he's going to please God and he's going to please God in his life.

So the reality of judgment keeps him faithful. That reality of judgment motivates him to please God. So you see how Paul's establishing that connection between the life that he lives by faith and earth and the judgment to come.

So Paul has no doubt in his heart, no doubt that judgment's coming, the judgment that the Lord Jesus will bring. And so even in his life, he's living with judgment in mind.

And, you know, would that we all live as Paul lived with that faith, Paul's faith that looked to the, that realized the truth of God's word, the truth that tells of a day of judgment to come.

[7 : 40] I mean, you know, as we were right, the words that Jesus gave when he spoke of the Son of Man, when the Son of Man comes, the definitive statement, when the Son of Man comes, then we trust the Lord Jesus in every word that he uttered.

And so it's for you and for me to take heed of that promise and to live with that judgment to come. And later in the sermon, we look in how particularly we live in the light of the judgment to come.

As I say, we'll come to that later as we go through the passage. But look first of all then, what we read in verse 10, about the appearing of all.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now isn't Paul just echoing the words that Jesus gave that we read in Matthew 25?

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he'll sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations. And that little word, all, is so crucial.

[8 : 51] Because that word, all, tells of the mass of humanity. Before him will be gathered all the nations. And compare that with the words of Paul, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Well, it mentioned us. Who are the all? All humanity. Well, of course that means Christian and non-Christian. All of humanity appearing and with all the angels that are there.

The angels observe the judgment to come from the Lord Jesus. Mentioned in Matthew as the Son of Man. The angels are there as Christ comes in his glory.

I mean, you know, even the very sight of what we're promised. It goes way beyond anything we can even begin to imagine. But there's one thing that's certainly true.

It will be utterly overwhelming in sight and sound and spirit. But what about the judgment itself? What are the criteria for the judgment that Jesus will give?

[9 : 59] What's going to differentiate Christian from non-Christian? And when we have that kind of question, we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. Scripture. And what do we find?

We find the eternal difference. Eternal difference in the judgment that Jesus is going to give between those who in their earthly life live by faith in him and who sought to live for Jesus through works of obedience.

The difference between the Lord's people who live by faith and show the faith in the evidence of their actions. and then in contrast, those who had no heart's desire to please the Lord Jesus.

Elsewhere, Paul writes that there will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You who are a Christian, you have the Word of God that informs you that you will stand before the judgment seat of Jesus and you'll hear the voice of Jesus call out who will bring any charge against God's elect.

Who will charge this man, this woman with punishment deserving eternal death and who will charge this man? No one. There will be no answer because you who are in Christ will have been declared not guilty because of the finished work of Jesus.

[11 : 23] You'll know a public acquittal on that day all because of what we're thinking of this morning and Jesus coming in human flesh and is bearing your sins on the cross and as we mentioned this morning again that great transaction that clothed you with his righteousness when Jesus took upon himself your sins and that righteousness that you'll be clothed with and are clothed with so that you will not be found guilty before a holy God and by faith you trusted in Jesus for your salvation and declared not guilty before the God of righteous justice and that verdict of no condemnation will be given personally and I think that you know we can see that even in the statement that Paul makes here that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ each one each person in turn appearing before the Savior judge and appearing with the righteousness of Christ clothing you to ensure that you will be acquitted because we all know that by our sinful human nature we deserve

God's condemnation we know that by that sin that we inherited that original sin that we deserve God's wrath and curse that God's word assures you that Christ came into the world to save sinners and that's the message that you know that Christmas brings Jesus came into the world for that great purpose to save the lost to save sinners to save sinners who deserve eternal punishment the result of that salvation on that day when the Lord Jesus returns is going to be seen by the whole world when Jesus returns as judge and pronounces not guilty to each and every person who came to Jesus by faith and showed his faith showed her faith by obedience by good works the works that testify to the work of salvation in that person's life but we're not quite finished with this all because Paul writes of all appearing before the judgment seat of Christ not just those who will be publicly acquitted by Jesus but that all includes those who will be condemned and again we've got to use scripture to interpret scripture here and again that's why we we read from

Matthew 25 when Jesus spoke about that division that's going to be seen in that the day of judgment let's remind ourselves again of what Jesus said before him will be gathered all the nations and he'll separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and he'll place the sheep on his right but the goats on the left but what about the verdict on the goats in other words those who are not of Christ not in Christ as opposed to the verdict given to the sheep to the flock of Christ the verdict that Jesus will give to all who refuse to have him as Lord and Saviour will be a verdict of condemnation as we read in verse 41 of Matthew 25 depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels but before we even look further at that verdict of judgment then we have of course to consider the judge who gives the verdict and when we read here of the one who gives the judgment we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ what does that tell us of Jesus it tells us of his authority his supreme divine authority to judge the language that Paul is using here is language that would be recognized immediately at the time because in Roman times the times that Paul was living in governors in Roman cities would give judgments they would take part in court cases and they would do so while they were seated it was called the judgment seat

Paul himself had appeared before a Roman governor a man called Gallio Gallio was seated on the judgment seat when he passed judgment on Paul and of course Jesus himself remember Jesus appeared before Pilate and we're told that Pilate was seated on the seat of judgment but when Jesus appears whether it's Pilate whether it's Gallio Paul all of humanity all will appear before Jesus when he's seated on that judgment seat and it won't be Jesus who will face judgment yes Jesus faced a human judge and Pilate and of course on the cross Jesus faced the justice of God against sin when Jesus was made sin for us no when Jesus comes in judgment he's not going to be judged he will be the judge because he has all power and all authority as judge he will dispense the perfect justice of God no ordinary human could dispense that justice only the divine son of God the son of man the Lord Jesus has that authority to give the verdict of God on that last day and so with that authority there's absolute justice there'll be no retrials there'll be no wrongful convictions there'll be no second chances the word of Christ and judgment will be final which means this surely many things but certainly for you who haven't yet given your life to Jesus remember what we said a moment ago

Jesus came to earth to save sinners will you come to him now and admit your sin repent of that sin and receive Jesus as saviour because in him you're assured of eternal salvation and in him you have that promise of being declared not guilty when you appear before the judgment seat of Jesus but then the question still remains and we come back to something we left hanging there just a few moments ago on what basis will Jesus give his verdict what criteria what standards will Jesus use to declare whether someone is guilty or not guilty what's going to be the judgment on all well listen to the words of Paul when Paul writes of the purpose of all who appear before the judgment seat of Christ listen to the words again in verse 10 so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil what's the key word here surely it's the word that's the verb done what he has done in the body what he's done she's done in his and her earthly body what he's done in his life on earth whether it's been good or whether it's evil that's going to be the result of what the verdict that

[19 : 02] Jesus gives and then you might be thinking don't believe that a person isn't made right with God because of what he does because of works I mean as God's word tells us it's grace that saves it's God's unmerited grace I mean Paul would write elsewhere in Ephesians 2 for by grace you've been saved through faith and this not your own doing it's the gift of God not a result of work so that no one may boast and that teaching that tells you that it's nothing that you or I can do to merit salvation otherwise what would be the point of Jesus coming to earth if sinners could win salvation by their own merits their own works why does Paul then link how Jesus will exercise his justice according to what a person has done in the body whether good or evil how do you reconcile it if there's a reconciling to be done here well there's no inconsistency there's no inconsistency with what Paul tells us in this passage about

Jesus as judge and the verdict that he gives for what a person has done in the body whether good or evil why is there no inconsistency because good works works that glorify God are the effects of grace saving faith is demonstrated by the good that you do your good thinking your good words your good actions the good that seeks to honour God to honour the one who's truly good to honour our good God and Saviour because good works works that are good come from a heart that's been changed that's been changed transformed by the saving grace of the Lord Jesus and that's why again we read in Matthew 25 come you are blessed by my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world and then all the actions that the Lord's people gave that showed that they were truly saved hungry and you gave me food thirsty and you gave me drink stranger and you welcomed me naked and you clothed me sick and you visited me in prison and you came to me and in

Jesus' words truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me actions from a heart transformed by grace actions from a heart transformed by saving grace actions that will be acknowledged in that last day actions that will be acknowledged as good publicly recognised these actions as the fruits of grace evidence of saving faith was what Jesus declared while he was on earth in his public ministry whoever believes and is baptised will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned believe faith whoever believes and is baptised will be saved whoever does not believe will be condemned and therefore that condemnation will be because of an absence of faith in the

Lord Jesus the absence that is evident in works of evil that's again what we read in Jesus' words then he'll say to those on his left depart from me you cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels and then the failure of action I was hungry you gave me no food thirsting you gave me no drink and so on then he'll 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 we will all have to give an account of our lives before our Lord and Saviour on that day of days what we've done with our Lord what we've done in response to Jesus and that doing doing the works that God gives you to do that doing that seeks to glorify God and not glorify self and there's a marvellous passage that really captures all this in Romans chapter 2 verses 5 to 8 because Paul's writing of the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment is going to be revealed listen to these words he will render to each one according to his works to those who by patience and well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality he will give eternal life but for those who are self seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness will be wrath and fury what's your response you who are in

Christ you who know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour what's your response to all that we've been thinking looking at this evening surely certainly one major response is to be this you know you've been saved but that's not an excuse or that's not a license to indulge in any kind of life of indifference or an activity or a life that's lived for self that glorifies self the very fact that we have this emphasis here on works in relation to judgment surely should spur you on in your life to glorify God in service service for God to live a Christ centred life that's a life of faith and a life of faith that's expressed in love for God and love for your neighbour Paul knew that that's why he adds there in verse 11 why there's a therefore you know a therefore always connects what comes before you know all that he's written about the judgment to come therefore knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade others that positive fear of judgment that should motivate all of you who love the Lord should motivate you to serve him and to serve him in gospel witness to serve him in the truth of the gospel in the service of the gospel because the message of judgment yes should should fill each one of us with the fear of the

[25 : 44] Lord that awe that reverence that reverence for our Lord and Saviour that reverence that trusts him for your very soul so we were you know thinking with the children this morning the whole matter of advent the coming the promise of the coming of the Lord Jesus that waiting patiently for him well what about your waiting patiently for the coming of the Lord in that second advent as we said if we believe in the first advent of Jesus we have to believe in the second advent if you've acted by faith in the Lord Jesus the one who came in that first coming to earth then surely you have to act by faith in regards to his second coming and so we live for him we seek to persuade others by word and witness that the Christ who was born in

Bethlehem is the Christ who will return as judge and that men and women must put their faith in him for eternal life because as we said and have to say that if the first advent of Jesus has any meaning it must relate to the second advent so where's your faith tonight is your faith in the Lord Jesus is it a true saving faith that's seen that the evidence of which is seen in your actions your mind works and thinks the words that you give the actions that you perform in loving God in your neighbour or is your faith a false faith in self and in the world and if that's where you are tonight a false faith a false trusting in self or in the world then run to him now come to him now in the repentance of your heart and surrender your life to one because he's calling you come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest and I'm coming to him you'll know eternal life and you'll know that reward of faith in that day of judgment when Christ

Jesus gives that public pronouncement that public acquittal all who are his no condemnation for all who are in him amen let us let us pray oh lord our god we have been dealing with solemn matters and you give us in your word the truth of what is to come and we pray lord that as we live our lives now that we will live in the light of eternity and that we will live in the light of the promise of the second advent of Jesus even now lord prepare our hearts for that time prepare our hearts even in patient waiting for the lord Jesus lord we know that our lives are so taken up by so many things that have no concern for eternity but lord help us we pray to live our lives by faith and for your glory so hear us lord as we as we continue in praise before your name help us lord we pray to glorify you even in these last moments of the service and we pray these things in

Jesus name amen well let's close our service in psalm 9a psalm 9a on page 9 we're going to sing just these three verses from 7 to 10 the lord forever reigns on high his throne for judgment stands he'll judge the world in righteousness with justice rule the land 7 to 10 the tune is martyrs then who's