

I. Introduction

- A. Our topic today is well known. People dread it. Deny it. Get angry at it. Or look forward to it. IMDB (International Movie Data Base) lists over 200 movies and TV episodes with this title. Everybody's heard about it. Everybody thinks about it. And pretty much nobody can talk about it intelligently or with any authority. We are going to fix that today.
- B. Our topic today is
 - 1. *Judgment Day*
- C. Welcome to EndGame part 7, it's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fine. We are studying the end time, and Bible prophecy about it. Who remembers the theological name for this topic? Eschatology. The study of last things in the Bible. Theology is how we organize everything the Bible says on a topic, without shoehorning Bible verse to make them say what we want. No. We let the Bible speak for itself, and we fit the pieces together. So today, Judgment Day.
- D. I've mentioned before how Judgment Day always scared me as a kid growing up in church. I grew up in a little church in Chicago. One of the widows had an air conditioner hanging out of it. And they had to put filler in to block the rest of the space that the air conditioner didn't cover. The used cardboard, and tape, and a little random sign. It wasn't there for any other reason than filler. Or for any other reason than to scare the snot out of this eight year old Italian boy.
- E. The sign, used as filler above a window air conditioner, stared at me for years. And it scared me for years. I had to stop looking at it. It was the size of sheet of paper, a royal blue background with white block letters. It said, "*Prepare to meet thy God*" (Amos 4:12).
- F. That scared me. It scared me because I wasn't sure how to prepare to meet thy God. Was I prepared? Was I? Was I?
- G. Of course, lurking there in the background was Judgment Day. Because even an 8 year old knows that when someone says, Prepare to meet thy... anything, it isn't going to end well. Prepare to meet thy principal. Prepare to meet thy auditor. Nothing happy happens after Prepare to meet thy...
- H. Fast forward to today, and I can tell you that I no longer dread judgment day. I have confidence. That may sound arrogant, but it isn't. In fact, there is biblical authority for this:
 - 1. "*And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*" (1 John 2:28)
- I. To have confidence sounds awesome. To not be ashamed before him at his coming sounds awesome. That is your potential. That is your possibility. And that is the goal for today's message, the promise in this verse would apply to you.
- J. So, first I want to talk about the concept of Judgment. Then I want to lay out three different judgments, three different judgment days if you will, in the Bible.

II. The Concept of Judgment

- A. Simple definition here: *Judgment is justice applied*. If there is going to be justice in the world, there has to be judgment in the world. To take away judgment is to take away justice.
- B. The Bible pretty much shouts the justice of God in a million places:
 - 1. "*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face.*" (Psalm 89:14)
 - 2. "*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*" (2 Timothy 4:8)
 - 3. "*You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.*" (Habakkuk 1:13)
 - 4. "*Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast.*" (Psalm 36:6)
- C. The justice of God is a major theme of both testaments in the Bible. This is really, really, really, really important to us today. Because this tells us what is at the core of the universe.
- D. Not randomness. Not chance. Not survival of the fittest. Not might makes right.
- E. What is at the core of the universe is an infinite God of infinite justice. He hates sin with a passion. And he judges it. This Creator God of infinite justice insists without any flexibility whatsoever, that the scales of justice get balanced in the end. This means the bad guys get what they have coming and the good guys get what they have coming.
 - 1. *When God repays people who do evil, that is called RETRIBUTIVE justice.*
 - 2. *When God repays people who are reckoned as good, that is called REMUNERATIVE justice.*
- F. There is no flexibility in this. Evil gets punished. Good gets rewarded. No exceptions. None.
- G. We should be very happy for this. Because without the justice of God, there would be no judgment. And without judgment, the Hitlers of the history, and the abusers of history, and the mass murderers of history would all get away with it. If they get away with it, that means we live in a universe where crime actually pays, so have at it.
- H. The only way to erase judgment day is to erase justice. And the only way to erase justice is to turn the world into a dystopian Mad Max meets Mordor.
- I. So that's a little about the concept of Justice. We need it. So, let's talk about three judgment days that flow out of the justice of God.

III. Three Judgment Days

- A. *Judgment Day One: The Cross of Christ*
 - 1. The day Jesus died on the cross was Judgment Day One. The Supreme Court of Heaven sat in session. God took up a case. God rendered a verdict. God delivered condemnation in the form of swift execution of the guilty.
 - 2. Let's break this down.
 - 3. The moral law was broken. Justice had to act. Either the sinner must die, or someone must die for the sinner. Christ was your substitute. Your sins were put on Christ.

4. Then God, put on his Judge's Robes. God judged him Guilty. He didn't sin, you did. He didn't sin, I did. But God laid on him the sins of us all. And Christ was judged guilty for the sins we had done.
 5. The penalty for sin is death, so Christ died for our sins. This was a courtroom scene
 6. Here's what this means. It means that if you are a believer in Jesus, the Judgment Day for your sins is past tense. It is over. It is finished. It is done. Your sins are G-O-N-E- gone!
 - a) *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."* (Hebrews 10:12)
 7. He sat down because his work was finished.
 8. This has enormous consequences when Judgment Day finally rolls around for you. Because Christ as judged for your sins, you can't be. There is no penalty, no punishment, no condemnation for your sins. There's no double jeopardy. The scales are already balanced. If you have believed in Jesus, God will not, and cannot, bring up your sins against you ever again, for any reason, even if you tried to invent one!
 - a) Forgiven means forgiven.
 - b) Finished means finished.
 - c) Gone means gone.
 9. Whatever judgment day you face will not be about your sins. Period. Does that mean you can sin with impunity? Yes, but only if you want to ruin your life. Because sin has its consequences... but they are not judicial and they are not eternal.
 10. Prepare to meet thy God no longer makes me afraid, because the cross of Christ made me prepared once for all.
 11. And do not make the mistake of thinking that the Cross erased justice. It did not. It satisfies justice, and goes on satisfying it forever.
 12. Judgment Day One: the Cross of Christ! Aren't you thankful?
- B. *Judgment Day Two: The Judgment Seat of Christ*
1. Even though your sins are judged, you will still stand before God one day. There is still a judgment day to come. This one is for believers in Jesus only. No unsaved people will stand in this judgment day. Just Christians. This one is called the Judgment Seat of Christ.
 - a) *"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."* (Romans 14:10)
 - b) *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [worthless]."* (2 Corinthians 5:10)
 2. This is evaluation day. It is judgment without condemnation — it is evaluation.
 3. Let's zero in on the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Greek word is Bema. In ancient Olympic games, athletes received huge rewards. They stood before the Bema Seat, and the judges put crowns on their heads. The crowns were simply vines twisted into wreaths, so they weren't worth much. But the crowns came with huge cash prizes, and honors, and prestige, and... lifetime tax exemption. So it was a big deal.
 4. The Bema seat was a tribunal for rewards. It was not judicial, it was not where someone was condemned. It was where triumphant athletes received their rewards.
 5. This is explained in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. Let's take it verse by verse.
 6. *"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 3:11)
 - a) Everything we are about to read in this paragraph is for believers in Jesus, who are built on the foundation of Jesus. Only Christians appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Judgment Day number two.
 7. *"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,"* (1 Corinthians 3:12)
 - a) The first verse talked about the foundation. These next verses talk about building.
 - b) Once you are saved, the rest of your life after that moment is what you build on the foundation of salvation. This is a metaphor, in case you didn't see that coming.
 - c) So, you are building. You are building your Christian life. You are building your post-salvation Christian life.
 - d) And there are two types of post-salvation Christian lives you can build:
 - (1) Gold, silver, precious stones.
 - (2) Wood, hay, stubble (straw).
 - e) Okay, so the metaphor gets mixed, but you get the picture.
 - (1) The first kind of building is precious, beautiful, meaningful, lasting, and valuable.
 - (2) The second kind of building is plain, purposeless, easily knocked down, and cheap.
 - f) And please notice both buildings are decent in their own way. The wood, hay, and stubble is okay. It's not evil, or sinful. It's just that it's okay, and far less than you can do. That's brought out in the next verse.
 8. *"...each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is."* (1 Corinthians 3:13)
 - a) So, picture the conveyor belt that runs through the broiler at Burger King. Flame broiled Whoppers.
 - b) Now, run something through there. What do you run through there? Do you run your sins through there? Look at the verse. What gets run through the flames. You?
 - c) No.
 - d) Not you. Not your sins.
 - e) The fire will test each one's WORK. Works. Your works. Your product. This isn't your bad stuff. This is your good stuff.
 - f) Not your sins, but your works.
 - g) It can't be your sins, because of Judgment Day One, the Cross of Christ. Those can't be judged. But your good works can be judged without one whisper of any of your sins.

- h) Why would God evaluate your works?
9. *“If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:14, 15)*
- Heaven is not based on works.
 - But your level of reward in heaven is based on works.
 - Let’s pick a hobby. What is your hobby? Coin collecting. Scrapbooking. Golf. Pinterest. Cooking. Bass fishing. Sports. Art.
 - All of those things are good things. Not one of them is a sin. They are good things.
 - Here’s the question: are they good things with eternal value?
 - Did God really put you on earth, and save you, to play golf for the rest of your life — don’t answer out loud.
 - No. He put you on earth to grow in grace, and grow in maturity, and move along the grace pathway. He put you on earth to grow mature to a point where you are really good and helping people find and follow God in your own way.
 - There are ways to incorporate golf and knitting and anything into that mission, but that’s where the gold is. That’s the gold, silver, and precious stones. That’s what lasts for eternity. And that’s what heaps giant pile of rewards in the back yard of your super-sized deluxe mansion in heaven.
 - By the way, I don’t want to spoil anybody’s good times. God does not want you to be a workaholic for Christ. He teaches you a rhythm of spiritual growth, then rest, then labor, then rest, then service, then play, then rest, all that. Sabbath. Don’t burn out.
 - But there will be rewards in heaven, and those will create huge differences between us.
 - We’ll both tee off in heaven, and my drive will sail a mile and a half, but your drive will make it to Pluto, because you got the gold, silver, and precious stones golf-set, but mine got burned up, so I’m stuck with aluminum.
10. Notice, “he himself will be saved.” This judgment is not about heaven or not. That’s already decided. It’s about rewards in heaven.
11. And that is where John’s promise comes in:
- “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” (1 John 2:28)*
12. The secret of these rewards is abiding in Christ. That is how you have confidence before him at this coming. That is how you are not ashamed... meaning you live with no regrets... at this coming.
13. Which means what exactly?
14. I think abiding in Christ is one the most important concepts in the Bible. A lot of experts put forth a lot of different theories about what it means.
- Some say it means a mystical experience of God. I don’t interpret it that way, though that might be part of it.
 - Some say abiding in Christ means obedience. I don’t interpret it that way either, though that might be part of it too.
 - If you are going to stand before the Bema Seat of Christ, for final evaluation...
 - And if “abiding in Him” is THE key action to pass that evaluation with flying colors...
 - Then wouldn’t it be a good idea if we were all crystal clear on what abiding in Christ actually means? That’s the basis of the evaluation, right?
15. John taught about it here in First John.
16. Jesus taught about it in John 15, where he used a vineyard to illustrate it. I am a vine, you are the branches, he said. If you abide in me you will bear much fruit.
17. The Old Testament talks about abiding too. The prophets talk about God’s people as God’s vine. I think Psalm 15 is the best commentary on what abiding in Christ actually means.
18. So what does it mean to abide in Christ? The word abide simply means remain, or to stay, or stay connected. It means to stick around. Hang around. Not drop out. It means to dwell or to live in a place.
19. So much for the word abide. What does it mean to abide in Christ?
- Has anybody here ever had a gym membership?
 - Has anybody here ever had a gym membership and stopped using it? You’re paying for it, but you stopped going the third week in March?
20. When it comes to Jesus, you already have the membership, so keep going to the gym. There you go. That’s abiding in Christ.
- Abiding in Christ means consistency in spiritual growth to the point where everyday life becomes an ongoing conversation with God.*
21. We have a plan for spiritual growth and it is called the Grace Pathway. Actually, and pathway is good, if it gets you into the Bible, and gets the Bible into you.
22. So that’s spiritual growth — or the Grace Pathway.
23. But abiding in Christ requires consistency. That’s the key. Momentum. Habit. Keep going to the gym... keep walking the grace pathway... Because as you grow in grace, everyday life becomes an ongoing prayer, an ongoing conversation with God, a life where he walks with you and talks with you and tells you you are his own.
24. What I’m saying is that when you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, God will be looking at your heart. Behaviors, obedience, actions, choices, morality — yes. But all of those things as they reveal the heart.
25. Because how things go down on Judgment Day depends on it. We’ll talk more about this in message number 9.
- C. *Judgment Day Three: The Great White Throne Judgment*

1. When the justice of God begins to be poured out on earth, it is so devastating, it is so shattering and so dumbfounding, that in John's vision there was silence in the heavens for a space of half an hour (Romans 8:1). Angels and demons alike will be dumbstruck.
2. We have no real concept of the ferocity of the justice of God.
3. The Great White Throne Judgment is the judgment that most people think of when they think of Judgment Day. It's the big one. It happens at the close of the Millennium.
 - a) *"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Revelation 20:11-15)
4. Only unsaved people will appear at this judgment. If you're saved, you won't be here, your name won't be called here.
 - a) In the vision, John saw the dead, "small and great..." Money, power, influence makes no difference here. Do you measure up to the righteousness of God or not.
 - b) Verse 12 says the dead were judged according to the works. Think about that. It says works, not sins. The good stuff. That means that an unsaved person can step before God and God can say, show me your best, and it still isn't good enough.
 - (1) There are some whose interpretation say there are degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire, worse for some than others. I agree with that viewpoint (Matthew 10:15; 11:24).
 - c) Death and hades (hell) are finished — they are emptied out into the Lake of Fire.
 - d) This is called the second death, because physical death is the first death, and final judgment is the second death.
 - e) Anyone not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire.
 - f) And the thing is the people who will be there will not only be in agony, they will be in rage. They will forever rail against God in "the blackest darkness" and "unquenchable fire" with weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 3:12; 25:46; Revelation 20:10, 2 Peter 2:17).
5. *Dear Christian, your name is in the Book of Life, and no one can erase it. Your judgment day is past, and you have nothing to fear.*
6. The sad thing is there will be religious people in the Lake of Fire. There will be decent people in the Lake of Fire. There will be loving people, good people, moral people, sincere people, people we know, and people we love.
7. What is at stake is the eternal righteousness of God and his absolute dedication to purging the new world of sin.
8. Jesus died for them. If they refuse Jesus, if they refuse their own conscience, the lake of fire is the best God can do for them.
9. The devil is cast into the lake of fire. The demons are cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the eradication of all sin, all evil, and all darkness from the world to come once for all forever.

IV. Conclusion

- A. Prepare to meet thy God.
- B. An older generation worried they were too bad to approach God.
 1. Today's generation see themselves as being too good to need him.
- C. Yesterday's generation saw him as being frighteningly omnipotent.
 1. Today's generation sees him as peripheral and optional and evil.
- D. Society is in a deadly peril of drugging itself into the slumber of moral indifference by drinking in a satanic nectar of distorted grace. As if love were God's only quality.
- E. He is holy God. He is a jealous God. His fury will rattle the heavens, and one day blow up the earth and the whole cosmos with it.
- F. We do nobody any favors when we erase Judgment Day. If you don't like it, you can't erase it. The only thing to do is help people escape it by the gospel of grace and the shed blood of The Lamb Jesus Christ.
- G. That is why our church exists. Dear World. Prepare to meet thy God.