

HEAVEN REVEALED

HEAVEN REVEALED: JUDGMENT SEAT

Synopsis: Last week we got to see what heaven is like now. But did you know that is not heaven's final form? God's ultimate plan is to reunite heaven and earth! This week we will look at passages describing God's reuniting of heaven and earth.

I am excited to continue in our Heaven Revealed series. If you are joining us for the first time I would encourage you to go back and watch the previous three messages. We have been looking through scripture to help us understand what Heaven is and realizing we can experience Heaven here now although the final culmination of the New Heaven and New Earth has yet to come. Why talk about heaven? Because the hope of our faith in Christ is that this life is not all there is. We can believe in life beyond this life here on earth.

Last week Pastor Mike spoke on what happens directly upon dying. We learned that we will be ushered by angels and immediately be in God's presence. We also learned that we will be conscious and aware of things that are happening on earth. We see people we remember and they will know us. And of course we learned that we will participate in this great worship as we sing Holy Holy is the Lord.

This morning we will talk about another aspect of Heaven that most people don't talk about. That is the believers Final Judgment.

The Final Judgment

¹¹ "And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. ¹² I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave[a] gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire," (Revelation 20:11-15 NLT).

So let's look at a scenario: Heart attack - ushered by angels - immediately in God's presence - your conscience - you participate in this great worship - you see some things that happening on earth however you don't know everything - meet some people and they know you and you know them - **THEN you will be joined by all living christians when Jesus raptures the church from the earth to be judged for rewards at the Judgement Seat (Bema) of Christ.**

When will this happen? We don't know for sure. But it is a certainty that the rapture will happen.

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Judgment Seat (Bema) of Christ

- The Greek word bema refers to a platform for a judge or king
- Pilate and King Herod sat on these
- Although we don't know the exact time it will happen, theologians believe this will occur sometime before the Second Coming of Christ
- Why? Because at his Second Coming, Christ returns with His believers

Many of us get nervous when we talk about judgment because we think in terms of natural law - our courts system; you will be found guilty or innocent; if guilty you will receive just punishment. And rightly so. Romans 14:12 tells us, *"Yes, each of us will give a personal account to God."*

The truth is many Christians don't often contemplate that each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Although many bible verses teach this, most of us don't live our lives daily with this "eternal perspective." If we did, life here on earth would definitely look much different. Amen. This eternal perspective of accountability and judgment should determine how we live in the now. It should make us think twice before speaking or acting.

So the big reason for our message this morning (as you will see) is...

FAITH IN JESUS ENSURES WE WILL HAVE LIFE IN ETERNITY AND WHAT HAPPENS AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT WILL DETERMINE HOW WE LIVE IN ETERNITY.

It's important that we remember that God promises total forgiveness for our sins, and without it we can't enter Heaven. It is a FREE GIFT. You can't earn it. You just receive it by faith in Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:9 NIV *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* This is true and yet there are other true things also revealed in Scripture, which we must try to reconcile and understand. For example,

2 Corinthians 5:10 *"For we must all stand before Christ to be Judged. We will receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body."*

And then again, Jesus speaking to both believers and unbelievers, said, *"You must give an account on judgment day for every idle word you speak,"* (Matthew 12:36 NLT).

YES Salvation is a free gift. We are saved by grace alone. But as we will see this morning God's compassion, and God's love will give way to God's judgment because God is God of justice. God says let me forgive you; let me forgive; many reject him; the evil in this world tries to keep us from coming to Him. Yet, He desires to give everyone many chances to turn to him. However, there will be a moment when chances are done and God's justice is set forth making all things new. He will make all things right.

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I believe we are creatures of justice to some degree or another. Think about when you were young or even now when you see something and had the thought that's not fair.

This is built in our heart because we are made in the image of God and He is a just God.

When we talk about people getting what they deserve it's called retribution.

For those who choose to reject Christ, their retribution is Hell. CS Lewis said, "everyone who is in hell wants to be there." Why? Because when you say, "I don't want your help God", He says ok THY will be done. When you say, "God help me", He says ok MY will be done. God's grace and dignity allows for us to choose. So your choice will receive it's just reward.

Now you might be feeling confused like I was. Hold on PT I thought once I've come to Christ that's it; everything is good; that's it; I'm all good. And to that I say yes but there's more. Turn to your neighbor and say there is more.

Randy Alcorn explains it like this. "There are two different judgments in God's word: the judgment of faith, and the judgment of works (deeds). The judgment of faith relates to our eternal salvation, while the judgment of words relates to our eternal reward."

Judgment of Faith simply stated ... Salvation is according to God's work for us, whereas, Rewards are according to our work for God.

Eternal price for Salvation - PAID FOR; who paid it - Christ (Hebrews 10:12-18). If we have put our faith and trust in Him for that PAYMENT/PROVISION for the penalty of sin, we will not go to hell. We have been fully forgiven of our sins, and we are completely secure in Christ's love (Psalm 103:8-18; Romans 8:31-39, John 5:24, Romans 8:1). That is why we can look at the Judgment Seat of Christ as not something to be worried about but something to embrace and look forward to.

Jesus will reveal to the believer his/her true nature within their heart. Every rebellious act, wrong attitude, and cutting word will be reviewed. Not to condemn us but for us to truly understand the depth and breadth of His grace and forgiveness. We will experience in a brief moment sorrow in the presence of our holy savior knowing how undeserving we are of what His sacrificial love has done for us. Because of this amazing gift, and after the momentary sorrow, there comes tremendous joy of having received this undeserved forgiveness. Why?

Christ's judgment is not a punishment; it is a reminder that we are pardoned.

⁸ "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do,"

(Ephesians 2: 8-10).

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So we are saved by grace through faith. However, the forgiveness of sins determines our eternal destination (heaven or hell), but it does not determine our rewards in Heaven. Ephesians 2:10 NIV *"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

If he has prepared this good work for us to do, we must choose to do the work He prompts us to do each and every day. The bible talks about receiving a crown and for time purposes we cannot discuss that. But what I do want to share is a quote from Randy Alcorn I found very interesting. He said, "to wear the crown we must first bear the cross" And scripture tells us we must Scripture pick up your cross.

²⁴ "Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"
(Matthew 16: 24-26 NIV)

The bottom line, What you do with your resources (time, talent, treasure), will not only matter now but will matter for all of eternity.

Paul clearly states that what we do here on earth will have eternal implications and we will answer to God for the works we have done in this life.

¹² "If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames"
(1 Corinthians 3:12-15 NIV).

If you have been less faithful and obedient in your walk with Christ you won't suffer loss of salvation but you will suffer loss of reward. And I don't know about you, but I want all that God wants to reward me on the New Earth. Amen! I know at the very least we all want to hear well done my good and faithful servant (Hebrews 6:11).

So as we are standing at the Judgement Seat of Christ and the Lord is looking at all we have done for Him and all we have not done for Him that He asked us to do, How will we feel? Well let's think about it. If we see all we could have had because of all we should have done and we realize in that moment that we failed to accomplish all our work, I'm sure we might have some momentary regret. Why momentary? Well after the judgment seat the Lord makes all things new and removes all sorrow and restores our joy.

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Amazing!!! How are you feeling so far? How is your assigned work coming along? Knowing our work will be rewarded should motivate us to follow Jesus wholeheartedly and cause us to have a healthy fear of the Lord living in obedience. Amen?.

After the Judgement seat

Next week you will learn more about what happens after the judgment seat. You definitely don't want to miss it. This is the part of the story when it gets really good. The New Heaven and New Earth the new ME the best ME will have been established. Our new body will be similar to our old body but like Christ's resurrected body - Christ ate, drank, and my favorite part He also had new abilities (teleported, walk through walls). In the New Heaven, and on the New Earth, there will be no sin, no comparison, no sicknesses, no false motives, etc.

Two big questions to ask yourself:

Do I know for certain that if I have a massive heart attack; I am saved by Christ's finished work on the cross?

There is only one throne in heaven and in the universe - who sits on that throne?

Your reigning reward and experience in the new heaven and earth will be directly correlated to how you live right now. The byproduct - when God rules and reigns is that your whole life comes in alignment. He's not just a God you believe in; he's the personal Lord of your life. He cares about you, cares for you, and guides you.

Many want to live this life blinded doing things our own way. And when we hit walls, go over cliffs, relationships break down, money evaporates and you're broke, depression comes up, life seems out of control, we say God where are you. He is saying this is a test and it's an open book test, do it my way, let me help you, let me love you. It's decision time and I pray you make a decision from an eternal perspective.

Let's live in Light of Eternity

Seek to live each day in light of eternity with the right kind of the fear of the Lord and a heart-felt love that desires to please Him. Live NOW the way that you will one day wish you would have. Don't postpone obedience, holiness, purity, drawing close to God or serving others. Put into practice now what you will be doing eternally in the New Heaven and Earth!

Close with poem written by British missionary CT Studd "Only One Life, 'Twill soon be Past"

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last. Oh let my love with fervor burn, And from the world now let me turn; Living for Thee, and Thee alone, Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne; Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."

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Discussion Question:

1. Do I know for certain that if I were to die I have trusted in the saving work of Christ?
2. How should the Church be living in light of how it will be on that day?
3. If God allowed you to visit heaven like the Apostle John or Paul, how do you think it would change your life?