

“Judge”
Apostles Creed
Various
08/06/2023

Introduction

We are wrapping up section 2 of the creed today which focuses on the person and work of Jesus. We've looked at what Jesus has done in the past – entered into humanity, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, descended to hades, rose again defeating satan, sin, and death – and we looked at what he's doing currently – sitting on the throne ruling, interceding, and preparing a place for all who trust in Him.

Today, we're finishing the section of the Creed focused on Jesus by looking at his future work. What will Jesus do in the future? The Creed says it this way – **From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

We've got our work cut out for us this morning so go ahead and grab a Bible, head to **Matthew 25:31-46**.

We'll get there in a little bit. Before we dive in, as we've been doing every week let's stand, and let's read the Creed together.

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAY.

JVI Show. Growing up, I had what could best be described as a fearful and frightened disposition towards life. To put it another way – I was the scared kid.

- I didn't ride my first roller coaster until I was 13, and even then I spent my whole first ride in tears. Which was terribly embarrassing seeing as I had worked it out to ride the ride next to my middle school crush.
- Until I was, I believe 10 or 11, the line of a stranger that “don't worry you'll know it's a tornado because it sounds like a train” made every thunderstorm sound like a train. Which led to once a week sleeping on my parent's floor.
- Or every 4th of July, when the rest of the kids from school found it thrilling to spend their evening at opposite sides of the driveway launching roman candles at each other, I was safely in the confines of the garage out of imminent danger.

And so knowing that about me, it should make sense when I tell you my story of conversion – how I came to faith in Jesus – was also a moment of fear and trepidation.

I was 6 years old, sitting on the living room floor of my childhood home, watching a Christian talk show where a very very old man with a much too young 2nd wife tells me that Boris Yeltsin is the anti-Christ, and he has 10 reasons why Jesus is going to return in the year 2000 (Y2K am I right?) and how I better repent of my sins and ask Jesus into my heart or I'm going to be left behind in the rapture. Yes, just like everyone's favorite Nicholas Cage movie.

Now I'm not discrediting the work of God in my life to save me, I really do believe that I understood my need for a Savior, but it was largely the fear of "from there Christ will come to judge the living and the dead" that led me to pray the sinner's prayer at age 6. And it was largely the fear of "from there Christ will come to judge the living and the dead" that led me to walk the aisle at youth camp when I was 12, and 13, and 14, and 15.

And so I wonder what goes through your mind or your heart when I tell you that today we're talking about Jesus coming back to judge...

Maybe like me it's thoughts back to your childhood, where you're instantly kind of brought back to that place of **fear** and **trepidation**.

Maybe for you this idea that Christ will return one day and judge is really your sticking point with Christianity as a whole. This idea of judgment strikes you as something that feels almost anti-God, or at least the God of love you've been told about. The idea of a final judgment by God feels old-fashioned and outdated and should be left to caricatured preachers of hellfire and brimstone.

Or maybe this line brings anxiety, worry, fear, not because of you per se, but because you wonder what this means for the people you love.

Wherever you are today, I think we can all agree, this line can be particularly difficult, particularly jarring, particularly tempting for us to get rid of, push aside, interpret around.

But while this line, perhaps especially as modern Westerners, can be particularly difficult, this line is also particularly orthodox and particularly biblical.

Belief that Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead is a marker of **orthodoxy**. Regardless of what some tik-tok theologian might want to try and convince you of, this line has been held and believed by faithful, Bible-following, Jesus-loving Christians as a core doctrine of the faith throughout church history.

And it's been that way because this line is all over the place in the Bible. The idea of Jesus returning on a future day to judge is not a doctrine built on one obscure passage scholars try to twist and distort to fill their agenda, it is not built on guessing or speculation.

Just in the NT alone the return and judgment by Christ is referenced over **300 times**. Just to put it in perspective for you, that is:

- **1 in every 13 verses**
- **7 out of every 10 chapters**
- **23 of the 27 books.**

Passages like...

- Paul in **2 Timothy 4:1 – I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.**
- John in **Revelation 22:12 – 12 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.**
- Peter in **2 Peter 3:10 – 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.**

But if that's not enough to convince you of the Biblical evidence for this doctrine, perhaps the best picture of what Jesus returning to judge the living and the dead means is taught by Jesus himself in Matthew 25.

So hopefully you're there by now. Here's where we're going today:

- I want us to walk through this passage together and just lay out for us what Jesus specifically says about his return and judgment.
- We'll next deal with some of the difficulties that arise in our minds over the judgment of Christ.
- And then I'll close by trying to shape this line in our minds from a line of dread or objection, to a line of repentance, worship, and then celebration.

Matthew 25:31-40 - The Sheep

This passage comes at the end of a longer sermon by Jesus all about the end of the world. What's going to happen on that day in the future that no one knows when it will take place beside God the Father – what is that day going to be like? And Jesus has already told us it'll be like a thief in the night. People will be getting married, going to work, eating and drinking, living their everyday lives when all of a sudden Jesus will return. It will be undeniable – a loud trumpet call and lightning flashing across the sky.

And then we get to verse 31...

Matthew 25:31-46

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

So Jesus tells us that at the conclusion of history – whenever that occurs – Jesus will come in glory and all of the "nations" – all of the people on earth – will be gathered before him. And at that point, Jesus will separate them into two groups – sheep on the right. Goats on the left.

This was a prophecy/metaphor lifted directly out of the Old Testament – **Ezekiel 34** – where it promises that the Lord would one day separate the sheep (His people) from the goats (those who were not His people).

And it's important to recognize here Jesus isn't declaring or making people sheep and goats. He's identifying and separating people based on what is already true about them, are they a sheep or are they a goat.

That's what a shepherd does, and that's what Jesus ultimately says that he will do when the end comes.

34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

So, the determining factor – the way Jesus distinguishes between the so-called "sheep" and the "goats" – evidently, is this: **the sheep are the ones who, in one way or another, welcomed Jesus. Accepted Jesus.**

If people did that, Jesus says, they get to spend eternity with him and the Father in what he calls the "kingdom."

Now, that probably fits, more or less, with what many of us have heard before about eternity. Especially if we grew up in the Church. To a lot of us, it probably sounded something like this: "If you accept Jesus (If you ask Jesus into your heart),

you go to heaven. If you don't accept Jesus, you go to the other place." That sound familiar to anybody? I figured as much. So far, so good.

But at the same time, Jesus seems to be saying a little more than that here. Because it doesn't seem like he's just talking about raising your hand in a church service or telling people you "accepted" Jesus in a spiritual, internal sense. Here, it seems like Jesus means something a little more tangible. A little more active. He speaks of us feeding him. Giving him something to drink. Clothing him. Etc. etc.

That, at least to me, seems a little more concrete than just "asking Jesus into your heart." Do you see that?

So the question then is what does Jesus mean exactly, by us doing all of these things for him? What does it mean to feed, clothe, visit, provide for Jesus? And that, really, is the question that gets asked next in the passage itself.

37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers (Gk - my brothers and sisters), you did it to me.'

Jesus says – here's how you welcomed me, clothed me, fed me...by doing that for the least of these **brothers and sisters of mine**.

Now, Jesus is very specific here. He doesn't say if you fed *any person who was hungry*. He says if you fed *these brothers and sisters of mine*. Which is Jesus' language throughout the gospel for **followers of Him**. People who belong to the Kingdom of God. People who believe and trust Jesus is the Messiah, King of Kings, Savior of the World – that is who Jesus calls his brothers and sisters.

For example, **Matt 12:50 – 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**

So that means according to Jesus – **he knows if we're sheep who inherit his kingdom or goats who inherit eternal punishment by whether or not we tangibly provide for other Christians around us in need.**

Now let me make sure I'm being abundantly clear...

Jesus is not saying – sheep are welcome in my kingdom on the day of judgment **because** they served those in need. But rather serving those in need is evidence they're a sheep who belongs in my kingdom.

Or I'll say it this way – **Jesus isn't saying that people are saved by things that they do. But he is absolutely saying that the things that they do reveal whether or not they truly are saved.**

This is shown clearly in other places in Scripture as well, most notably a couple of places in **1 John**. I'll give you one:

1 John 4 – 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

So Jesus will return. And when he returns, those who are sheep, evidenced by how they tangibly loved and served other Christians will enter into eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Matthew 25:41-46 - The Goats

Which is all good right? We're on board with that. But then comes the next part...and this is where things start to get a bit sticky. He's going to say the exact opposite to the other group.

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' 45 Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Jesus repeats everything He just said, but now he puts it in reverse. The first group cared for Jesus by caring for his people. Their welcome and provision for God's people was evidence of their welcome and provision for Jesus himself. Likewise, the second group of people's unwillingness to welcome and provide for God's people is evidence of their rejection of Jesus himself.

And the consequence of rejecting Jesus is eternal separation from him. **It's what Jesus describes with imagery like "eternal fire" and "eternal punishment."** Which is the imagery Jesus uses elsewhere for what you and I call hell (or in light of the sermon a few weeks ago – *Gehenna*) – **the state of perpetual torment via eternal separation from God.**

That's what Jesus says in Matthew 25. That's what the Creed holds up. That's what we affirm as Bible believing Christians – one day Jesus is going to return and he's going to judge. And those who welcomed Him (evidenced by their tangible love for other Christians) will inherit the kingdom of God/eternal life and those who did not welcome Him (evidenced by their lack of tangible love for other Christians) will inherit eternal punishment.

Judgment?

Alright. Here's where I need to pause and we need to chat. Because, let's face it, this idea of *hell*, or "eternal punishment," is admittedly one of the most difficult ideas for us as modern people to get on board with. We hear "Jesus is coming to judge and for some that means eternal torment and separation from God" and instantly all of these questions rise to the surface.

- How can a loving God send people to hell? Doesn't that sound a bit extreme and unlike Him?
- How can Christians enjoy heaven if they know that others, especially family and friends, are imprisoned in hell for all eternity?
- What about those with no opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus and respond? Wouldn't punishing them make God unfair?
- I get punishment for a little while, but why does it have to be eternal punishment?

And that's just a few of the many questions that might arise in your mind or the minds of those who you love. And they are deep and urgent questions, because humans and their eternal state are involved, right?

So here's what I want to do. I want to wrestle with some of this for a few minutes. But instead of taking all of your questions and trying to answer them, I want to actually flip it. If you're wrestling with these questions, instead of answering the questions you have, I want to ask you some questions. And if you're like – well that seems unfair – I have the microphone so I can do what I want. OK?

But genuinely, if you're there or maybe you know someone who is there and this can be helpful for you as you engage with them, can I just give you a few things to take and chew on? I know we're gonna go over today, we've planned for that and I'll try to keep this brief, ok?

QUESTION 1 – Is God loving if He doesn't judge?

We are quick to say there's a problem with God's love if He judges. If He judges and condemns the wicked, those who do not turn from their sin, He's not loving. How can a loving God send people to hell?

But can we reverse the question? Rather than asking "Is God loving if He judges?" It's worth considering – "Is God loving if He doesn't judge?"

Let's just imagine, for a second, a world where hell isn't a reality. Where there is no substantial consequence for evil or sin or anything of that nature. Put yourself there with me, mentally. Imagine with me a God who creates everything you and I know. A God who, with his own breath, breathes life into humanity; puts literal air into our lungs so that we come alive. Imagine a God who puts human beings he created into a garden where he has provided for them everything they could ever need, want, or hope to have – including unhindered access to him.

And then, imagine that God watching as those humans turn their back on him completely. Imagine them taking every single thing that he meant for good, and twisting and distorting it towards evil. Imagine watching those humans hate each other, hurt each other, harm each other, abuse one another. Imagine watching them steal, kill, and destroy everything around them. Imagine them wreaking devastation on the good world that he made, wreaking havoc on everyone, including themselves. Resulting in unthinkable horrors like destitute poverty, injustice, sexual abuse, racism, sexism...on down the list.

And imagine God watching all that play out for generation, after generation, after generation, at a global scale, throughout history. Thousands and thousands of years.

You have that picture in your head? Okay, now imagine God witnessing all of that and his response being, "meh, not a big deal. I know that feels like a lot, but I'm much too loving of a God to be bothered or angered or disturbed by any of that."

How do you feel about that picture of God? Does that feel like a good God to you? Does that feel like a loving God to you? It doesn't to me. I mean I get upset and feel unloved if a friend doesn't get as angry as I want them to when I've been hurt by something. And yet we want God to overlook billions of deeds and thousands of years worth of injustice and say "eh" and then claim that's loving of Him?

Theologian Fleming Rutledge puts it this way. She says...

We must believe in hell because there is no other way to take seriously the nature and scale of evil in the world. We must believe in hell because there is no other way to do justice to the victims of darkness. We must believe in hell because, without it, Christian faith is sentimental and evasive, unable to stand up to reality in this world. Without an unflinching understanding of the radical nature of evil, Christian faith would be nothing but a suburban bedtime story.

You see, this is why, in many, many parts of the world – where people are faced with injustice after injustice after injustice, right before their eyes – their hang-up with the God of the Bible is not that he's too just; it's that he's too merciful. To them, the irrational thing is that God would see it fit to show some people mercy who are responsible for evil. That, to them, is the unacceptable thing about the God of the bible.

**So again worth us considering – Is God loving if He doesn't judge?
Which then leads to the second question I want us to consider, and that is this:**

QUESTION 2 - Do you really want God to be fair?

That's a second doubt that often arises in our minds when we hear about the judgment of Christ. That's not fair!

But let's just consider that claim together for a second. Starting here – what is fairness? ***Fairness is people getting what they asked for and deserve.***

If you work 40 hours and get paid for 30, that's not fair. If you sell a car for \$10k and someone writes you a check for \$5k, that's not fair. If it's your turn to go at the 4 way stop sign, and someone cuts in and skips your turn, that's not fair.

Fairness is people getting what they asked for and deserve.

What does that have to do with hell? Well, we have to rethink how we think about hell. Because we think hell is God punishing a bunch of people who are kicking and screaming and begging for Him. They want to be with God, but God is being mean and won't let them and that's not fair.

But that's not hell.

Hell is the place for those who have chosen to reject Jesus and his authority. And if that is true, then it is a completely fair and logical consequence.

Think about it this way: if you spend your entire life not wanting/rejecting the peace, presence, and kingship of Jesus, then hell is when God lets you experience the fullness of what you want. It's when he "gives you over" fully to the choice you made on earth. God says essentially, "if what you want is a life absent of my rule and my reign, you can have it. In fact, you can have an eternity of it."

But that also means an eternity absent of all the good things God created and allows people to enjoy. The world we live in right now is full of things that God, in his mercy, has allowed everyone to enjoy, regardless of their status with him. Things that theologians call "common grace." Things like life, breath, beauty, creation, relationships, friendships, sex, food, drink...and the list goes on.

All of these things that God allows all of us to enjoy simply because he is gracious. Whether we realize it or not, everything you and I love and enjoy about the world exists because God allows us to have and love and enjoy and experience all of those things.

But here's the thing: **if we spend our entire lives rejecting God, refusing to acknowledge him as the giver of all of those things (which Romans 1 says includes those who never hear the good news of Jesus, that they stand guilty of rejection because creation testifies to God and His goodness)...there will come a day where he allows us to experience the full consequences of that rejection.**

Jl Packer – "Rebels will be judged as rebels, to be rejected by the Master whom they rejected first."

So then the question becomes – do you really want God to be fair? Because being fair is to give those who reject God exactly what they asked for and deserved. Eternity free from Him.

In fact – **The only thing not fair about the judgment of Jesus is His free offer of salvation through faith in Him.**

Which then maybe you're thinking – but that still seems so extreme. Especially that it's forever. Maybe that's where you are – I can get behind judgment, but eternal judgment is just too much.

Which then leads to the 3rd and final question.

QUESTION 3 – How holy do you think God is?

Here's something we all understand – who the offense is against, dictates the severity of the punishment. Tracking?

For example, if you came over to my house later today with a baseball bat, and started hitting my fence, I'd be kind of weirded out and a little afraid but ok no big deal. If you started hitting my cars, I'd be a little bit more angry. If you started swinging at my kids or my wife – let's just say I suddenly am no longer a pacifist, okay?

Jokes aside, in the law of the United States, those acts would accrue varying degrees of punishment.

Who or what the offense is against, their worth and value, dictates the severity of the punishment.

If God is the picture the Scriptures paint...where he lives in unapproachable light. Where His radiant glory shines across His creation. Where every time someone comes into His presence in the Scriptures they have to turn away because of how holy He is. Where the entire universe bends at his will.

If that is all true, AND if all of our sin is at its core sin and offense against that God (think about Psalm 51) then that would dictate the severity of the punishment. And if God is that awesome, then surely it is not outlandish to think rebelling against Him and rejecting His ways warrants a punishment as seemingly extreme as eternity.

And in case that doesn't fully seal it, or in case we're still tempted to think sin isn't that big of a deal or still not deserving of that level or severity of punishment for eternity, just remember what it cost Jesus to pay the debt it created. If sin is no big deal, if sin is not worthy of eternal punishment, why does God die?

How do we respond?

Alright take a breath. Let me lead us towards the close. I started by saying I had 3 goals for today:

- The first was to show what Jesus Himself says about his return and judgment. He is going to come back. One day, a future day only God knows, and those who have welcomed Him (evidenced by their tangible love for other Christians) will inherit the kingdom of God/eternal life and those who have not welcomed Him (evidenced by their lack of tangible love for other Christians) will inherit eternal punishment.
- And we dealt with some objections and some questions – about if that judgment is loving and fair. Loving and fair when some have not heard the gospel and loving and fair to be an eternal punishment.

But I said my 3rd goal was to help this line move from dread, fear, or objection to a line of repentance, worship and then celebration. So let me help us do that.

Father. I was afraid of a lot of things growing up. But nothing and no one was as scary as my dad. Now my dad was not abusive by any stretch of the word. He loved us very much, but he was strict and disciplined. He grew up in a military family and some of that made its way down into our home. My dad was very strict. And well my mom was...not. Great mom, also loved us (she listens to these sermons so need to clarify)...just a bit on the lenient side.

So with that dynamic there was a phrase you learned to fear more than anything else in our home, it's when you knew you pushed mom to the edge. She would say it this way, calmly but clearly – **“Wait till your father gets home.”**

I mean shivers down your spine. Because if you had messed up, if you had disobeyed, if you had disrespected or rebelled against mom, you knew dad was coming, and that meant punishment.

But here's the thing about that phrase. Sometimes the words that brought fear and trepidation, were also the same words that brought delight, hope, joy, longing.

Particularly on Fridays. Because Fridays in the Olson household were pizza and movie night. Specifically Pizza Hut stuffed crust pizza and Disney Channel original movies.

And so all day Friday as soon as we got picked up from school – can we eat pizza and watch a movie? Can we eat pizza and watch a movie?

And my mom would say the same phrase, calmly but clearly – **“Wait till your father gets home.”**

Same phrase. One brings terror, the other joy and longing.

What's the difference? What I know awaits me when my dad returns.

Church, judgment is coming. Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. But judgment is only something to be feared for those who are guilty. Judgment is only something to dread for those who await punishment.

But the beautiful news of Matthew 25 and this line of the creed is what is offered to the sheep!

Look back at v34 – **34 Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**

That's a line of joy! Christ is coming to judge – but those who are sheep, those have welcomed Christ need not fear – they are blessed by the Father. They will inherit the kingdom prepared from before the foundation of the world. A kingdom where there is no more crying, pain, struggle with sin and temptation, hurt, mistreatment.

So for those who know they are in Christ – this is a line, not of fear and dread, but of longing! When the early church declared this together it was a line of triumph! Christ is coming back to judge and the kingdom will be ours to inherit because we are blessed by the Father!

So hear me on this...

- **This line doesn't have to be a statement of fear for you.**

You can be ready. You can be welcomed as a sheep into the kingdom of God. How? By welcoming Jesus. By putting your faith and trust in Him! You can be given and guaranteed an inheritance, a place as a child of God, a welcome into His Kingdom forever. ***That's the offer from Christ for you today.***

In 2 Peter 3, we read Peter's encouragement to the church in light of Christ's future return. Peter would have been on the mount of Olives and would have heard this sermon from Jesus in Matthew 25. But now 30+ years later the church he's leading is starting to worry – when's he going to return? Is he slow? Is he delayed? And here's what Peter tells them...

2 Peter 3:8-9 – 8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Don't rail against the judgment of God – it's not fair! It's not right! It's not loving! The fact that Christ has not yet returned, and you are here today hearing about the gospel, God's love for you, Christ's sacrifice for you on the cross – that is all evidence of His love. His kindness. Her grace and mercy meant to draw you into salvation.

Because listen, judgment is coming. Because God is loving and just – sin must be punished and judged. BUT because God is gracious and merciful – He is patient that you would see that in His kindness He also has sent the one who will take that punishment.

You see the very Jesus who promises to come again, surrounded by angels, fire in his eyes (like Revelation tells us) to separate the sheep and the goats, to declare eternal judgment – is the same Jesus who went to the cross for sin and sinners.

Who died in our place. As the perfect spotless lamb. Sacrificed himself so we who deserve judgment, don't have to receive judgment.

That's the offer of the gospel. Would you repent and believe? Would you, even today, let this line be transformed from one of fear to one of longing – Christ will return. I'm looking forward to that day with hope, joy, anticipation...and you can too.

Would you trust in Him?

This doesn't have to be a statement of fear for you, and...

- **This also doesn't have to be a statement of fear about those you love.**

Don't let the judgment of God stay as a theological point to debate. Don't debate yourself out of worrying about your family and friends.

Let it capture your heart and fuel your whole being that you would leverage and give your life away for the sake of spreading the gospel of Jesus to your home, your neighborhood, this city, this nation, and to the world.

Now we don't have control over any of who is going to be saved, but we can control our role in it.

Paul gives us this very charge in **Romans 10 – 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”**

What happens to those who never hear the good news of the gospel and therefore repent of their sins through faith in Jesus? They stand condemned before God and face eternal judgment because of their sin. What does Paul say that means for us who believe? Not to have some debates as we sit around comfortably in a living room for community group time.

The answer is to weep, lament, mourn, be broken...and then go share the gospel. Give and pray and send so that others can share the gospel.

Listen, let me say it clearly and directly – if you find yourself particularly frustrated and heart broken about future judgment for those who do not hear the gospel, that just might be God stirring in you a call to the nations. That actually might be the Holy Spirit, raising up within you a holy discontentment at the thought of unreached people groups around the world who have no access to the gospel, no access to the Scriptures, no knowledge of God's love for them and of what Jesus Christ has done for them.

Let this line fuel your going. Fuel your witnessing. Fuel your desire to leverage your life, to get off your phone, to go have a conversation with your neighbor and to share the love of Jesus. To quit your job and move overseas to share the love of Jesus. To be willing to be offended, put your neck on the line, and share the love of Jesus.

Jesus rules and reigns and from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

A weighty line. A powerful line. And this is what we believe.

Pray + Respond.