

Introduction

Last Sunday's sermon was about the power of words, and I got a lot of feedback from you about it. But the feedback I got wasn't about the power of words. It was about something else I mentioned briefly in the course of discussing that. God will make every word that we've ever spoken known on Judgment Day. I saying that disturbed and puzzled some of you. I know that because you told me it did. You also asked me a question in that regard: **"Which of our sins, if we're Christians, will God make known on Judgment Day?"** Two of you suggested that I preach about that today and so that's what I'm going to do.

Judgment Day

Let's start with the word **"judged"** in verse 12-13. There was a movie out some years ago titled *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day*. Well, what we have here in verses 11-15 is the real Judgment Day, immediately following the Second Coming of Jesus.

Verse 11 reveals who the judge will be. It's God Himself, sitting on **"a great white throne."** The book of Revelation repeatedly pictures Him sitting on a throne. That represents His authority over what this verse calls **"heaven and earth,"** meaning over the universe and everything in it. God is the ultimate and final judge who will manifest Himself in visible form on Judgment Day.

Verses 12-13 go on to identify just whom it is that He will judge. It's **"the dead,"** which refers to every human being who ever lived.

Notice what will happen to them at the Second Coming of Jesus. The sea, death, and Hades will give them up. Hades is the dwelling place of non-Christians between their deaths and the Second Coming of Jesus.

John does share an aside about death and Hades in verse 14. God will throw them into the lake of fire. That's figurative language that means He will destroy them. No one resurrected will ever die again. And Hades will no longer function as the dwelling place of non-Christians.

Anyway, going back to verse 13, the sea, death and Hades will give up the dead. That refers, I think, to the teaching of Jesus in John 5:28-29. The Holy Spirit will raise both the righteous and the unrighteous from the dead and give them resurrection bodies. They will then, in those resurrection bodies, stand before God's throne to be judged. That includes, according to verse 12, "**the great and the small.**" Oprah and a homeless woman named Esther, for instance, will both, in resurrection bodies, stand before God's throne to be judged.

Many if not most Bible-believing Christians believe that there will be two judgments: a judgment of Christians only after Jesus raptures them just before the 7-year Tribulation, and then this Great White Throne Judgment of non-Christians only 1007 years later. In my view though, there is only one judgment and it's the one pictured in verses 11-15. Many of you disagree with me I know, but I believe that "**the dead**" in verses 12-13 refers to Christians and non-Christians alike.

But whether it's one or two Judgment Days, all Bible-believing Christians agree. God will judge every person who ever lived.

The Subject Matter, Nature, and Procedure of Judgment Day

Now, this text teaches us three things about Judgment Day.

The first is its subject matter. That subject matter is what verses 12 and 13 call "**deeds.**" The Bible does define more specifically what those deeds are. They're our actions, words, motives, and works that have any degree of moral content, good or bad.

Those deeds will be written down in what verse 12 calls "**books.**" That is a metaphor that teaches this. God's judgment of us will be fully informed. First, He will know all of our deeds. He won't miss one, no matter how slight. I once exaggerated how many miles I ran to impress a person. I once told a waitress that she undercharged me by \$1.49. Both of those deeds will be in the "**books.**" Second, God will know each of our deeds through and through - the what, when, where, why, and how of them. I once lost my temper with an attorney and rudely hung up on

her. I once probated a widow's estate for free because she couldn't afford to pay me. The **"ins and outs"** of each of those deeds of mine will be in the **"books."** God's judgment of us will be fully informed.

Verses 11-15 teach us a second thing – the nature of Judgment Day.

The phrase **"if anyone's name"** in verse 15 clearly implies that it will be personal. Some people have the idea that it's going to be a group judgment and that we'll just get lost in the shuffle of it all. But we won't. On the contrary, one by one, each of us will stand alone before God to be judged. C.S. Lewis explained it well: **"In the end, that face which is the delight or terror of the universe must be turned upon each of us."** He was right. God will direct His complete and total attention to each of us individually. Judgment Day will be personal.

It will be public as well. All the dead being before God's throne at the same time, in verse 12, implies that. It's estimated that between 90 billion and 110 billion human beings have lived on planet earth. On Judgment Day, all 110 billion of them will be present, look on, and listen as God judges us. Judgment Day will be public.

There's a third thing verses 11-15 teach us about Judgment Day, its procedure. No one knows for sure what that procedure will be. But this is my best guess based on the thinking and studying I've done.

First, God will publicly announce all the deeds we've done good and bad. He will declare to all the people who ever lived and me, for instance, that I was honest with the waitress and rude to the attorney.

Second, God will publicly announce what our eternal destiny is – heaven or hell. Verses 12 and 15 mention **"the book of life,"** which is different than the books. This book, which Scripture mentions elsewhere, contains the names of every person who received Jesus. It's figurative and represents that God will know every person who received and rejected Jesus, which He will make known. He will announce to every person who ever lived and me, for instance, that I received Jesus and that my eternal destiny is heaven. He will also announce that Adolph Hitler rejected Jesus and that his eternal destiny is hell.

Third, God will, based on the book of deeds, publicly announce our degrees of reward in heaven or punishment in hell, both of which I've explained before. One of Jesus' main teachings was this. What we do comes from what we are. Based on our deeds, therefore, God will determine our character - how much like or different than Jesus we were on the inside - when we died. If we received Jesus, the more like Him we were when we died, the greater our reward in heaven. If we rejected Him, the more different than Him we were when we died, the greater our punishment in hell. God will publicly announce that.

The procedure I just described may or may not be how Judgment Day will go. It does give us a framework, however, for thinking about it.

Which Sins of Christians

Anyway, based on what I've said today, we're now ready to tackle the question you asked, **"Which of our sins, if we're Christians, will God make known on Judgment Day?"** The issue, in essence, is this. Will God make known the sins of ours that He forgave, or will He not?

Most Christians believe He will not for two reasons. One is logic. When God forgives our sins, He regards us as if we never even committed them, which means He won't punish us for them. Making them known is inconsistent with that. The other reason is Scripture. They cite verses like Micah 7:19, **"You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."** They interpret **"into the depths of the sea"** to mean, **"never to be brought up again."** For those reasons, most Christians conclude that God won't make their sins that He forgave known on Judgment Day.

But I disagree and here's why.

First, making our sins known isn't a punishment. God casting them into **"into the depths of the sea"** means He won't punish us for them - won't make us pay for them - in this life or in the life to come. But making them known on Judgment Day isn't a punishment. We still get what we don't deserve, heaven, and don't get what we do deserve, hell.

Second, as I've already explained, verse 12 implies a public

judgment. What it implies, Jesus explicitly teaches in Luke 12:2-3. The succeeding verses, 4-9, reveal the context of verses 2-3. It's Judgment Day. Jesus says in that regard, **"But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be made known."**

Third, Judgment Day is primarily about God and only secondarily about people. Its overriding aim is that every person who ever lived will recognize His glory. And that's best achieved by making the sins of Christians known. Think about it. After God has made my sins known, every one, including you, will know what I deserve – eternal hell. But He will then announce that I received Jesus and that He's giving me heaven instead because I did. He'll do the same with you and by the time He's finished, every person who ever lived will recognize the value of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. And they will esteem each person of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - as a result.

Some Words of Comfort and Challenge

That then is my view and it upsets some Christians when I share it. So let me give you a few words of comfort to go along with it.

First, we're all in the same boat. A little joke explains what I mean. It was Judgment Day and God was bawling out the woman standing before Him something fierce. As His scolding of her went on, the man next in line to be judged turned to the person behind him and said, **"Boy, I'm glad I'm going after someone so bad. By the way who is the woman? She looks familiar."** "Oh," the person replied, **"That's Mother Teresa."** It's a joke of course but it does make the salient point that we'll all be in the same boat on Judgment Day.

Second, New Testament verses make it clear that the glory we get on Judgment Day will far outweigh our exposure. One of those is the verse at the top of our bulletin, 1 Peter 1:7. Notice the result of receiving Jesus. At His **"revelation"** or Second Coming, we'll get **"praise and glory and honor"** before God, the angels of heaven, and every person who ever lived. Think of the highest public honor that's

bestowed on a person on earth – being sworn in to the presidency of the U.S. But that can't even begin to compare to the honor that we who received Jesus will get on Judgment Day. It will supersede our exposure by far and make it a day that we'll remember literally forever.

Those are the words of comfort; now, the words of challenge. I'd be remiss if I didn't share them. Get ready for Judgment Day.

There's only one way you can. Receive Jesus, that is, apprentice yourself to Him. Become a disciple of His. Make and to the best of your ability carry out a specific decision. It's to arrange all of your earthly affairs around being with Him in order to learn and do all the He says. Doing that achieves two things that prepare you for Judgment Day.

First, God enters your name into "**the book of life.**" Remember that He sends those whose names are in the book of life to heaven and those whose names aren't to hell. Some of us debate what specific decisions for Jesus do and don't get people into "**the book of life.**" But there's one thing we know for sure. The decision to discipleship does.

Second, carrying out the decision to discipleship places us before the Holy Spirit in such a way that He's able to transform us into the image and likeness of Jesus. Remember. Character is the basis of our reward in heaven. The more like Jesus we are when we die, the greater our reward in heaven will be. The Holy Spirit prepares us. On an ongoing basis, He makes the core of us more and more like Jesus.

Conclusion

A Christian leader named Harold Camping predicts that Jesus is coming again this Saturday, May 21. I saw a billboard of his in Akron that says it this way: "**May 21 – Judgment Day.**" If I believed that were true, I'd do something I've always wanted to do, on May 20. I'd buy 2 eight pack boxes of Hostess Cupcakes, one half gallon of chocolate milk, and eat and drink it all. But I'm not going to do that because I believe May 21 isn't Judgment Day. Nevertheless, Camping is right about this. Judgment Day is coming! So, get ready for it!