



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 20:1-15

"The Final Judgment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Let's turn to Revelation chapter 20 for our Scripture reading, and we'll read verse 11 through verse 15. The apostle describes another of his visions, and you will notice again the characteristic beginning of them in that little clause, "And I saw," we've been pointing out since chapter 19 and verse 11 where he said, "And I saw heaven opened." But these visions follow one upon another, and they are not unconnected chronologically. One might argue it is simply the way in which the visions were given to him, and that the things that are described in the visions are not necessarily chronological. But we pointed out in the last study that in the visions themselves, in the content of them, there is a recognition of chronology, for example in the 7th verse, "And when the thousand years are completed Satan will be released from his prison." So we are looking at visions that were given to the apostle in this order perhaps, but also the contents are chronological. That happens to be of some importance in the interpretation of them. But now follows the next to the last of them and we read,

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was given for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another

book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

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

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these very solemn words which remind us of something of which we need reminding constantly. That there is coming a day in which judgment of the dead shall take place. We live in a day, Lord, in which judgment does not rank highly in the interest of men. Perhaps it never has ranked highly. But in our day, it seems as if our society has forgotten the fact that there is coming a judgment. There is a judgment of the believers, and there is a judgment of the unbelievers.

We thank Thee for this passage because it does give us very significant Revelation concerning the judgment of unbelievers, and we pray that we may give proper heed to it. And if we are unbelievers, we pray that the reading of this solemn passage may turn our hearts to the securing of redemption through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And if we are believers, we pray Lord that it may be a means and an incentive to stir us to more significant dedication and devotion to the things that Thou art seeking to do through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee for the confidence that we have that we belong to him, but we thank Thee also for those commandments given in Scripture, to which we are subject, that we are to preach the gospel to every creature. We pray that this church, this believing body, may be an instrument in the spreading of the Good News concerning Christ.

Therefore Lord, bless the radio ministries in the various places where the programs are heard, and we pray Thy blessing upon the tape ministry. In the four corners of this earth, literally, people do listen to the tapes by Thy grace. We pray that they may be responsive to the things that are spoken.

We pray for the sick. We ask Thy blessing upon them, especially for those in our calendar of concern. O God, brighten their lives today by Thy presence and through the comfort of the Scriptures to them. Bless those who minister to them, and if it should please Thee Lord, give healing to them. We pray for the physicians and for the family who minister to them.

And Father, we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, wherever the gospel is preached, in this city, in this state, in this land, and throughout the lands of this earth, which Thou hast created. O God continue Thy purpose. Bring it to its certain successful conclusion. And may the praise of the saints of God redound to Thy glory down through the ages to come.

We pray for our elders and for our deacons, and for the members and friends and the visitors who are here, we ask Thy blessing upon each of them and upon their families, upon their children. May O God Thy presence be very real to them, and if there should be some here who do not know our Lord, may Thy presence become a reality for them also. Bless our service, the singing of the hymn, the ministering of the word. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." The final judgment is one of the great truths of the word of God, and unfortunately, it is one of the ones that our society, in our day, does not really like to emphasize. In fact, we like to speak somewhat disapprovingly of hell, fire and damnation preachers. But if we are preaching the word of God, if we are

paying attention to Scripture, then it does not seem possible for us to avoid being a hell, fire and damnation preacher.

Now, if you mean by that a person who overdoes it, well of course, we all would have sympathy with that because the Bible is a large book, and there are other truths besides the final judgment. But if the prophets, and the apostles, and our Lord agree on one thing, it is that there is a final judgment. And since others, in our day, neglect it so, I think it is incumbent upon us who say we believe the Scriptures to be sure that we do make known the doctrine of the final judgment.

One of the greatest American's who ever lived was Jonathon Edwards. Mr. Edwards has been called even by unbelievers the greatest philosopher, theologian that America has ever produced. One of the characteristics of Edwards' preaching was his great stress upon eternal judgment. As we were told Wednesday night in the Bible study here, many of the things that Edwards set forth are things that are still very appropriate for us today. I read a few things this past week. Some of the things are rather startling. He says, "Tis the infinite almighty God that shall become the fire of the furnace." He said, "No man could see hell and live." He said, "The damned in hell would give the world to have the number of their sins one less." Think of that. "The damned in hell would give the world to have the number of their sins one less." This little statement really startled me. And it nevertheless is true. But I hesitate to even read it because it is so contrary to the spirit of our age.

But listen, it said the approach that Edwards gave to children was basically the same as the approach that he gave to their parents. Children were in danger of judgment, and they, too, needed to learn to flee from the wrath that is to come upon them as well as upon older sinners. Edwards called children, I'm quoting his words now, "young serpents," unquote, "who have not yet learned to bite, but were full of poison," a very solemn statement, "Young serpents who had not yet learned to bite, but were full of poison." That's why you parents, who have those lovely children, and we have so many

in Believers Chapel now, you have as your responsibility to bring to them the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to deliver them from the full manifestation of the poison that we inherit by virtue of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Edwards preached many, many sermons upon eternal judgment. I guess in one sense it's no wonder that he was forced out of his pulpit. But nevertheless, it's Edwards who's remembered today, whose sermons are still read, whose works Yale University Press noted as being among the ranks of the fundamentalists, as printing all of them in a remarkable series of the writings of this magnificent man.

Eternal judgment, is there life after death? That's one of the questions raised by eternal judgment. If we had time, we don't have time to do this, I think, and if we had someone able to do it better than I am, we could point to human reason and say that human reason suggests that there is life after death. History, even a man like Socrates was a man who believed in the fact that after this life there was a life to be lived. Socrates said, "You can catch my body, but you cannot catch my soul." And others of the wise men of the past have come to the same conclusion. Intuition speaks to us frequently to the effect that there must be a time of judgment following, logic, the incompleteness of this life.

There is hardly a man, I imagine, in this auditorium, there's not a one of you who would say, "My life has been a complete life. I have accomplished the things that I wish to accomplish." As the years have gone by, some of those things that you hope to accomplish have become impossible now. And you, as you look over your life can think of the incompleteness that characterizes it, the moral order, the fact that there seems to be written upon the heart of man the principle of justice. And we recognize by the injustice that prevails in our society, and consequently, there must be, men reason, there must be a time when the injustices of this life are righted. But all of this would reflect human reason. The one, solid foundation upon which we believe that there is a final judgment coming is the foundation of the Revelation of God in holy Scripture, and in the final

analysis, that is the thing in which we stand, that Scripture, that God and Scripture, that the prophets and Scripture, that the apostles and Scripture, and above all, that our Lord and Scripture stresses that there is a judgment that is coming after death and life after death.

What kind of explanation for the injustices of our history could one give? We could look at our own lives. In my life, I've seen the rise, I've seen it, I was little, infant, I was one of those "young serpents," when the Bolshevik revolution took place. But we have seen the rise of this great evil system. Reagan was right. It was and is an evil empire. Things are changing, of course. And we rejoice in many of the things that are changing. But we have seen this system rise. We have seen millions, literally, put to death by some ghastly heads of that state. We are thankful for what is happening. I hope that it continues. I am grateful for what is happening in the subject nations. I hope that still more happens. But nevertheless it raises a question about justice.

Schiller, I think it was who said, "The history of the world is the judgment of this world. One looks at history and one sees judgment." Lessing said something similar, "We know this, judgments cannot be established however, by human reason alone." When Napoleon made his attack on Russia and marched all the way into the land, and then was defeated, many people felt that that was the hand of God. In fact, there was a song about the shattered army of Napoleon's that had these words in it, "With man and horse and caisson, the Lord of Hosts did smite them." Now that may look as if that's a wise judgment and therefore a divine judgment. I don't doubt that it was God who ultimately accomplished that, but if you will look at that from the stand point of non-Revelation, that is no word of God. There are two ways you could look at that. You could say, as many did say, we were delivered from Napoleon, but on the other hand, you could say, we lost the opportunity of having a whole western Europe, including Russia, that knew something about the order and the benefits of Napoleonic society.

There are different ways in which we may look at things that happen in this world. Judgments cannot be established by human reason alone. And the voice of the majority is often not the voice of God. Judgments may look backward as well as forward. The Lord Jesus, one day was walking with his disciples and, you'll remember, John records this in the 9th chapter of his Gospel, that they passed a blind man, and the men who were his apostles to be, ask him a very significant question. They said, "Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" And they were asking the question, "Why?" looking toward the past.

That's the way we often do when things happen to us. We say, "Why, why did this happen to me?" Snoopy is on his dog house and it's raining. And Snoopy says, "Being a dog is not the greatest thing in the world. We have a lot of disadvantages," as he reflects in his best philosophical appearance. "What I'm trying to say is, life is hard enough, why rain on me?" [Laughter] We tend to look at the past or the present, but notice our Lord's response to this. He said, "It was neither that this man sinned nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him." In other words, the things that were happening were not the result of things in the past, but they were things that were done in order that there might be a certain educative future. So when we look at things from the stand point of human nature, we never can find the final answer.

The judgments of God are often silence. As we read in Romans chapter 1, as men responded to the word of God and turned from it and committed all kinds of sins, the apostle says three times, "And God gave them over, God gave them over, God gave them over," among other things, to a reprobate mind, and to a society in which the sexual differences were no longer recognized. This was the judgment of God. Our society knows something about that today. That, Paul says in Romans 1, is not what we experience if we continue, but what we are already experiencing is his judgment upon what has already taken place in our society.

When we want to learn truth, finally we must turn to the word of God. The world turns to an unfathomable nihilism, or to an ice cold mechanistic universe. The Christian however, has one great truth that sustains him in the experiences of life, and his great truth is, nevertheless, as the Psalmist says, "I am continually with Thee." Isn't that marvelous? No matter what happens, nevertheless, "I am continually with Thee." So whatever happens, we don't say, "Why me?" We say, rather, Lord, what am I to learn from this? Thou are with me. This has come to me from a loving hand. It's purposive. It may be designed to educate me. It may be because of something that I have done. But I know that regardless, as a believer in our Lord, Jesus Christ, as the Psalmist says, "Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee."

Is there a final tribunal? Yes, the Bible speaks of a final tribunal. Is it the danger of hellfire? Yes, it's the danger of hellfire. There's nothing wrong with the word. It's very expressive. Fire is very expressive. It reminds us that eternal hellfire is not an enjoyable thing. And incidentally, if we know there is a heaven. We know it because Christ told us that there was a heaven. In the final analysis, we could never know it. Did not the Lord Jesus say, "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you." No prophet could ever speak of heaven, and could be fully and finally believed were it not that our Lord came and confirmed those words as being from God. You see, what we need to be absolutely sure of the truth is a word from God. That's why our Lord who came must truly be, if we have a word from God, the God-man.

Now with reference to hell, that's underlined. The term hell in the original text Gehanna, that term translated hell, is a term that is found twelve times in the New Testament. In every case but one in the 3rd chapter of James, in every case but one, the person who uses hell is our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul doesn't use it. Peter doesn't use it. Matthew doesn't use it. James uses it once. John does not use it. Our Lord is the one who uses it. Keeble once said, "The fount of love, his servants sins to tell love's deeds, himself reveals the sinners hell."

Charles Wolfe was a very well known, and a very fine preacher. And he once made a statement with regard to Ecclesiastes chapter 8, verse 11, which reads, "Because sentence against an evil word is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." He said, in his striking way that the judgments of God fall often enough in this world to let us know that God judges, and seldom enough to let us know that there must be a judgment hereafter.

So we're talking about something that has the support of divine Revelation, it is something that has the support of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who is ultimately the source of truth for us. He is the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by him. He's the one who has, in essence, given us a word from God. No other word is a word from God, but that word which he gives us and that which he authenticates as from God. That's what he did. He came as the God man, authenticated the teaching of the prophets, and then gave us a word from God, an inviolable, unchangeable, saving word.

Now the apostle is giving us a message from our Lord, for this message, as he says in his book, is given from our Lord, Jesus Christ, the author of the Revelation. He first says a word about the vision of the throne. He says, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them," five short verses, but what truth. And this one, the beginning of it, "And I saw," points to the end of the interim which is just been mentioned in verse 5 of ruling and reigning with Christ for a thousand years and then when the thousand years are completed, the final rebellion, and now, "And I saw a great white throne." Those words are very suggestive. Obviously, he's speaking with a great deal of symbol, "A great white throne." "Great" because the infinite God sits upon it. "Holy" because the infinite Holy God is the one with whom we have to deal. And it's a "throne" because this passage speaks of the justice that is to be rendered from it.

Human justice is never perfect, never. One of the failings of our judicial society is the fact that the men who operate it are humans. We tend to forget that. We praise law. And that's proper, we should keep the law. We should obey the law, but, at the same time, we remember that there are men who are responsible for our judiciary, and men have flaws. Think of the possibilities by which sins and transgressions may not be properly adjudicated. After all, there are many kinds of sins of which human law takes no cognizance. Think of some of the things that characterize individuals. There are individuals who are full of pride. There are individuals who are full of ingratitude. There are individuals who are guilty of mental cruelty, which does not issue in anything that can be punished by the judiciary. There are sins of scorn. There are sins of falsehood. There are sins of dishonoring of parents, and there are sins of abuse against children which do fall within the purview of some of our laws now, but many of them do not. Human justice is never perfect, pure justice.

Furthermore, human judges and their courts do not know the penalty that exactly fits the offense. I think in only one case, that of murder, do we know, by the authority of Scripture, what the penalty ought to be. Thus the judgments of time are token penalties. They are penalties that men, in their wisdom, have sought to match with the crimes. But men of our society are failing men. The human judge is often uncertain as to the guilt of the prisoner. He may have a man before him who is condemned and charged as having been indicted, but as a human being, he does not have the omniscience to know whether that individual is truly guilty. We have in our judiciary, over and over again, not simply in Texas, in Dallas, but in other places all over this land, individuals who are put in prison who do not really belong in prison.

Now, we're not trying to suggest that our society is lawless, but nevertheless, it is a failing kind of society. And we should remember that fact. We've had two cases I think, at least, maybe three, recently, in Dallas which have been given a great deal of publicity. Furthermore, we need to remember that in our world, the guilty often escape. On the top

of the domes of many of the courthouses is the familiar figure of justice blindfolded with balances in her hand. That's a symbol of man's effort to do justice and a symbol also of his reverence for justice, but we should not forget that those in the symbol are blindfolded. There are other ways, other reasons, why, of course, we do not have perfect justice. The guilty often escape, so there is a wonderful service that our Lord performs at the great white judgment when things are going to be made right, "A great white throne," infinite Holy justice.

Now, John also says that from this infinite, holy, just throne, "Heaven and earth fled away and no place was found for them," fled in dismay, I would imagine, we are to understand that. So we assume from the way it's stated, that the Great White Throne Judgment, if you are interested in where it's held somewhere in illimitable space, the space that God has created.

Now coming to the 12th and 13th verses, the apostle describes the vision of the judgment of the dead. He said, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." Now we have read in verse 5 and 6, "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power." And we read also that they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, and we made the point when we were talking about the millennium, I hope you remember, that to live is to be resurrected. If we believe that that means simply to have life with God in heaven, then how are we going to explain the statement, "and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books," and how then are we to understand the statement, "the rest of the dead," verse 5, "did not come to life until the thousand years were completed"? In other words, if to live and to reign with Christ, to live and reign with him in heaven, then the rest of

the dead who do not participate in the first resurrection, the unbelieving dead, they will ultimately also live.

Now, we pointed out that that is an impossible interpretation and that the term "lived" or "come to life" as it is in the original text, being in ingressive Eris, is a reference to the resurrection of the body used of our Lord used in chapter 2 and verse 8. So when we read, "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years," it means they were resurrected. They came to life, bodily resurrection, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years were finished.

Now, if the first "lived" refers to the bodily resurrection, so does the second. So we are told, here, that the dead are those who are also raised bodily, the unbelieving dead. They have a bodily resurrection also. That's thoroughly in harmony with our Lord's statement when he was here upon the earth, or in chapter 5 of the Gospel of John verse 28 and 29, he said, "do not marvel at this for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth, those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." There is a resurrection of life for believing dead, and there is a resurrection of judgment for unbelieving dead. So John says, "I saw the dead," that is those who don't live and reign with Christ, the dead. These are the ones whom John sees. They are the unbelieving dead. They are physically and spiritually dead. But now, still spiritually dead, they are physically with a resurrection body, a body well suited to enjoy the torments of eternal life, if we may use that expression.

Here are the men in the Bible whose unbelief is set forth in holy Scripture. There is Cain. Cain, so far as we know, is among those of whom John speaks when he says he saw them standing before the Lord. Now when he says they were standing, incidentally, that very fact suggests the resurrection of the body. So they were standing, Cain is one. Those of Noah's day were numbers who are here standing before the judgment, Nimrod, from Pharaoh to the modernistic modern preachers who are preaching things contrary to

the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, from Balak to the modern heretics of the present day. They all shall stand there, small and great, kings, peasants, preachers, atheists. There they stand, all of them, standing before the throne as the books are opened, standing before God waiting for the judgment from God. Resurrection of the body, what kind of body will the unbelieving dead have? I don't know. It's not described in holy Scripture. It's simply stated that they will have a body in which they will suffer eternal torment.

There is an old story of Leonardo da Vinci and the painting of *L'Ultima Cena*, or *The Last Supper*. You may have heard it. It's a legend that is associated with Milano. It is said that Leonardo, when he was painting that magnificent portrait, was looking for an individual to represent the face of Judas. And so, he sought to find a person who would match what one might expect of the face of Judas. And finally he came upon an individual, and after he had painted the individual, or when he was painting him, he asked him something about him, and he said, "Don't you remember me?" I'm a person you painted before when he was just an infant or a young person, and there Leonardo had also painted him as representative of, I've forgotten the figure, whether it was a figure of our Lord or not, but it marked the change that took place in that individual over the time.

John says that the books were open. Two witnesses evidently, I don't know the relationship of them, never having seen them. One of these books may be something like vouchers for the other, but we do read in verse 15, that if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. And incidentally, this is written in order to relate to us, God does not have to open the books to find out who passes the judgment or whose name is in the book of life. This is more along the lines of a giving of a verdict. And not anything as far as God is concerned, finding out truth. We don't have in Scriptures individuals who write who knew something about instant replay, or who knew something about print outs, or something about unerring transcripts of

things that have happened. But we have something even better than the latest computer that you could possibly think of. We have the eternal God who has within his mind all of the facts all perfectly arranged. "And there when the books were opened, the dead were judged out of them according to their works." And notice particularly, "according to their works," twice it's mentioned. This judgment is just. All the types of sins are encompassed within it.

One of the great teachers of the New Testament pointed out that there were three types of sins that our Lord laid stress upon that in a sense almost encompass all of the kinds of sins that you can think of. There was the sin of the publican, sin of the flesh, there were the sins of the Pharisees, sin, particularly of hypocrisy, so prevalent in religion, in which we have people sitting in the pew who profess a faith they do not have in their hearts. We have individuals preaching in a pulpit like this, claiming a faith that they do not have in their hearts. And then the sins of the Sadducees, like the rich man at whose door was Lazarus for so many years. The sins of materialism, he didn't really do anything bad so far as the Scriptures concerned, except he didn't do what he should have done, and these three types of sins, the sins of the publicans, the sins of the Pharisees, the sins of the Sadducees do encompass a great deal of the kinds of sins of which we are guilty. We think of parables our Lord told like the parable of the rich fool and the unjust judge.

Judgment is also in degrees, as Matthew chapter 10 and verse 15 puts it, I'll read that verse, because people often ask the question, "Do we have a judgment that recognizes degrees of unbelief and sin?" Yes we do. Our Lord said, "Truly I say to you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorra in the Day of Judgment than for Capernaum," "more tolerable," and recognition of the fact that judgment is in degrees.

Now in the final two verses, John speaks of the consequences of the judgment, and the consequences are very simple. The consequence is spiritual death. You often hear people say there are three kinds of death. There is physical death. There is spiritual death, and there is eternal death. Now that is true, we can speak of death in that way.

But fundamentally there is just one death and that's spiritual death. It manifests in physical death, and if there is no response to the gospel, the spiritual death becomes eternal death. The fundamental death is spiritual death, that one thing. The refusal to respond to the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the state in which we are born spiritually dead, unresponsive to the word of God, we remain spiritually dead. We do not understand the truth of God. We are unable to understand it. Paul says, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, it's not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." This is spiritual death. And so, spiritual death is the thing of which the apostle is speaking.

One can see, incidentally, the character of Hades here, because it ultimately finds its way into the lake of fire. And we read in verse 14, "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire This is the second death, the lake of fire." The second death, being eternal death, prolonged in the lake of fire. And then finally, in verse 15, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Sin involving endless guilt, time unrelated to its character, we tend to think that, and we make distinctions between, but so far as the enduring character of it, all sin is ultimately endless. And the one sin that we've committed against the Lord God, that means we deserve eternal judgment, although of course in Believers Chapel hearing the exposition of the word you know that we are born in condemnation, but that one sin that ratifies it is always a sin of which we are guilty. Age, length of time, does not in any way limit the guilt of sin. The idea that time reduces the guilt of sin is not a biblical truth at all. Sin is endless, and therefore endless judgment is set forth in holy Scripture.

There is a remarkable passage, which I have in my notes that I would like to read to you, it's a statement made by William Elbert Munsey. He said with reference to the eternal punishment of the wicked and the eternal happiness of the righteous and the eternity of God, "As far as Revelation is concerned, they form the same building, the universalist has placed his shoulder against the basement pillars and if he succeed the

whole structure falls, but he and his co laborers may toil and sweat and leave their bones to molder away in the cellars but God lives on, the righteous shout on and the damned groan on throughout all eternity." "All eternity," Mr. Munsey said.

Now, I'd like to read you what he says about eternity, these are remarkable words. He says, "Eternity cannot be defined, beginningless and endless, it cannot be measured, its past increased, its future diminished. It has no past. It has no future. It has no ends. It has not middle. It has no parts, an un-analyzable, tremendous unity. If all the mountains of all the worlds were pressing upon the brain, they could not weight it down more heavily than eternities least conception. It is something that always was and is and always will be. It is coeval with God. It began when he began, and he had no beginning. It will end when he will end, and he will have no ending. It is an un-originated, beginningless, endless, measureless, imperishable, indescribable, indefinable thing. Itself is its only definition." If asked, "What is eternity?" We can only answer, "Eternity." And in our answer confess our weakness and folly. It's older than the world, older than the angels, older than the sun, older than the stars, as old as God, yet no older now than when the worlds, suns, stars, and angels were made, and never will be any older, yet never was any younger. Eternity, that is really something for us poor sinners to think about.

Well, our time is up. Scripture points us to the reality and horror of the second death by its descriptions of the terrors of the wicked. Christ's severity to the fig tree, for example, underlines it. Christ's severity in his parable of the wedding, in which the guests who did not have the proper clothing was cast out. Christ's words regarding the truth in others of his parables make the point well. Sin is restless and perturbed in the presence of God. If in your experience you ever remember the days when you did not know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, you know what I'm speaking about when I say that sin is restless and perturbed in the presence of holiness.

As I've often said to you, I can remember in college that when some of my friends who took classical Greek, as I did, were studying in the library, they were young men studying to be Baptist preachers and both of them did become Baptist preachers, although one left the Baptist church and meets in a little church very similar to this now over in the south east, whenever they went in the library, I was sure to go elsewhere, because when I came in their presence it wouldn't be long, I knew, before we would be around talking about the Lord God in heaven. And I was not nearly so anxious to learn about that as I was to cure whatever hook or slice I might have had at the present time in my golf game, much more interested in that, much more interested in other things. And I can still feel the feeling that I had when I would come into the presence of someone who wanted to talk about spiritual things. What is that? That's sin. That's the perturbation of evil in the presence of a relative kind of holiness. There is an instinctive shrinking from that which is good by those who are evil. It's a premonition of the eternal death that the Bible speaks about.

There is a way of escape, our passage says. It's in the presence of the name, "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Those whose names are written in the book of life, you notice it's the presence of the name, it's not their works, but the presence of the name. Of course, works are involved because those whose names are in the book of life are those who in their lives reflect what God has done for them and does continually do for them. The Scripture is plain. It is faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ, and faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ alone, that saves souls. In the Old Testament it's, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "Kiss the Son." The apostle says, "Believe in our Lord, Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Arise Oh, God, judge the earth," the saints say. It's so true. It's the fulfillment of his plan and purposes.

May God in his marvelous grace touch your heart, may you, in response to our Lord's pleading with you, turn from following your way to following our Lord Jesus Christ who loves sinners, gave himself for them, shed his blood that they might be saved. Why don't you, right in your heart, at this present time, if you never believed in Christ, why don't, as we bow our heads, you just say a simple prayer, "Lord I know I'm a sinner, I know, I know that there is something wrong with my heart. You have said in your infallible word that Christ died for sinners, and that eternal life is offered through faith in him. I come acknowledging my sin. I take Christ as my own Savior. May God in his grace bring you to that decision. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed thankful that, in marvelous grace, Thou hast touched our hearts. We could never do justice to Thy word Lord. But we thank Thee for the reality of the sense of the forgiveness of sins that comes when we recognize that Christ has taken our place and born our penalty and brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And O Father we pray for anyone in this audience who may not know our Lord. Touch their hearts, turn them also to Christ, and may they join the company of the believing ones in the eternity of the enjoyment of salvation. We remember the Psalmists words that Thou art always with us. We are grateful and thankful. Go with us Lord.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.