



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 20:11-15

"Eternal Judgment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] A lot of Bible teachers in desiring to use figures of speech that express the practical use the expression "where the rubber meets the road" as being the symbol of that which is extremely practical. So I guess we would have to say Howard we can create a new one, something like where the dials turn the tapes on or something like that, because evidently we failed somewhere in the process of the KRLD program. However, there was some very good preaching on WRR which I heard on the way. [Laughter] So you can listen to WRR from 7:30 to 8:30.

I think it's very fitting that the subject for today should be "Eternal Judgment" in the light of what is coming up Tuesday. [Laughter] Well, I guess the rest of you have already sent in your return. [Laughter] But some of us who haven't sent in our return yet we think of Tuesday as eternal judgment. Well, it's temporal judgment but anyway, they do go together to some extent.

We're turning for our Scripture reading to Revelation chapter 20 verse 11 through verse 15. And the apostle describing one of the visions the he received from the Lord writes,

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that 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, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (You notice particularly that the vision contains a reference to judgment according to works twice. There seems to be some necessity for emphasis upon that. And John continues,) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Obviously a reference to spiritual gift as over against the first or physical death.) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the access that we have to Thee by virtue of all that he has done for us as the representative mediator for the people of God. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the blood that was shed and for the resurrection and for his ascension and his session at the right hand of the Father on high. We thank Thee for the assurance that he lives at the present moment to secure all the he accomplished when he died upon the cross. And we thank Thee for the hope that we have of the Second Coming and of the kingdom of God. We thank Thee not only for its interim character, but its eternal character as well.

And we especially give Thee thanks for the grace and love manifested in the calling that has come to us through the Holy Spirit and in the forgiveness of sins, which is

the possession of all that have been brought by the grace of God to rest for time and eternity upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his saving work. We truly, Lord, are a blessed people, and we give Thee thanks today and express to Thee the gratitude of our hearts. Not simply thanks for something we have received, but gratitude to Thee because Thou hast accomplished it in Thy great wisdom and power.

And Father, we are grateful, too, for all of the ways in which Thou dost bless us daily in our daily life. We thank Thee for the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Spirit. We thank Thee for the guidance which is given to us constantly. Enable us Lord to be submissive and responsive to it. We thank Thee too for the privilege of being a representative of Jesus Christ in 1986 in this part of Thy world. Enable us to truly represent him in a way that will honor and glorify Thy name.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the President and others with him in government. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ also, and for all of the local manifestations of it over the face of this globe. We pray Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word and upon the saints, all who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. May today be a day of spiritual growth and edification. And Lord, we especially pray for those who are experiencing the difficulties and trials and troubles of Christian life. Encourage them; build them up in their faith. Strengthen them and those who are passing through extreme trials of illness, bereavement, Lord particularly uphold them. We ask Thy blessing upon those mentioned in our calends of concern. We pray Lord, that if it should please Thee, that the earnest petitions and cries of the saints regarding them may receive a favorable answer. But we give Thee thanks knowing that all that Thou dost do is within the divine purpose and according to the love and grace of our great triune God.

And so, Lord we worship Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon us this day. Bless our meeting this evening. And now, as we sing and listen to the word may we have the experience of Thy presence. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We have come to the last in our messages in the series "The Eight Most Important Christian Doctrines." And this one really was and afterthought, because when I first sat down at my desk and just wrote out what I thought might be eight of the most important Christian truths, concerning which we should be knowledgeable, this one was not included. And then after finishing, a day or so later I realized that of all of the truths that I set forth, this surely belonged among them.

Eternal judgment, this as you might gather just from the name itself is a very terrifying doctrine from the word of God. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says in the 9th chapter and the 27th verse of his book, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." That highlights the fact that that is an event for which we all are destined, a judgment before God. Now, I realize that Christians like to make a distinction between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the judgment of the Great White Throne. And I have no objection to that. I think that is probably a biblical expression of what lies before us. But the thought of judgment is involved in both of these experiences, and even the thought of the judgment seat of Christ is a rather solemnizing truth. We believers face a judgment, and those who are unbelievers face the most terrifying of all of the judgments of God, eternal judgment.

It raises a great number of questions, for example, is there life after death? There is no way to settle that assuredly apart from some of the things that we said when we were talking about divine creation. Human reason suggests this, even men like Socrates, a pagan, but one of the highest of the pagans ethically acknowledged that so far as he could tell with the wisdom that he had that there must be a life after death. Intuition and human logic suggest this as well. We, of course, see many evidences of this. We know that basically in our human experience there is a sense of incompleteness. And particularly as you grow older, the sense of incompleteness becomes even stronger. Now, some of you young people out in the audience, you might not have the sense of incompleteness. Your goals and aspirations are still before you, and you anticipate that

perhaps you will be able reach them. But some of us who have reached the age that I have, we have a terrible sense of incompleteness and of unavailable time to do the things that we would have liked to have done and the things that we would like to do now. That very sense of incompleteness, which so far as we can tell is universal among men, suggests that there is something else beyond this life.

It's, I think, evidenced in the fact that the Egyptians often when they buried, buried things that might be useful in the life to come. We are all acquainted with the fact that the American Indians also buried with their dead things that they thought might be useful to them in the happy hunting ground beyond. And even in our society we see some reflections of this. About four years ago I was reading Ann Landers' column one morning. And in the column a lady wrote in about six gold fillings that she had in her mouth. And she wrote and asked her advice. She said, "I've been encouraged to make a will, and I've been encouraged to dedicate these six gold fillings to certain individuals in my family. And it has disturbed me a good bit," because she said, "I do believe in the resurrection and I feel that I will have a resurrection body and I might need these gold fillings then." And she said, "Furthermore, so far as we know the dentists might be much more expensive in the life to come, and now that I have them I feel like perhaps I ought to keep them." And then this was the last comment she made, and she said, "Furthermore, the wait in the dentists' offices might be much longer then than it is today." And so Ann Landers, I mentioned this in the 8:30 service this morning and quite a few people came up and said, "What did she say?" [Laughter] Well, she said, keep them, because you will have much more peace of mind if you keep them. That was her advice. But at any rate the letter seemed to be a genuine letter and reflected the fact that deep down within this lady and all of her lack of understanding of things from the scriptural stand point, at least had some sense of life after death.

When we think of the moral order of this universe we also realize that if justice is really to be meted out, and we have every indication that it is, even in human experience

ultimately to be meted out, then there must be life after death. But for believers the ultimate proof, and really the only final proof for believers, is the divine revelation found in the word of God. And there is no doubt that the Scriptures set forth a life after death.

Is there really an explanation for the injustice of history? I have listened or read a great deal about the response to Mr. Reagan's comments concerning the Soviets. And you remember that a few months back he made reference to Soviet Russia as an evil empire. Quite a few felt that that was either an unfair or an unkind way to describe the Soviet Union. And some time afterwards I was reading one of the comments of Helmut Thielicke who was for many years following World War II, Professor of Systematic theology at the University of Hamburg in Western Germany, and also the preacher in the large cathedral in that city. Mr. Thielicke was probably, and still is for he is still living, he's probably the best known evangelical preacher in all of Germany, known also in the English speaking world because many of his books have been translated. They're excellent books. He's written systematic theologies and three volumes on ethics, and he's just an outstanding scholar.

Well, in one of his comments in one of his sermons he says, "How can one explain the fact that such a diabolical system as Bolshevism is apparently able to maintain itself and is not flung into the abyss by a higher hand?" So the idea of Soviet Russia and the Bolsheviks as being an evil empire or a diabolical system is not simply the fabrication of the mind of our President, Ronald Reagan.

But the question that arises for Christians is, is there a time coming when injustices in history shall be rewritten? Or is, as Schiller said, "The history of the world the judgment of the world?" Well, I think the Bible makes it very plain that there is to be such a time coming. Judgment cannot be established by human reason alone. That's very plain. When Napoleon advanced toward Russia and sought to conquer Europe it was said afterwards, "With man and horse and caisson, the Lord of hosts did smite him." Well, I think the French probably had a different interpretation of that. The rest of Europe had

their interpretation, but the French had theirs. And if we look simply at human reason, then we would not be able to answer that question.

Furthermore, when we think about judgment in human life, judgment may look forward or it may look backward. This is illustrated in our Lord's relationship with the man born blind from birth. Remember he and the disciples passed by the man born blind. The disciples said, "Lord, did this man sin or did his parents sin that this judgment was inflicted upon him?" And so they looked at it as an evidence of sin on the part of either the man or of his parents. One might wonder their belief how a person who had not yet been born could still commit a sin, but that's the philosophy of the disciples at that time. But Jesus said, "This man did not sin, nor did his parents sin, but this has happened to him in order that certain truths might come to be known. So the judgments of human life, not only might reflect the past, but the experiences of present life might be given in order to educate us with regard to the future.

As many of you know, I read the comic strips and some time ago Mr. Schultz had a strip with Snoopy in it. He was lying on his back in his customary position on the top of his dog house, and so he said, "Being a dog is not the greatest thing in the world," as the rain poured down upon him. "We have a lot of disadvantages," he said as he sat up and thought about his philosophy. "What I'm trying to say is life is hard enough." But then back on his back looking toward heaven he says, "Why rain on me?" Well, we do ask the question of why, but often the question of why is the question we cannot answer, and we really should be answering with "For what purpose?" Because the experiences of life all pass through the hands of a sovereign God, and it's not so much why that's important, it's for what purpose are we to respond to these things. So the judgments of life may look backward or forward.

Judgments from God are often simply God's silence. Sometimes he just doesn't seem to do anything that we can put our finger on, but that doesn't mean that he is not acting in judgment. In Romans chapter 1, the Apostle Paul describes the condition of

society in his day, and he describes it as a society that has been given over by God and given over three times, he says, to various sins, all kinds of sins. The sins of transforming the creator into a creature in order to be worshiped, and particularly does he lay stress on the sexual sins, and homosexuality is singled out. And many people have the idea that if we continue in our American society in the way in which we are going, then we are going to be judge. But the apostle's philosophy is a bit different. He says, "As a matter of fact we are being judged and we are in the process of experiencing the judgments and one of those judgment is that very thing which has been inflicted upon us."

Now, we look around in our society and very often Christians will say, "Our society has become so corrupt sexually, and materialistically, and in other ways, we are heading for judgment." Well, yes we are. But what we have already experienced is the judgment of God. And so our society is a judged society, not simply a to-be-judged society biblically. If we look out though, we would finally either be, without divine revelation, we would come to an unfathomable nihilism, that is, we cannot understand our society at all. There is nothing to it, and there is no loving God at all. Or we come to another interpretation and say, "Our society and our world is simply an ice cold mechanistic silent universe operating according to the natural laws which happen to be a part of this world of which we are a part." But Christians, with the light of divine revelation, brought to the conviction that the Bible is the word of God by the testimony of the Holy Spirit the highest objective testimony that there can possibly be. They say, nevertheless in spite of the prosperity of the wicked, in spite of the things that we don't seem to understand, Thou art continually with me. That's what we know from the testimony of the word of God.

Well, is there a final tribunal? Yes, there is. The Bible speaks of it in a number of places, but this is one of the outstanding ones. Revelation chapter 20, verse 11 through 15. Now, you think that the idea of hell was invented by some evangelistic people who wanted to scare people into the receiving of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Let me

assure you that if you turn to the word of God, you will discover this rather striking fact. That the term Gehenna, or hell, in its truest sense, that term is used about a dozen times in the New Testament, and surprisingly in every case but one it is used by the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Lord Jesus is the inventor, if we wanted to speak about this from the standpoint of the ultimate revelation in Christ, he's the one who's most responsible for the doctrine of eternal judgment and hell fire. So, as Keble said, "The found of love, his servant sends to tell loves deeds, himself reveals the sinners hell."

There was a remarkable preacher of some time back by the name of Charles Wolfe. Mr. Wolfe was a very effective preacher, and he was once preaching on Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11. That text reads like this, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And then Mr. Wolfe went on to say, "The judgments of God are given and exercised and executed often enough so that we will realize that there is a judgment from God but seldom enough for us to realize that there is a judgment coming." And this is what John writes about in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 11. This is a series of visions, which the apostle sets forth for us in the last few chapters of the Book of Revelation. In verse 11 we have the vision of a throne and in the five short verses, verse 11 through verse 15 we have the unfolding of the ultimate divine and eternal judgment. What truth in five short verses, when he says, "And I saw, he's linking up the time with the preceding visions that he has just given."

Now, someone might think this is a series of visions, how do we know that there is any order of chronology in them? Well, that is a good question. But it's answered if we will look at verse 7 of chapter 20 where he distinguishes in the unfolding of the divisions, time references. He speaks about, in chapter 20, the binding of Satan, he speaks about the kingdom of God and men living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. He speaks about the rebellion at the close of that interim period of time. And in verse 7 he mentions "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his

prison." That's a clue that these visions, and there are about seven of them, are chronological in their significance. So after the kingdom set forth in the earlier part of the chapter he comes to this great white throne judgment. And we are to presume that it follows that time, and yet precedes the vision of chapter 21 verse 1 where we read, "And I saw a new heavens and a new earth."

In about seven different places in significance here he says, "And I saw." They set out the visions that God gave him. And this, the vision of the throne, is begun in verse 11. "I saw a great white throne." Now, I think all three of those words are important. He says that's it's a great white throne, and I think that the reason he calls it a great throne is because infinite justice is to be exercised there. He calls it a white throne, because white is clearly often in Scripture suggestive of the holiness of God. So the Great White Throne suggests that which is infinite and that which is holy. And of course, the throne suggesting the sovereignty of the one who sits upon it suggests infinite holy sovereign justice exercised by the one who sits upon it.

There is a basic human reason why it is necessary for God to execute final judgment. Justice among men is not final and it's not perfect. Just think for a few moments about why some of the reasons that justice is not final among men. First of all, many sins and many transgressions are not even recognized in our law as sins and punishable in gratitude. How many people have been hailed up before the judge and put in prison for ingratitude to parents, ingratitude to parents? But that's a fundamental and most serious sin in the sight of God. "Honor thy father and thy mother, the Law of God says." But no judge today would sentence a child on the basis of that Law of God. And there are many other things such as mental cruelty, scorn, falsehood, dishonorable parents, various other types of sins that are not even recognized in our Law. That's one of the reasons why we need a final judgment.

And furthermore, human judges in our courts do not know what penalty exactly fits the offense. Many of them are, of course, the kinds of judges who seek to follow

what the Law says. We have a series of judgments today made by judges who feel that it's their right to make new law. But now, even if we assume the most strict interpretation of the law, still our judges do not know certainly what penalty exactly fits the offense. And did you know that so far as the word of God is concerned there is only one case, that of murder, on which the word of God speaks as the precise penalty that should be executed, capital punishment. That's the only crime for which there is a specific word of God statement concerning the penalty. So naturally, judges are human individuals, I'm not attacking judges. We have to have judges. We should pay attention to what they say and follow what they say. But at the same time they are human beings and they do not know exactly what penalty fits the offense that the individual may be answering before them.

And thirdly, human judges are often uncertain as to the guilt of the prisoner. We often have this even in our local courts. We have individuals who are called up, who are prosecuted, sometimes with inadequate evidence and they are put in prison, and some suffer for years. We have national cases, well known, in which an individual recently, a well-publicized case, I think suffered five or six years and then finally afterwards the individual involved in the crime confesses that he did not commit it at all. So it's obvious that there is need for eternal judgment.

You can hardly read the cases that appear in our newspapers without thinking human judges error. We had a most striking case in economics recently in the state of Texas in which a judge in the south just in the struggle between Texaco and Pennzoil over Getty Oil Company issued what seems to me as an amateur to be a most weird decision. In fact, one of the weirdest that I've ever seen in business law. To award the company \$11 billion just seemed ridiculous. And I think that that's the general impression of almost everybody except a few in Texas. Now, I've been living in Texas long enough I consider myself a Texan. I've lived here longer than I've lived in anywhere else. But I was embarrassed by that decision. And then just the other day the judge, in a public

statement when he was addressing the group, has now said that he thinks that he might have made a mistake. Well, when he said that Texaco stock jumped two dollars and Pennzoil's stock fell four dollars on the New York Stock Exchange. [Laughter] But that only illustrates, and I'm not trying to pass judgment. I think it was a weird decision you understand, but it only illustrates the fact that judgment are just human beings. And therefore, when we stand before the great white throne judgment we'll know the truth of more important things than whether Texaco ought to pay Pennzoil \$11 billion dollars for the shenanigans that they may or may not have practiced in the obtaining of that oil company.

And for the final reason why we know human judgment is not sufficient, men are put in prison and they escape the clutches of those who hold them. So it's obvious human judgment fails. And for all of these reasons final judgment, infinite, holy, sovereign, divine judgment and justice is a desideratum.

Now, we read, John says in verse 11 that "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." Fled in dismay efficiently, and where this judgment is held Scripture does not tell us. Somewhere out in God's space it is held. But I'm not worried about that. There are many things about the Lord God that I will never understand, and it does not disturb me that no specific place is mentioned.

Now, John having mentioned the vision of the throne in verse 11 then speaks of the vision of the judgment of the dead in verse 12 and 13. And he says in verse 12, "And I smelt the dead small and great." Now, he has just previously talked about individuals who had physically died but who live and reign with Christ for a thousand years." Physical death is the experience of all of us if we are here and we die before the Lord comes. All of you, if Jesus does not come, you young people who look so healthy, you'll die too. Those of you sitting in the audience nodding a bit, you'll die too and face some judgment there. [Laughter] But anyway, we shall all die physically. But if we have

believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we have the assurance of the resurrection and a body like our Lord's own glorious body.

But now, for those who are not believers who die without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they experience a resurrection, too. Their resurrection is a bodily resurrection as well. Resurrection, if it is not bodily resurrection shouldn't be called resurrection at all. And so they who are bodily raised shall stand before the Lord God as the dead. That is, those who have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and who therefore do not possess eternal life. They have physically died and they are still spiritually dead. And we can think of all of the individuals that the Scriptures set forth from Cain on down to the times through New Testament times, all those who lived in Noah's age, Nimrod, from Pharaoh all the way down to the most blatant critic of the truth of the word of God today. They all shall stand there. So when John says, "I saw the dead," he's talking about those who live their life through and have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we have such human ideas about things. We think that the dead who appear before the Lord God must be the bad individuals. We think also they are probably the disenfranchised, the poor. But the rich and the prominent they'll figure out some way some how to avoid this judgment, and particularly if they have been the benefactors of our society. And if large buildings in the community are named after them, that surely is a title to eternal life. That's foolish. That's contrary to the word of God. The Scriptures say, "And I saw the dead, small and great." Kings will be there as well as peasants. And not only that, preachers will be there, and those who listen to preachers. Atheistic preachers will be there. Agnostic preachers will be there. Hypocritical preachers will be there. In fact, I think there will be a great company of preachers there standing around that throne. And some of the strongest judgment shall be meted out to those who have stood in pulpits just such as this and have opened the pulpit Bible and have given moral discourses, not based on the divine revelation found in the word of God. They

shall stand before God. That suggests, though it does not state specifically, the resurrection of the body.

And I have no doubt in my mind but that as you look at those in the resurrection body of the lost you will see the evidences of the kind of life that they have lived. Scripture says that believers shall have a body like unto Christ's own body of glory. Now, we gather from that that those who are unbelievers shall have a body that is similar to their profession and their possession. And therefore we will see the evidences of the kind of life that they have lived.

It's a well known fact psychologically that the way in which you live your life is often reflected in your physical appearance. And as you look at individuals as the years pass you can have some insight into the kind of life that that person has lived. That's a well known fact. I don't know that it's always true in every case. But you can look at a Christian who has been a Christian for twenty or thirty years and you can see the evidences of the grace of God in their countenances. I look out on the countenances of some of you right at this very moment and I think that I can see the evidences of the working of the grace of God. I hope that you can see some in my face. [Laughter] It's becoming difficult to see anything for the wrinkles. But nevertheless I hope that you can see some of the signs of the grace of God. But we do have evidence psychologically that that is true.

There is a well known story about Leonardo da Vinci and the painting of "L'Ultima Cena" or "The Last Supper." It is said that Leonardo, who had the habit of starting things and not finishing them for lengthy periods of time, began that picture and painted the face of Christ by the use of a young chorister in one of the choirs of the church. And then he stopped and for a long time he did not finish the picture. And then finally under pressure he decided that he had to finish the picture and so he went looking for someone he could use as his model for the face of Judas. And so finally he found a disheveled, drink-sodden mendicant on the beggar's stairway in Rome. And he took him to Milan and

there painted his picture, that is using him as a model for Judas. And when he was paying the model Leonardo is said to have asked him his name, and the man replied, "Don't you remember me? I sat as the model for your Jesus." So here is a man who sat as the model for Jesus but lived such a life that he later was able to sit as the model for Judas.

Now, that is a legend I don't know how true that is, but it certainly is true to what psychologists have noted concerning life. I have mentioned this very frequently in the Chapel, but there are some of you who are visitors. But there have been some scientific experiments conducted by psychologists who took brothers and then took husbands and wives and took their pictures when they were young and then took their pictures when they were older and they discovered examining the pictures that those who were husbands and wives looked more like each other than those who were brothers and sisters. In other words, the living together with the other person manifested itself on their faces. I know that some of you wives look a little discouraged over that, but [Laughter] he was your choice. [Laughter] And I do think that there is some truth in that that we do become like that with which we spend our time. That's a great encouragement to spend time with the Lord Jesus Christ because as we do we are changed into the same image "from glory to glory," the apostle says by the Spirit of the Lord.

Now, he says in the 12th verse here that after he saw the dead, that the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the Book of Life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. Two witnesses, evidently the books are vouchers for the book, the Book of Life. The Book of Life, evidently, is that that contains the names of those who are truly saved. Is your name in the book? Well, of course we do not know except by virtue of the conviction that God has brought into our hearts as a result of our encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who have believed in him and in whose heart the Holy Spirit has brought the conviction of eternal life and who are resting upon the word of God have the

sense of assurance grounded ultimately in the blood that was shed at Calvary's cross, and in the conviction wrought by the Spirit that we have received him as our own personal Savior.

I think it's very striking the book is not opened for anyone to examine. And that's one reason why, though believing in the sovereign election of God, we still preach the gospel to all, universally. We do not know the lost, and we do not know the saved. If we knew the elect we would separate them and preach to them, because otherwise it might seem to be wasted effort, except for that's a reason for the judgment of those who are not elect, who have not responded to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore in part justifying their rejection. Though, of course, we all are rejected as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden. We talked about that a lot recently. There's no need to talk about it now. But we are not able to look into the Book of Life.

This morning I was hearing a preacher and he was talking about divine election on the radio. And he said there are some elect and there are some who are non-elect. And he said, "We don't know, we preach the gospel to everybody." He said, "There are people who object. They don't like the idea of some being elected and some not being elected or passed by by the Lord God." But he said, "The gospel is preached to every one and the gospel is preached to them." And when it is preached to them they confess they don't like the idea of some being elected and God passing by others. They don't like that and when the gospel comes to them they object. They object because they don't like it. And the preacher reminded them, "Well the invitation is given to everyone and you are free to respond. If you have question about whether you are elect, you can settle the question right now by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ." But if you don't want to respond, then you get exactly what you want, and therefore you have no complaint. That preacher was preaching the truth. In fact, it was I who was preaching over the radio. [Laughter] I was amazed that I put it so clearly. [Laughter]

You know, it's a funny thing about radio preachers. I often listen to myself coming to church and I think usually it's a waste of time, because I gave the message, but I discover that there are truths that come to me that I have expounded six months before that I have forgotten exactly the way I put it. And sometimes I forget the things that I say, and I say, "Did I say that?" Sometimes I want to take back some of those things, too, but it's too late.

Now, he goes on to say that they will be judged according to their works, and twice he says that as if to emphasize it. He says, that they will be "judged every man according to their works." And that, of course, stresses the fact that the judgment is just and the judgment is in degrees. What kind of sins shall be judged? Well, all sins. I read a chapter from a Scottish theologian a number of years ago in which he talked about sins. He said sins may really be classified, generally, in three categories. There are sins of the flesh and they are sins like the sins of the prodigal. And the Lord Jesus speaks about them in the parable of the prodigal son. He says then there are sins like the sins of the Pharisees. They are generally hypocrisy, that kind of sin. In fact, that's the kind of sin that you have to have religion, because the worst kind of hypocrisy and the most telling illustration of it is the religious leader who does not believe what he professes, that kind of hypocrisy. That really is the most flagrant kind of hypocrisy and the most evident kind. You need religion in order to commit that kind of sin.

And then he said the third kind was the sin of the Sadducee, which ultimately is the kind of sin that we would classify as worldliness, the kind of sin that is interested in this life only and the materialism that characterizes my life. If you'll pardon me, I don't like to refer to the comic strips twice in one message but I like Heartland, and I like the way Dave Heart tries to avoid the decisions that need to be made, because often he speaks to me. But he goes over and he leans on his teacher's desk whose name is Mrs. Woolhandler, and he looks up at her and says, "I just cannot get motivated Mrs. Woolhandler, third grade seems so insignificant in the grand scheme of things." And she

looks down at him as a typical teacher, I had two just like this in grammar school, they were rather large and they could look right through you. And she looked down at him and she said, "Well, you'd best get motivated Mr. Heart, so you can go to college, get a job, make tons of cash, and grab a slice of the American dream, a two-tone four wheel drive, a jeep convertible, a video player, a sexy athletic intelligent wife and a pedigreed cat." [Laughter] And Dave says, "Wow, suddenly it's all so clear." [Laughter] And then she says, "That's what teachers are for."

Well, we all know that kind of sin and let us not forget, we evangelicals, that we are often very guilty of this kind of life. Materialism characterizes evangelical society in this country to a very remarkable degree. So our judgment is just. It's in degrees. Incidentally, you'll notice that God doesn't have to say anything in this judgment. When those books are opened and people appear before them they know deep down within that they stand before the Lord God guilty. The consequences of the judgment are stated in verses 14 and 15. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The initiation of the second death; sin, my Christian friend, involved endless guilt, the fact that I have committed a sin against the Lord God today means that I am endlessly and eternally guilty before the Lord God. The reason for that is simple. Sin is an offence against an infinite God. And tomorrow the sin I commit today makes me just as guilty as I am today. Time does not diminish guilt. Ten years from now I'm just as guilty, twenty years from now, a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now. I am still just as guilty of that sin. The guilt of sin is endless.

And furthermore, guilt is unrelated to the character of the sin looked at only objectively and physically. I may take a little pin and push it into a rock. That's not very much, but I may take that little pin and push it into the pupil of the eye of someone and that same act becomes an act of great guilt. I may thrash or strike at someone who is seeking to kill me, and that is defense, but if I do that against the President, that's another

matter. It may take me all night in order to burglarize a house and steal from it. It may only take me a second to fire a gun and murder a friend or foe. You see, time in character is not related to the ultimate guilt of an act. Sin is an immense river. In secret channels running from hell's seething ocean beginning in the heart of Lucifer, according to Scripture, breaking out into our society in the Garden of Eden, leading on in widening banks to the lake of fire.

There's a marvelous account of this in one of the sermons that I read many years ago in which this author with great force stressed the fact that that river of sin was a black river with all kinds of crashing waves and occasionally rocks would appear in it, scoria rocks I remember him saying. I wonder what kind of rocks are scoria rocks, but I think I understand what he was talking about, and lost souls sitting upon them moaning about a lost life. And all of society rushing down to the river to plunge, the young, the old, all me, he said, with gray flowing behind them rushing down and the angels and friends who are believers shouting out stop, stop, but they still plunge into the river which ultimately empties into the lake of fire. And also, he said, standing off on the side is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood that was shed; and trampling over that all of human society rushes down into the river of sin, all men, what a vivid picture of human society. Men are sinners. Men love their sin. They persist in their sin. They love it so that they give themselves totally to it, and when the appeal of the Lord Jesus Christ and the appeals of the Holy Spirit in his common grace in his appeal to turn to Christ. Men turn aside rejected, dive into the river of sin, which leads to eternal death. There are people who suggest that everybody is going to be saved in the end. The Scriptures speak strongly against that. While they shout out that everybody is going to be saved, God lives on as the eternal God. The righteous shout on and in Scripture the damned groan on throughout all of eternity, all eternity.

Well, Scripture points to the reality and horror of the second death by its descriptions and terrors of the wicked. It would be nice if we could conclude the

message with just a series of citations of the word of God in which the Lord Jesus Christ warns us of what is coming. For example in Matthew chapter 5, verse 30 he says, "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." In chapter 13 and verse 42, in the remarkable chapter on the parables he says, "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Michelangelo had his most famous portrait a picture of Christ's last judgment. Our Lord rising from the throne striding forward and even Mary the virgin clinging over in awe and fear near his side and the people out before with anguished looks on their faces. He was so upset over the incest and wickedness and murder of his society in the 16th century that that was the concept of our Lord that he proclaimed the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ and the divine justice. We instinctively shrink from the holiness of God. Evil fears holiness. In fact, evil is restless and perturbed in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Lord Jesus came down into the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, after they had committed their sin, ran and hid. That's the experience of human beings.

And so, let me close. I'm sorry to have kept you a little over time today. I usually keep you only five minutes over time and it's eight or nine. And so I must stop, but I want to warn you that as a preacher of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, eternal judgment is found in the word of God, and we cannot escape it. May the Lord God so speak to your heart that you'll recognize your lost condition if you have not, and that you'll flee to Christ and the blood that was shed as your only hope. May God give you grace to do just that. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the fact that admonition is found in holy Scripture. We need it. We need, Lord, to be constantly warned of the judgment that is to come, and of the disciplinary judgment that we as believers face as well; the judgment seat of Christ, the great white throne judgment, what solemnizing truths. Lord

help us to live in the light of them, and by Thy marvelous grace be an instrumentality in the saving, the snatching of some, from the path that leads to eternal death. For Jesus' sake. Amen.