

11045-A May 29, 2011
Revelation #37
Eternal Judgment pt 2
Revelation Chapter 20:11-15

I. John 3:16-20. Jesus said astounding things about judgment.

- A. The world. Cosmos in John is the rotten system in its broken state. It has already been condemned. In fact it condemns itself by passing laws it does not obey.
- B. The way. God loves the cosmos in a very surprising and specific way—radically self-sacrificially. Rom.8:32
 - 1. “So loved” does not mean “so much” but “in this way”
 - 2. He doesn’t lust after it, but has compassion on it. (We actually reverse these)
- C. The wonder (astonishing): the world is perishing under God’s judgment, yet he loves it and has given his own Son to save it.
- D. *And Jesus said this to Nicodemus—a Bible scholar at the top of his game—who discovered that he too was perishing!!*

Revelation contains the most graphic vision of final judgment in the Bible. It is personal and violent.

II. Last week we saw several things about the Final Judgment. Rev. 20:11-15

- A. The description of it. *Symbolic of reality beyond our imagination.*
 - 1. Not literal fire. Symbolic of a reality that we cannot imagine, but that by analogy may be compared to some sort of endless fire.
- B. The power behind it. *God himself, in Christ.* Matt. 10:28; Jn. 5:22
 - 1. Wrath is God’s settled, permanent, righteous opposition to all evil and sin.
 - 2. *There will never be a time when God ceases to oppose evil. He doesn’t “get over” his wrath.*
- C. The basis of it. *Human Deeds.* 12
 - 1. *Because deeds are the index of the heart.*
 - 2. *The heart is what needs to be forgiven and transformed.*
 - 3. *So, hell is a confirmation of man’s will to not belong to God.*
- D. The experience of it. *Eternal Conscious Torment.* 10
 - 1. The symbolism indicates an ongoing, eternal reality.
 - 2. A continued state of anger and rebellion against God, even when forced to admit he was right.
 - a) There is sorrow over pain, but no repentance about sin.
 - b) Given over to their desires against God. Rom.1:21-32
- E. The rescue from it. *Not our deeds, but Christ’s deeds.* 2 Cor. 5:21
 - 1. His death and his obedience both put to our account.

III. Five important truths that come from the hard news about judgment.

A. There is a judge and it is not us.

1. There is a judge: Good news because nobody gets away with anything.
2. It's not us: Good news because we don't have to decide the fate of people. I'm free to be loving, truthful, and patient.
3. *We can speculate too much about other people's judgment.*
 - a) When you trust the Lord with your soul, you are trusting him with everybody's soul.
 - b) 3 ways in which this sort of speculation happens
 - (1) What about the aborigines? (Someone I don't know might not get fair treatment from God.)
 - (a) Really? You know this?
 - (2) What about my friend? (Someone I love might *be* in hell.)
 - (a) But we do not know that.
 - (3) What about my enemy? (Someone I hate *might not* be in hell.)
 - (a) But we are not in charge. Matt. Mtt.7:1
4. *We can speculate too much about our own "rightness."*
 - a) Many of us rejoice in our "rightness" "correctness" rather than in our forgiveness. Mtt.7:1; Luke 18:9-14
 - b) There is subtle shift that happens when people rejoice in being right rather than being forgiven. They become judges.
 - c) Discerning is one thing, but perpetual anger over other people's sins is a danger sign that we might be competing with the Lord for his job as final judge.

B. And there will come a time when we will not be able to hide. (Earth and heaven fled away)

1. *We are individually, ultimately alone with God. (see also 2 Cor.5:10)*
 - a) What in this world is making me put God off?
 - (1) A relationship? Marriage? Parenting?
 - (2) A business goal? Success?
 - (3) An educational goal?
 - b) There will come a time when nothing matters except our relationship with God. People often come to this realization when something significant in this age collapses, leaving them "godless."

C. Because Sin is more evil than we think it is. (The just punishment is horrible)

1. *The punishment is horrific. Something must be wrong:*
 - a) The Bible is wrong to describe this in this way?
 - b) God is wrong to judge in this way?
 - c) We are wrong about our view of sin.
 - (1) It is worse than we thought.
 - d) We are so accustomed to viewing our sin in light of other sin that we don't see it in God's light.

2. *Sin against an infinitely good person has infinitely bad consequences. Ps 51:4*
 - a) If a sniper kills a gangster, that is bad because it is murder.
 - b) If a sniper kills a baby in her stroller, that is worse—why?
 - c) The nature of the victim has an impact on how we view the crime. If the victim is innocent and helpless, the crime is worse.
 - d) *God is innocent and all sin leads to killing him.*
3. *Sin is not just breaking rules; it is worshipping something in the creation.*
 - a) A good thing that becomes more important to you than God.
 - b) It doesn't start with hatred of God, but with a deep desire for something in the creation: like Eve's desire for the fruit and Adam's desire for Eve.

D. And our deeds by themselves can do nothing but condemn us.

1. *The Bible does not declare the doctrine of final judgment to make people act better. But to stop all acting.*
 - a) The worst thing you can do is try to act better instead of repenting.
 - (1) If you achieve it, you will become a Pharisee
 - (2) If you fail (and you probably will) you will become dejected, cynical, and lose your faith in Christ.
2. Our bad deeds of course are evil.
 - a) These are the real index of our heart.
3. *But apart from grace our good deeds are even more dangerous!*
 - a) We use them to avoid repenting.
4. Many moralistic people try to avoid Jesus by avoiding sin.
 - a) They look good, *but their motive is to avoid repentance.*
 - b) *Stop trying to convince yourself and God that you don't need to repent. 1 Jn.1:8-9.*

E. But, at the cross God's justice and love meet for us. John 3:16; Rom.8:32

1. *Not two books of our works to balance out (karma)*
 - a) But one book of sacrifice for our sin. The Lamb's Book of Life.
2. *The slain lamb is where God's love and justice meet. Rom. 3:21-4:8.*
 - a) His just wrath was poured out on his own son, the slain lamb, so that his eternal life could be given to you
3. *This wrath, hell, is what Jesus experienced for us.*
 - a) Separation from All the goodness of God and emersion in all the wrath of God on our behalf.
 - b) The God who personally judges all evil is the God who has become one of us and absorbed his own wrath and judgment. Rom 3:21-28.

IV. The Good News is that God had astonishing compassion on the sinful world and sacrificed his own human life to save us from the wrath we so richly deserve. John 3:16.

A. If we do not respond to this reality, we have nobody to blame but ourselves.