

MAY 5 & 6, 2012 • RENÉ SCHLAEPFER

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. *Revelation 21:4*

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. ... And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. *Revelation 19:11–12;20:10*

[Jesus:] "A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." *John 5:28*

[Jesus:] "This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous." *Matthew 13:49*

- Jesus spoke more about God's judgment than anyone in N.T.
- ______% of Christ's teachings are about the final judgment.
- More than _____ his parables are about the final judgment.

Common Questions About God's Judgment

What is hell?

"Gebenna" (used 11 times by Jesus): Jerusalem garbage dump

- "...the eternal **fire** prepared for the devil and his angels." *Matthew 25:41*
- "...outer **darkness**, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *Matthew* 8:12;25:40;22:13

All these are metaphors to describe a real place, or more accurately, a real state of being.



Why would a loving God want to send people to hell?

God did **not** send his Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the **world** might be saved through him. *John 3:1*7

The Lord is **not** willing that **any** should perish but that **all** should come to repentance. *2 Peter 3:9*

...God our Savior desires **everyone** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. *1 Timothy 2:4*

If God doesn't want anyone to go to hell, why do people end up there?

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. *John 3:19* (See Romans 1:24,26,28)

"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires beaven will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened." — C. S. Lewis

Why does there have to be a final judgment?

Without it there would be no real
Without it there would be no real
"If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not want to make a final end to violence — that god would not be worthy of worship in fact, my practice of non-violence requires a belief in divine justice." — Miroslav Volf, Yale professor
Without it there would be no real

Is this really fair to everyone?

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are **without excuse**. *Romans* 1:20

[Jesus:] "...I am he who **searches hearts and minds**..." Revelation 2:23

Isn't God supposed to be forgiving?

Like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be recovered, so we must die. But God does not take away life; instead, **he devises ways** so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him. 2 Samuel 14:14

How do I respond to this?

1. Receive

[Jesus:] "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and **will not be condemned**; he has crossed over from death to life." *John 5:24*

2. Reach

"I don't think we know the details about hell; we must just stick to the view that (a) justice and mercy will be done, (b) but nevertheless it is our duty to do all we can to rescue the perishing." – C. S. Lewis

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the **gates of Hades** will not overcome it. *Matthew 16:18*

In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: "What are you asking God to do?" To wipe out your past sins and, at great cost, to give you a fresh start, offering miraculous help? He has done so, on Calvary. To leave you alone? Alas, then, I am afraid that is also what He does. — C. S. Lewis

Resources For Further Study

The Reason for God Tim Keller

God Wins Mark Galli

The Great Divorce C. S. Lewis **Mere Christianity** C. S. Lewis

Sermons and by Bill Hybels and John Ortberg also contributed to the content in today's message.

THIS WEDNESDAY: FAQ2

From 6:30–8:00pm, a panel of pastors will answer more of your FAQs about faith!



God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. *John 3:17*

Daily Meditations

Monday

Look at the notes from this past weekend. Which questions about the final judgment have you had? Did any of the answers surprise you?

How could the Bible's descriptions of God's last judgment actually inspire or motivate you here and now? How do these ideas help you grow closer to the Lord? How do they help inspire you reach out to others?

How would you respond to people who enjoy telling other people or groups that they are going to hell? (See Romans 14:10–13; James 4:11–12; Matthew 7:1–3)

Ask God to help you think accurately and inspirationally about God's justice and mercy in the life to come!

Tuesday

Each day this week, I'll invite you to read verses about God's healing and restoration of all things — and I want you to notice how these verses are almost always tied in to verses about His judgment of evil. For example: Read Revelation 20:11–15 and continue into Revelation 21:1–6. I am not saying these verses are easy to understand, but I do find the relationship of God's judgment to His subsequent healing to be consistent — and thought-provoking.

Why do you suppose life without fear, pain, or sorrow is linked to the destruction of evil and evil influences?

What do you find comforting in these verses? What disturbs you?

What reactions do you suppose these verses were meant to provoke in the original readers?

Ask God you give you wisdom as you study these verses — and especially humility. Certainly we are not meant to callously point fingers at others and tell them they are going to hell!

Wednesday

Read Isaiah 61:1–9. The Bible says the opening verses here were the text for Christ's first sermon (See Luke 4:17)! What do you find comforting in these verses?

Wednesday (continued)

Still, tucked into these verses there is a reference to God's judgment (verse 2). Notice that Jesus doesn't quote this part of the text in Luke — because this is yet to be fulfilled, at the last judgment. The rest of the verse was fulfilled immediately in Christ's earthly ministry. How could a promise of God's vengeance be comforting to those who have suffered unjustly?

Pray for those suffering in countries around the world today. Ask God for justice for the oppressed. Thank God for the promises in these verses!

Thursday

Read Isaiah 11:1–9. This is another passage quoted in the New Testament as a reference to Jesus Christ. How do you see Christ's comfort and His judgment in this passage? How are they related?

This passage was originally written to Israelites who had seen their nation fall into ruin; the Lord inspired these words to motivate them to have hope. How does this inspire you to have hope today?

Thank God for the hope of renewal of all things!

Friday

Read Luke 13:23–30. What surprises you about this description of heaven? Note the type of people in Jesus' audience in this chapter (See Luke 13:10–14). It seems to me that Jesus is emphasizing to religious types, cocky in their self-righteousness, that they should approach their eternal destiny with more humility. Why do you think Jesus told the falsely pious, self-satisfied religious leaders that they would be surprised about who's "in" and who's "out" of heaven?

Why is this truth important for Christians to hear today?

You may have noticed that many of the passages about heaven refer to those left out of heaven. Why you think the Bible contains these warnings?

Ask God to give you a heart of love and compassion for all those who need to hear about Him. Ask Him for opportunities to share.

Saturday

Finish any devotions you may have missed and meditate on the memory verse. Please pray for the services this weekend — that God would be glorified and people would be brought closer to Him. And remember to do something special for the Moms in your life — it's Mother's Day!