

A Certain Event at an Uncertain Time

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[0 : 00] Join me in Luke chapter number 12, and we should all say thank you, God, for saving me. As we're turning there this morning, Katie Holt was showing me a psalm.

She was studying, and it talked about praising God for our salvation. And we're talking about our understanding, our New Testament salvation of being saved from sin. But as we talked, we rejoiced in the fact that we have been saved from so many things by God.

And someday in the future, at an uncertain time, but most certainly a certain event, as a church, we would be able to say thank you, God, for saving me. If you think this world is crazy now, there's coming a time of seven years of tribulation that we'll speak about briefly today where we can say thank you, God.

And throughout the Bible, when it speaks about this, it is a cause of comfort because God saves his church, us, from this time. And so we're here in Luke chapter number 12.

Before we get into the passage, just a quick story of the day. And many of you know this about me, and I try to be better about it. But sometimes I'll have a conversation in the foyer with one of you out here, and I'll see somebody or I'll think of something, and I just kind of disappear.

[1 : 14] And I know I shouldn't do that, but sometimes I'll be in the middle of a conversation, and I'll think of something, and you're like, where did Trent go? We were in the middle of a conversation. And I know that's rude, and I don't mean to be, but I'm working on that.

But sometimes what I do is I bring two conversations together. And in the early years of our church, I was talking to this guy that was new to our church. He's not here today, so don't look around and try to figure out which one of you wanted to do this.

And he wanted to go to a college campus with signs that talked about the end is near, that Jesus is returning. And he was inviting me to come with him and to write on poster boards and to do that, you know, just a typical weekend event with some friends.

And so that's what he's doing. And then another friend over here is like, hey, let's go to the woods. Let's ride motorcycles. Let's shoot guns together. And we're talking about planning something. Well, somehow these two conversations, they merge together.

And the guy that wanted to do the typical weekend event had somehow agreed to do what this guy wanted to do. And the look on this guy's face when he realized that he wasn't agreeing to go ride motorcycles, but he agreed to go down to a college campus with signs and stand on the street corner was quite comical, okay?

[2 : 23] And they come together. And so that is oftentimes when you think about the end is near, Jesus is coming. You normally assign it to the people that are standing on the street corner.

Several of us, maybe five or six years ago, went to a place that heard John Lennox, which holds a chair of mathematics at Oxford University, a seat that Isaac Newton had held.

And he was speaking about artificial intelligence. And as he was doing that, he talked about Jesus Christ returning and that it was imminent. And it could happen at any time.

And that the signs we're seeing are preparing us for a time that after he comes, And I just say that to say, it doesn't matter if you were introduced to the fact that Jesus is coming back by somebody that was on a street corner, or if you're introduced by this fact that one of the great brilliant math minds of the day, neither one of those make them true or false, but the what the word of God says matters and will last forever.

And the Bible is clear that the Lord is going to return for us. And we should be excited in this. We should be rejoiced. When speaking to believers in the Bible, when it speaks about these things, Brother Frick said so well a few Sunday nights ago that this is a matter of comfort to us, that it ought to be a way in which we encourage one another.

[3 : 41] Acts chapter number 1, verse 9 through 11. I want to give you, he is going to return in the fashion that he went up. And when he had spoken these things, and what he had spoken was Acts 1, 8, where the Spirit had come, giving us power to be witnesses to the whole world.

He had spoken these things, and while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, That was verses 9 and 10.

The manner in which he went ascended to the Father is the same manner in which he will return to us. And we await his glorious return, believing that it is imminent.

This parable is something that catches the imagination of early Christians. It becomes a theme of Christian teaching throughout the Bible. Let me read some verses to you. 1 Thessalonians 5, 2. It's clear to you guys that it could come at any time as a thief in the night.

2 Peter 3, 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and earth also in the works that are therein shall be burned up.

[5 : 07] Revelations 3, 3. Remember therefore how thou received and heard, and hold fast and repent, and therefore thou shalt not watch. I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will do. And then we'll be reminded as we go through Luke in chapter number 17 and chapter number 21, we will revisit this theme.

260 chapters in the New Testament. 318 times this theme of the Lord's return is brought up. So on average, one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament calls us and brings us to remember this.

The doctrine of the return of Christ, as appears in the New Testament, is like a mountain that dominates the entire landscape. Many of you have had the privilege, many of you in this room, have been to Atikipa, Peru, and there's a volcano in the background, misty.

And no matter where you go in that city, you can always look out into the distance, and you see this beautiful volcano. When we read through the New Testament and the landscape of the Bible is always this theme of the Lord's return.

It's never to get very far away from us. I've been singing some songs this week, and as you know, I'm very much a very beautiful singer. And when I sing about end times, it makes it even more beautiful, right?

[6 : 24] And we have so many songs about it. And when you just take the verses and you say it, Stephanie's looking at me like, what are you saying? All right? What are you singing? And one song as a teenager that really reminded me often of this was a song that would say, it goes like this, a man and wife asleep in bed.

He hears a voice. He turns his head. She's gone. I wish we'd all been ready. Two men walking up a hill. One disappear, and one's left standing still. I wish we'd all been ready.

And then the chorus goes like this. There's no time to change your mind. The sun has come, and you've been left behind. And so when I sing this around the house, the kids get really weird, okay?

And wondering what I'm telling. Steph doesn't like it when I sing this as we're going to bed at night, all right? But I haven't been walking up any hills with any of you guys to sing this, neither.

And so there were songs in our lives that reminded, I think maybe there may be less of them, and that's not helpful for us. We need things. We sing it. As you look for it, it is well with myself speaks of that, as the clouds will roll back.

[7 : 27] And we're constantly being reminded of it as a wonderful thing. We're exhorted here in this passage, and it's clear that this should cause a way that we live. That understanding should cause us to live in a particular way.

Verse 36, Remember our passage here, and reading it, is that Jesus is telling the parable of a story of a master who goes off to a wedding, and then those that were left behind are there, and some of them should be prepared for him to come.

And we'll talk more about the wedding in a second, but they don't know when he is going to come back. And some of them are ready. And if they were ready, they were ready to serve the master, and they were serving him. But those that weren't ready, they abused the other servants that were around them.

And then Peter says, Who are you speaking to? And Jesus' response is, If the shoe fits, wear it. You know, I'm speaking to you, Peter. I'm speaking to everybody that's listening. Everybody ought to take something out of this.

And he ends with, To whom much is given, much is required. So let's go back 2,000 years to an understanding of weddings. And weddings were quite an ordeal.

[8 : 48] They would take a minimal of three days, it appears, and they could go on for weeks, depending on how much money a family would have. When Jesus turns the water into wine, we're seeing how symbolic and how important a wedding was, that you were really, it was a status symbol, a place in society, and it was just a long event that would take place.

And so when a person would leave, for some minutes, like when your wife goes to Target, okay? You just really have no idea if she's ever going to come back, all right? It may be within 30 minutes, it may be next Tuesday.

There's just no idea. So whatever chores you're supposed to be doing, you need to get them done early, all right? Because you don't know when she's going to be coming back. And then it says that they may come in the third hour.

If you're looking from a Roman perspective or a Jewish perspective, either way, we're looking at 9 o'clock at night till 3 in the morning. Keep your lamps burning so that you are ready for these things that are going to happen.

And so to help us understand this and to say that you should be like the servants that are waiting, I need to give you a basic overview of the end of the world as we know it.

[9 : 54] And it's incredible that we have been given this knowledge. We've been given knowledge of how the world started. So many people want to know that and they want to argue about it, but we read about it in God's Word.

And then so many people are fascinated about how the world ends, and we can read about it and we can know it. And it's just, it's cool, all right? I don't know a better word for it. It's just simply cool that we have the ability to read about the beginning of this world and the end of it.

So let me fast forward to a thousand years plus as the end of the world will be known. Revelation 21, And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth was passed away, and there was no more sea.

So at the very end of this thing, as the end of the world as we know it, some of you are thinking of another song, right? End of the world as we know it. And as the end of the world, it melts away and it's gone. A new heaven and a new earth.

And this is where we spend eternity. And we often forget that. That is what is going to happen. The earth as we know it, and heaven will pass away, and that's what is going to happen. Right before that event is the great white throne judgment.

[11 : 00] The small and great, all unbelievers all throughout history will stand before God, and the answer is already given, but they will hold, be an account for not responding to their understanding, to the gospel, to not putting their faith and trust in Him, the God of heaven, and they will be put into the lake of fire for all eternity.

Right before that event is Satan's revolt. Satan has been bound for a thousand years up to this point, and in Satan's revolt he comes, he's released, and he gathers up all the people on earth that would be willing to revolt against the Lord.

And so where do those people come from? Well, that's a thousand years that we know as the millennial reign. And the people coming into the millennial reign are believing people, and as they come in they have children, and those children will be, even though they live with Jesus as king, even though Satan is bound, they still have a decision to make, and those people will make a decision, and they will join Satan's revolt at this end that will happen.

So we have that thousand years that we read about in the Bible, and the lion and the lamb lay down together, and we speak about it, and Jesus is king. Well, leading up to that time, we have the battle of Armageddon.

That's what's happening down here on earth. And that battle would be us coming from heaven with Jesus, and right before that is the marriage feast of the lamb, that we have that with the Lord.

[12 : 27] The Bible speaks of it. And then on earth, there's seven years of this incredible tribulation. 25 million people bought the Left Behind series. John MacArthur wrote a book that wasn't fiction, and it sold a few dozen copies, and he seemed pretty grumbly and bitter about the fact that more people were curious about the fiction story than a book that wasn't fiction, and then we have it.

But there's a great interest in it. I was 16 years old in a hospital in Vanderbilt. I spent a month, and I read through most of that series. I'd read some of it already. It was quite fascinating to me. I wanted to imagine what that would be like.

And so we have the battle of Armageddon. But there in that seven years of tribulation, we are in heaven. What starts that is what we know as the rapture.

It's those verses that I was reading about where Jesus is coming. And what I want to, and right after the rapture, is the judgment seat of Christ. The Greek word for a throne there, that judgment seat is bima, the bima seat.

What I want you to see here, and no, you won't be tested on it. Don't raise your hand and say, are we going to be tested on this later? Okay, you're not going to be tested on this later. And we could, I'd love to talk to you about this more, and other people as well.

[13 : 39] But what I really wanted you to see in walking through here is that once the rapture happens, once there's a taking away of His church, all these seals and bowls and all the things that happen just happen right in order.

There's a series of events that are going to happen. There are certain events that are scheduled out. And you could set your calendar, you could set your clock bomb by the time that this happens. And it leads us all the way for 1,007 years to the end of this world.

And those are certain events that happen in a certain order described in the Bible. And good Jesus-loving people and Christians had disagreements about timing and all that and some of the details.

But what we know is how it ends. We also know that it's going to, Jesus is going to return. But what we don't know that has a certain time is when He is coming back. And that is the focus.

That is the sense of urgency that you ought to be feeling is that even though you could study all these things and it's good and you can lay out a chart, what you don't get to do with your chart.

[14 : 40] How many of you have ever seen a really Clarence Larkin type chart? I mean, I could cover the walls with the charts that are made about this. You can study and you can memorize it and you can know it and you can argue it inside and out.

And it's good to know these things. He gave it to us. But what you're not going to have is you're not going to know when this event starts. And that ought to be a motivator for you in what we're doing.

As Christians, it ought to be a motivator for us and knowing that there's two judgments that are coming. There's one for us as believers and then there's one that's coming here for at the very end.

And we'll talk about that. So live life ready for the return of Jesus. Verse 36, And ye yourselves liken the men that wait for their Lord when He will return from the wedding. You guys, I'm not talking just about a wedding here.

I'm talking about you guys waiting for the Son of Man cometh an hour when you think not. All these pictures are not trying to get you to determine a date when Jesus is going to return. But to live in such a way that so that when He does return, we are ready for His return.

[15 : 42] So three ways that we're going to kind of unpack and spill out here of how to live ready. One is to recognize that we live in the last days. And the Bible says that. We live in the last days.

You need to recognize that. This ought to be a motivating factor for your decisions in life. Second, you need to be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.

Verse 35, Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning. This is urgent. It's important. If you could go ahead and, Nikki, if you wouldn't mind putting up the slide that I have here, some of you would be familiar with this little quadrant.

Greg and I talked about this on occasion. How many have ever seen this quadrant before of urgent important, urgent non-important? Have you ever seen that? Like, for example, not urgent and not important, social media, YouTube cat videos, you know.

David, the boy, he's always sending them to me, all right. This is just not urgent. It's not important. Urgent, but not important. Phone notifications all the time. They seem to be urgent, but they're just often, they're not for them.

[16 : 41] Not urgent, but important. You need to plan lunch for tomorrow. Eating is important, all right. But it's not urgent because it's off in the future. And you probably, you could think about things that fall in these categories.

I just want to add one thing to your calendar in one quadrant here. Being ready for Jesus' return is urgent, important. It's always going to be important and it's always going to have a sense of urgency about it.

And in your quadrants of life, urgent, important needs to have that Jesus is going to return. I need to share the gospel with my loved one. I'm eventually going to get around to it.

No, Jesus could return at any moment. This is urgent, important. I'm not being faithful in which He has called me to do and I'm going to get around to it at the next calendar year. No, we need to be ready for the Master's return.

This is urgent, important. Hebrews 1, 2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by a Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.

[17 : 41] Hath in these last days spoken to us by a Son? In times past, He spoke to us in diverse manners by the prophets of old. But now, in the last days, we have heard through Jesus Christ.

So that's where we say that we live in the last days. Maybe a word that you often have in relation to this is imminent, which means that it's likely to happen at any moment. It's impending. It can happen at any time.

There is nothing more in biblical prophecy that needs to happen before Jesus can return here. And everyone has wanted to know all through the years. Everybody's wanted to know.

Mark 13, 4. Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled. So when is it going to happen, Lord? When are you going to come? When are you going to set up your earthly kingdom?

When is this going to happen? They ask Him in the Bible. We've been asking for the last 2,000 years. Jesus' response, Mark 13, 32, and 33. But of the day and the hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

[18 : 42] Take ye heed, watch, and pray, for you know not when the time is. So we're commanded to live knowing that His return is at hand. Be ye also patient.

Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. That's what James said in 5a. The Holy Spirit through James in James 5a told us to live in a certain way.

Establish our hearts in a certain way, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. And so this is a lesson for the disciples, and it is a lesson for us. Here's a passage that I've read at gravesides, and you've probably often heard read at gravesides, but it also would be appropriate for you to read at your kitchen table in the morning, or at your bedside when you wake up in the morning.

That's 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

[19 : 53] For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of an archangel, and the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. We sung about it today. We sung about that resounding sound of a trumpet that will come.

Verse 17, Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air as He's coming, Acts 1-8, in the way that He ascended.

He is coming back. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. It's not just something to argue over.

It's not just something that ought to cause urgency. But it ought to be a real comfort to you to know that He is going to do this and that we will be forever with Him. And all the things that happen on earth and all the timeline that I quickly gave you, it's so wonderful to know that once we are with Him, we will be forever with Him.

When He returns here, we return with Him. Because there is not a moment of time I'd ever want to be separated from Him. And once we return with Him, we see Him face to face, we will be with Him forever.

[20 : 59] And so verse 35 tells us, let your loins be girded about and your lights burning. Kind of a cultural understanding of your loins being girded about. If you started looking for it in the Bible, you'd find it in Exodus when they were going to get ready to eat their meal.

They would typically, as in many cultures, they wouldn't have had their shoes on. They would have been relaxed. Meals would take a longer time. So they would sit back and enjoy it and be reclined. But in the Passover meal, that they were told to be ready to go.

Keep your shoes on and have your loins girded up. So having, I remember as a kid seeing those little patterns. My sister would make things sometimes. They came out of a little paper, you know, and you laid it out.

Anybody following me here? I don't have any words for this. So if you don't get it now, I'm not going to be able to help you, okay? And so back in the day, they kind of had a one size fit all model going on for these kind of robes that are going.

And so when they were running, it would be a problem. So they'd either put it in a belt or they would tie it up, but they got ready to run, all right? And I imagine the ladies in here understand this better than us men, okay?

[22 : 02] And so they would have this ready to go. And they said, live ready like that. And then using that same kind of imagery, Peter in 1 Peter 1.13 says, Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to be in for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And so it talks about a preparedness about you to live constantly ready. The complete opposite of what our kids do when we go on a road trip. We stop at the first gas station and Thatcher, or one of the kids says, one of them says, I got to put my socks on, all right?

I'm like, what do you mean? We just left the house. I got to get my shoes on, all right? And then another, you know, a female adult in our, in that truck there acts like she had no idea that we were going to stop and what was going on.

And they're like, by the time we park, I am like a hundred yards ahead of the rest of the family, all right? Because I had a, my loins were girded about, my mind was prepared. I was ready, I was ready to get out of that van and take off running.

But they have all these things that they're not ready for. Oh, we're here now. I got to get my shoes on, all right? I got to stop making this craft that I was doing in the back seat, you know? And all these things are happening.

[23 : 12] And that's how, that's how many people live their lives. Oh, you're back, Lord. Oh, I, wait a second. I got to get my socks and shoes on. Wait a second. I got some things I need to tie up. Jonathan Edwards in his resolutions of life said, let me never, every day live as if I'm prepared for this to be my last.

To not do anything today that I would do that, I would be ashamed if this was my last day upon this earth. And so that's a cultural understanding of girding up your loins. And the next one is your lights be burning.

The picture, another picture of disciples being ready at all times. So if the loins girded up is emphasizing kind of your posture of life and that readiness, the lamps would be that speak about at all times.

Expecting a visitor at midnight, you would keep your front light on. You would keep your porch light on. In Matthew chapter number 25, a very vivid picture of this you could study later. It's the 10 young ladies waiting for the bridegroom to come.

And some of them weren't prepared. They didn't have enough oil to keep their lights running throughout all of the night. And so the truth is highlighted in verse number 39. In case you missed it, in case you missed about the lamps and the being girded, your loins being girded and being ready and prepared, he says it another way.

[24 : 24] And this we know that if the good men of the house had known that the hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be broken through. And so he's not a thief.

Jesus is not a thief. We belong to him. That is not what's being taught there. Just like as a thief doesn't give you a warning to say that I'm coming and may come in the middle of the night of any time, you should live your life understanding that the Lord is coming back.

And I can say this and I think it would, I know it would be true for the last 2,000 years. There would be signs and things that are happening that would say that everything needed is happening right on us.

So many prophecies of the Bible that are going to be lived out during the seven years of tribulation and in times past where people said, I just don't understand how that's going to happen.

We don't even wonder anymore. We know how it could happen. It makes sense to us. If it didn't make sense to it, it wouldn't mean that Jesus couldn't come back. But it's just as clear as it's ever been that the Lord could return and that all these things would just start the motion.

[25 : 30] And when that time clock starts, it will not stop for that 1,007 years. But we do not know when that is going to start. But the passage clearly is designed to move us to live in a particular way, to evaluate your life and ask if you are doing what your master's commanded you as you wait for his term.

Peter says, is this going to be on the test? Are you speaking this parable unto us or to everybody? And in Jesus, as he responds in verse 42, who then is faithful and wise steward whom the Lord shall rule over his household and give them a portion of the meat in due season?

If the shoe fits, wear it. There is a lesson for every one of us in here today. Is he speaking to you? Do you desire to be a wise steward? Are you mastered by the master?

As believers, we should have a mindset and an outlook in which we are bent to do the will of Jesus. We should seek first the kingdom. We desire to do what he has given for us to do.

I imagine Peter sits up straight because he's saying, oh, you are speaking to me. I will have things that I need to do when you leave and we wait for your return. So Jesus is saying, if you have ears to hear, you need to listen.

[26 : 40] Peter listens and he does what he has given and you shall as well. And who is living ready? Jesus answers. Verse 42. Oh, look at verse 33.

Blessed is servant whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. He is the one that when the householder goes away, gives to the household their food at their proper time.

Let me read this for you. This is what Jesus is saying specifically to Peter. Peter, I'm going away. I'm summarizing here. If you're looking down at your Bible, I'm just giving a summary here. Peter, I'm going away and in the hands of your disciples, I'm going to leave my sheep.

And while I'm away, here's what I want you to do. I want you to feed my sheep. I want you to feed them with the word of God. I want you to care for their souls. I don't want you to use them. I want you to serve them. I want you to be, always be thinking about them.

I always want you to be thinking about their spiritual well-being. I don't want you to get rich up of them. I don't want you to take advantage of them. I want you to live your life in such a way that you're feeding them, you're shepherding them, you're serving them, you're looking out for their well-being.

[27 : 43] That's what it means for you, Peter, to be ready. I feel this on such a deep level. You know the day that I am not just preaching a sermon, but I am going about the chore and the assignment of doing what the pastor has told me to do while I wait for him.

Hebrews 13, 17, Obey them which have rule over you and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls as they must give account that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

I thank the God of heaven that I don't give an account for your actions and your behavior. I praise the Lord for that. Not looking at any of you particularly in here, but I'm thankful that I'm not giving an account for you, but I give an account for the assignment that he gave to me to care for your soul, to love you, and to teach the Word, and that's what he gave me to do.

So yes, I'm giving a sermon today, but I'm going about the chore and the assignment that the Father gave me to do until he returns. Understand the assignment. All right?

I'm looking at teenagers, a slang that is commonly used among them, which is the person understood what it is they were supposed to do. You ask somebody to do something and they do it well, you're saying that that person understood what they were given to do.

[29 : 03] And I want to do my assignment, always having a mindset and an attitude and a practice of always looking out for the well-being of the flock. And do you know that you have been given an assignment as well?

Verse 48, But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes, but unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

You have been given much. You have been given great responsibilities. You have been given great resources. And to whom much is given, much is required.

Be ready. It is not by looking out for ourselves, but being concerned for the well-being of one another. Remember what they were doing? The ones that were not looking for their master's return.

Verse 45, But if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men servant and maidens, and to eat and to drink and to be drunken. Man, they're doing much worse than my kids and not putting their shoes on, all right?

[30 : 03] They're saying, Hey, we're never getting to where we're going. The master's never coming back. Let's just go ahead and drink the wine that he has here. Let's just go ahead and let's mistreat the servants that are around us.

I will never have to give account for my life because he is not coming back. And so, we're called to care for one another. We're called to love our neighbors, and that includes everyone, but we're called to give special attention to those with whom we serve.

And so, what's going to be the basis on which we're evaluated when the Lord comes? Did we do what he said? And that servant which knew the Lord's will, verse 47, prepared not himself, neither did according to his will.

You know, doing according to God's will, that is Great Commission type language. Making disciples of all nations, going and teaching, and then baptizing and teaching is most certainly the Great Commission.

But do you know that you have a responsibility in the fact that you have been taught and you've been baptized and that you've been continually taught that you're supposed to observe all things that he has commanded of us?

[31 : 10] That is to do what you've been given to do. And so, this is more than a nice story, but this is foreshadowing an actual historical event. Two widely separate events.

A day where believers will stand before the Lord, the judgment seat of Christ, a thousand years later, a thousand seven years later, where there will be a white throne judgment for unbelievers.

And I'm so thankful that those are widely separated, not just in time, but in purpose. And so, over here at this judgment seat of Christ, and we ought to be thinking about both of those.

I know in the Connect class today they were talking about being throne oriented. As believers, we should always be looking to that day where we'll stand before the Lord, but we should also be thinking of our neighbor and the day that they will stand before the Lord and which one of these two thrones will they stand.

And so, Bema is a word that's used in Matthew 27, 19, and when he'd sit down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him. And this here we're talking about Pilate sitting down upon a seat.

[32 : 14] An actual seat was a place of judgment. In 2 Timothy 2, 5, we're talking about a man who strives for masteries, is not crownless, he strives lawfully. They had games that were like Olympics.

And so, there's a person that would have said upon a throne. For me, I always think about Robin Hood, the cartoon, with a fox. Okay? Anybody here with me? Okay?

And he's sitting upon that and Robin Hood's over here and he's shooting the bow and arrow and there's a person who sits upon the throne and says, you're not striving lawfully. You didn't do this the correct way.

And so, I believe this is an avoided discussion. You know, more so than even walking through that kind of the end of the world as we know it and many of the things that we've looked at, this topic here has brought great concern for me because I don't want to create any type of confusion.

Are we saved by grace or are we saved by works? And the scripture is very clear. John 3, 18. He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

[33 : 19] Romans 8, 1. Therefore, there is no condemnation of them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after flesh but after the Spirit. And that judgment that we were looking to where the master will come back and said, have you been doing your assignment?

Have you been doing what I left you to do? When I stand before him, there is no condemnation for my sins. I've already been forgiven of those. Could you imagine, I've said that a lot today, Ben, a lot of imagination going on, right?

Could you imagine we're graduating, Ben's graduating from North Georgia, he's walking across the stage. Now Ben, he graduates and I don't even know all the words that you could get for graduating, but as he's walking across the stage, somebody comes over at the intercom and says, actually Ben is not graduating, he is getting kicked out of college today and Ben freezes, you know, and Ben's taken out of there.

That is not what you expect at a graduation ceremony. You expect that there's people that have graduated, there's a fact that there's people that have rewarded for what was going on, that is what you're expecting.

At the judgment seat of Christ, there is not a, oh, I didn't recognize that you had not been forgiven of your sins. Oh, you're not supposed to be here yet, you're supposed to be at the other one. That is not what's being accounted for.

[34 : 29] But with that being, so that's one extreme. There's some extremes here that can be seen. So there's a confusion over what is the purpose of this judgment seat, of this Bema seat.

The one extreme is the shame that we've been told, the motivation. I won't ask you to raise your hand, but this is the, you're going to be seeing a movie screen and all the things that you ever did wrong and all of those sins that you ever did, you're going to give an account for it.

He died, but we're going to shame you at that time. Some of you have been taught that and this is my response to that. If you were to show the movie of my life, it would look like the Jesus film because Jesus took my life and he lived in my place and he died in my place.

So do not try to take my sin and shame me with it because it's been far removed as the east is from the west because of what Jesus Christ did and there's no longer any condemnation.

So there's the one extreme that's all about shame but then there's another idea that might have which is the participation trophy that we all live in and it was like, hey, everybody did a great job. Everybody, everything's the same.

[35 : 35] Here, you get a trophy, you get a trophy, everybody gets a trophy but it seems that the text of Scripture would have us to understand a few things that though sin is forgiven, sin is never small and not always true theologically but in this case, a middle ground between those two seems to be what the Bible would be teaching.

Not shame and condemnation and not punishment for sin, that's against God's promises. Scripture teaches that for the believer God's justice has already been fully and forever satisfied at the cross in relation to the believer's sin.

If God were to punish the believer judicially for his sins for which Christ had already rendered payment, he would be requiring two payments for sin and would therefore be unjust. Such a concept, punishment of sin, erroneously disparages all the sufficiency of Christ's death upon the cross.

At that day, I can rest assured that my sins have been paid for. But all equal rewards and no sorrow, participation trophy, that seems to go against God's teaching.

Neither of this reflects on what Jesus is teaching us here. Here's four quick reasons. Sin, even in the life of a believer, has consequences. We see that there's a loss of fellowship with the Lord when there's known sin in my life.

[36 : 51] There's a loss of joy. There's discipline from the sin from the Lord in our life. We do not think of discipline as punishment, but God's gracious work has trained us and developed us with this discipline.

And then clearly in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 13, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and if any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward, and if any man's work shall be burned up, he shall suffer loss, but himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

When I serve the Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit and glorifying him, I am doing something that will last through all eternity. I am doing the work in which there will be a reward that I will get to receive and glorify my Father.

But when I do a work in the Lord that is out of impure motive, when I do things that are wrong, when I do it to please men, those types of work are going to burn up like wood, hay, and stubble.

And so that is the question that we all look to. And we say, there comes a day where the King of Kings and I will stand before him, he will truly evaluate my life and ministry. He will separate what has been done for him and what has been done for myself.

[38 : 05] And even though I may be able to fool everybody around me, I look to a day like the volcano in the background that's always there of a day that is coming where I will meet with the Lord.

Verse 36 in closing, in yourselves liken the men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding. When he cometh a knock that they may open unto him immediately. So we must ask ourselves some hard but needed questions today.

Believers, are you living as men who are waiting for a master's return? Does that affect the timeline of your life? Is that anywhere on your calendar?

Maybe as a practice, on your calendar right above it, this may be the month that the Lord returns. If you can't set it in a date, but you can set it all around the calendar and remind ourselves, is this the case?

Has God been working in your life in an area of doing to serve him, of a area of obedience unto him? Is this shown in how you treat your fellow servants? The example given in here of the doing that we were supposed to be doing is in relationship to one another.

[39 : 11] The man that knew that the master was coming back, he set the table, he fed everybody, he cared for them because that was something that the master had given him to do.

And are we faithfully doing what the master would have us to do, which is to feed those around us? Bible teachers, yes. Pastors, yes. Missionaries, yes.

but every one of us have people around us that we're given the obligation to feed the word of God. And are we doing that faithfully as unto the Lord?

And to those that may be unbelieving today, in this room, or online, after the great taking away, the rapture, when we're standing before the Lord on this day, will we find you there?

At this first judgment seat of believers, will we be standing there and recognizing that you're not with us? That you had never, he had never was the master. You were not one of his servants.

[40 : 08] You had never put your faith and trust in him. And if you're not with us on that day, brought up in the rapture, that means that the judgment waiting for you is going to come at the end, at the great white throne, which is to say that you did not put your faith and trust in him.

Will you be part, Revelation 20 verse 12, and I saw the dead small and great. And that's speaking about people. And he may be speaking about some people in this room or people watching online today.

And I saw the dead small and great stand before God and the books were open and another book was open, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works and towards their rejection of him in this life.

And for the hope of his return, dear Lord, your name we praise with longing hearts we watch and wait for the great day of days. Is that how you view his coming?

As the great day of days? Do we look forward to the Lord's return? Are you watching and working? Do you recognize that it's coming? This is a work of the Holy Spirit in every one of your lives to evaluate.

[41 : 15] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for being clear to us. Lord, I thank you for being long-suffering and patient. We do not know the hour in which you are going to come but we are mindful that you have given us a work to do.

Amen. Thank you.