

Everything came down to the final test. I struggled with Hebrew in seminary. I did fairly well in Greek, but for some reason my brain is slow to figure out the Hebrew language. The backwards letters and the vowels being little dots would just drive me insane. I got regular tutoring, I would put extra hours into studying before exams. And my grades were still bad. I was having to fight to get a C. And the final exam was coming up. For these exams you would just get a random sentence in Hebrew and have to translate it. They would usually come from the Bible, but random words would be mixed around and inserted to keep you from just repeating what you knew. So, when the final exam came, I knew my entire grade was ridding on how I did. I needed to do better than I had done on any other test to pass this class.

I was talking to Rica, our foreign exchange student, and she was telling me that her finals are coming up for her high school in Germany. And in her country, your grade on these tests determines wether you can go to college or not. Or how good of a college or what kind of major you can get.

I don't know about you, but I am happy I am not in school anymore. Tests stress me out. Especially final tests were so much of your future can ride on a small number. It might be nice to not be in school, but all of us have a final exam coming up. And it is a harder final than any test in Hebrew. And it is a test that your eternal future rides on.

Revelation 20:11-15 will tell us about the seriousness of the test, the consequences of failing, and the only way to pass.

I. Everyone will face God's judgment (v. 11-13).

This is the seriousness of the test.

It is something that everyone single person will face.

Every single human being who has ever lived.

Every single person who is alive live.

Every single person who has gone before us.

And every single person who will come after us.

Everyone will be there at the white throne.

And it is before that throne that we will have to face judgment.

Verse 11, **"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them."**

This is where the exam takes place.

It takes places before God on the throne.

Calling it the great white throne is such an understatement.

But it is emphasizing His authority.

It is emphasizing His purity.

It is emphasizing His holiness.

I have some undershirts that I wear underneath my collared shirts.

And they are white.

At least I think they are white, until I compare them to something that is actually white.

When I hold up my white undershirt to Brianna's white shirt.

Or to a piece of paper, or a whiteboard.

Then suddenly, my own shirt does not seem so white any more.

That is just how the throne that Jesus sits on will seem.

And we get this wonderful description of the earth and sky fleeing.

Because the world is ending.

The old creation that was marred by sin and death is beginning to fade into the dust and back into the nothing from whence it came.

The New Heavens and the New Earth are on the horizon.

We will talk more about what the New Heavens and the New Earth look like next week in the following chapter.

But before they can get here, the old must be dealt with.

And sin and evil must be judged.

Everything must be done in proper order.

That includes not just people but it also means the earth itself.

It also reminds us of the power of God.

This is who we stand before.

There are moments you stand before important people and you feel the weight of it.

You stand before a judge.

Or you stand before a Governor

Or a head football coach of the Sooners.

And you recognize and can just feel the weight this person carries.

All the powerful and influential people are nothing compared to standing before God.

Before Him, the heavens themselves will roll away.

And it is before Him that we will be judged.

Not in the court of public opinion.

Not through a vote.

Not through the internet or in the news.

We will be judged by God the almighty.

Standing before His throne.

Verse 12, **"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened."**

Look who stands before God.

It is the dead.

This is something that people need to understand.

When we die, there is life to come.

It is not that nothing happens.

People do they often like to imagine that when they die maybe there's nothing and it's kinda like falling asleep. You just never wake up.

Others may want to imagine get to be reborn and try again and just keep trying till we get the life that we want.

Others think everyone goes to paradise in heaven and experience all the good things be with their loved ones.

What the Bible teaches us.

In what reality use is that after death comes judgment.

And then, at some point, everyone who has died will stand before the throne of God and he will pass judgment.

And this judgment comes for all the great and the small.
The point of the scripture is making is that single human being who has ever lived or existed, will face the judgment of God.
Everyone is going to have to take this test.
Everyone will have to face God no one is going to escape it.

So often there are criminals or tyrants, cause their sin was found out.
Think of a pedophile who has been discovered and and rather than facing judgment and prison, they take their life into their own hands to try and escape.
Or the very rich whose embezzlement and theft is brought to life so they flee to another country and can't be found.

Nobody escapes this judgment.
Every single human being will stand before God and be judged.
And it doesn't matter what your religious belief is.
It doesn't matter whether you think this is true or not.
It doesn't matter if you are convinced of the veracity of the scriptures.
This is what will come.
Everyone will stand before God.
The very highest and the very lowest and everyone in between

"Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."

Then the books are opened.
Because the question that we have is what is this judgment based on?
It doesn't tell us what all of these books are called.
We know that one book is the book of life which we will find out more about a moment.

We find out that the rest of the books. It has been written down what we have done.
These books are the records of our lives.

There is no arguing with God.
There is just evidence and the evidence of our lives.

Written in these books is everything we have ever said.
It is never act we have ever made.
Every thing we have ever done
Is every thought we have ever had.
That is a lot of books.

This can be a little hard for us to wrap our minds around.
There's a real world example of this that might help us get it.
Because there are actual books that exist in this world right now that are written.
There is a record that exists of everything you have ever done on the Internet.
There's a record of everything that you have typed in the search.
When you looked up, what was the name of that actor in the movie?
When you're trying to find a good recipe for chili.
When you googled when the election came up
And all the other things that you have searched and I can't say from this pulpit.

There's a record of every website that you have visited and these Internet companies gather all of this information about us.
They figure out the kind of new stories that you click on and the ones that you ignore.
Figure out what kind of things that you like to buy figure out the images that you linger on.

It's a lot of these tech companies harvest this information about us and they sell it. They sell it to advertisers. They sell it to politicians.
they sell it to each other so they can make money off of us.

There are places you can go, and you can find some of these books to get these records. You wanna try to find a record of all of the things that you looked at.

I tried this once and was overwhelmed because it was hundreds and hundreds of pages of stuff.

I barely knew how to read it, but I knew there was gonna be a lot in there. I did not want to see.

God's book has all of that in so much more.

It is accurate not guesses from computers.

The very end of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Which is a book about the purpose of life in a meditation and wondering on how we were supposed to live with everything can often seem empty and nothing really satisfied.

And Ecclesiastes ends warning us that God will bring every deed into judgment.

Including every secret thing.

Every moment that you had an opportunity to give to someone poor in a need will be brought up.

That God has all the facts.

And he knows our hearts.

And he will judge at each moment, whether we gave righteously and in the way that we should.

Or whether we withheld not because it was wise, but because we were selfish and greedy.

He will judge everything that we have ever said with on the Internet or in person or behind someone's back when no one was listening.

Every single deed.

Everything that we have done that we shouldn't have done everything that we didn't do that we should have done.

Our judgment is based on those books.

I don't think this will be a fun day or a fun test.

Verse 13, **"And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done."**

Kinda just continue the same idea.

All of the dead were going to come and have to be here.

It mentions the sea because those who died in the sea, were thought to be lose forever.

You may think of those today who die in shipwrecks or who dying war who bodies we never recover and can't ever find him.

We know that they're dead. We just don't know where they are.

Every single person will be found and judged.

Everyone will be judged according to what we have done.

This judgment is going to be just.

It is not going to be arbitrary. It is not going to be biased.

It will be the most fair and right judgment in history .

II. Judgment leads to death (v. 14-15).

There are real and deep consequences to failing this test.

They're all kinds of tests that we can take.

A lot of them in your passing or failing doesn't make a big difference.

I took an allergy test recently. It's just gonna tell me if I have allergies or not. It's gonna give me information.

Are there times you're in school and you take a test and it's a practice test just to let you know if you know something or not but it's not gonna be on your final grade.

Then there are some tests if you fail them, you're gonna be in trouble.

There's like the final exam in a class where if you don't pass this exam, you're gonna fail the class.

Were there are times when you're trying to get a particular job if you're trying to be a lawyer, you have to pass the bar.

There are exams and tests you have to take to get into medical school.

There are tests that determine your future.

This is a test that determines your future, and it determines your eternal future.

God, deciding against us leads to the second death and eternal death.

Verse 14, **"Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.**

This is the second death, the lake of fire."

First, we see that death itself is disposed of.

This is metaphorical and beautiful language.

It is a fulfillment of the promises God has made in the past.

That in the world to come.

That in the New Heavens and the new earth, death will be finished.

It will be swallowed up in victory.

It will be no more.

The first thing to go into the fires of hell is death itself.

And this place is called the second death.

There are two places people can go in eternity.

There is eternal life with Jesus.

And there is eternal death apart from him.

It is described in Revelation 20 as the lake of fire.

Verse 15, **"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."**

And the penalty is going to this place.

Those who fail.

They will be cast into the lake of fire.

Or what we commonly refer to today as hell.

That is the only other destination.

There is no neutral place.

There is only this one.

And the way to fail the test is to not have your name in the book of life.

There are two options for the final judgment.

The first is that they check in the book.

Is your name written in the book of life?

Has your name been written in there since the foundation of the world?
If yes, then you pass the judgment.
If yes, then you do not have to stand before the throne.
Then you get to go into eternity with Jesus in New Jerusalem and the New Heavens and the New earth.

If your name is not in the book of life, then the other books are checked.
Then all of your deeds.
All of your actions are brought out and examined.
Everything you have ever said.
Everything you have ever done at work.
Everything you have ever done when you were drunk.
Everything you have ever done when you were mad.
Everything you ever did in a moment of weakness that you regretted immediately.
Everything you ever did years ago before you knew any better.
All of those and much more are brought out into the light.

My father always told me that sin will find you out.
Our sin and the things we do wrong will always be revealed.
It will either be revealed now on this side of eternity.
Or one day it will be.
Or, it will finally come to light on this day.
And we have to answer for it.

Because the only way to pass this test.
The only way to pass this exam and this judgment.
The only way to be found not guilty is to be completely innocent.
In all of those books.
In all of those records of our lives.
They will be compared to the purity and holiness of God.
They will be compared to the laws and commands of God.
And if we have failed at any one point, then we are guilty.
It is a pass fail test.

And it only takes one small sin to fail.
And those books will reveal mountains and mountains and mountains of sins.
For every single one of us.

And failure means being cast into the lake of fire.
And after reading all the lists of your sins, no one will be able to complain.
Everyone will have to admit this is what they deserve.
If this is true, then we are in trouble.
If this is true, how can any of us escape?
How can any of us not experience the second death?

III. Jesus is the only escape from judgment (v. 15).

There is only one way that we can escape judgment.
There is only one way to avoid the lake of fire.
There is only one way to avoid the second death.
And that is through Jesus Christ.

Verse 15, **"And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."**

This has been repeated several times in Revelation and in the passage.
The only way out to is to have your name written in the book of life.
It seems that believers are not actually judged in this section.
There are other passages in the Bible that talk about believers being judged.
But we are judged on a different basis.
Because everyone who faces the white throne judgment is going one direction.
Their names are not in the book.
And so they are sent to judgment and eternal punishment.

But believers have their names written in the book of life.
Their judgment is slightly different.
For believers our judgment is not whether or not we will go to heaven.

There does not seem to be any moment where Christians destiny is in the balance and they need to respond rightly to Peter to say why they should go to heaven.

Instead, the judgment for believers seems to be based on the reward.

It is just determining how rewarded they will be in the life to come.

On Wednesday we will look a little more at those passages.

There we will examine them in a little more detail.

Because in Revelation believers have been resurrected and already received their reward.

For us this morning we need to see the main thing.

Because the most important thing is not how big your house in heaven is.

It is not whether the crown of life is literal or not.

It is not whether or not we get to have big bank accounts.

Or whether the rewards we get will be awesome or not.

The most important thing is will we experience eternal life?

Will we pass the test?

And the only way to pass the test is to have your name written in the book of life.

And the only way to have your name in the book of life is to embrace Jesus.

This is the core of the gospel.

This is the heart of our faith.

The only way to come to the Father is Christ.

The most important thing that we have to do.

Most important thing for every single human being on earth is to place your faith in Jesus Christ.

It is to trust in him and him alone for our salvation.

You cannot pass this judgment on your own.

You cannot possibly be good enough to pass this judgment on your own

You cannot be smart enough to argue the god who created you and who designed your brain and who invented logic.

You cannot strong arm, God, or force him.
Our only hope and judgment is to plead on the name of Jesus.

Because the beauty of the gospel and the wonder of the gospel is the Jesus before time began.

Before God said, let there be light and before the foundations of the world, he already saw us in our hearts.

God already had all of the books that had all of our sin and all of our failures and all of our mistakes on it.

And what Jesus and what God decided to do is that he would make a way for us anyway.

That, even though we were going to mess up the world that he created and reject him and kill his son.

He would show us grace.

He would show us unmerited favor.

What we deserve and what is just is to burn forever in the lake of fire.

But instead, Jesus came to offer us a way out.

He gives us the chance on this side of eternity to have all of those stacks of books with all of our sins, blotted out with the blood of Jesus.

Want you to imagine that all of those books that have all of the things that you have done wrong?

Everything is written out and it fills all the pages.

And if you put your faith in Jesus, and if you put your trust in Jesus, it is like he goes through those books and instead of white out, he uses his very blood that he covers up every single one of your sins.

And as you keep sinning in the future, as more things keep getting added to the book. The blood of Jesus covers all of those too.

And then Jesus writes our name in the book of life that says we are his son. We are his daughter. We are loved that we are welcome and that we are righteous and holy.

Not because of what we have done, but because of what the blood of Jesus says that we are.

If you have not put your faith in Jesus and in him alone for eternal life, you must.

It's my favorite question of the Heidelberg catechism that's when I ask my children often what is our only hope in life and death?

I really hope is that we are not our own but belong to God.

Your only hope in life and death is Jesus.

For those of us who are believers, how do we respond to this idea of the coming judgment?

First, we need to remember the gospel.

We need to remember that the only way we can stand before the throne that we can stand before God and not melt into a puddle and not cast ourselves into the lake of fire because that's what we deserve.

The only way we can stand there is because Jesus will be standing beside us, and he will be holding us up and he will be talking to God the Father on our behalf.

We can start with a gospel and then as we continue in his life goes on we start to think that maybe God's love for us depends on how good that we do.

Or we can think that maybe our eternal destiny is determined by how good that I do right now.

The only thing that determines your eternal destiny is the blood of Jesus And whether you've put your faith and your trust in Jesus, in Jesus alone or not.

So first we need to remember the gospel.

Remember that Jesus is our only escape.

And this should bring us comfort.

This should help in the times when we are filled with doubt and with worry. When shame comes when the enemy whispers that we are nothing

We can remember and be encouraged that our destiny is not determined by ourselves our destiny was determined by Jesus and we're trusting him

And having trusted in the gospel.

And if we have put our faith in Jesus, and we are pleading, and trusting that he alone will help us pass this judgment.

Then when we think about the books of our lives.

When we think about the time that we will have to stand and answer to God for how we live.

Then what we should do is that should change how we live today.

Today is being written.

Yesterday and the years behind you are already written down of the written down length they ain't being changed.

But how you live today and how you live tomorrow and how you live for the rest of your life hasn't yet been written.

You have a say and have the rest of your story goes.

We get to choose how it is that we are going to live.

Decide how it is that we are going to obey or not obey Jesus right now.

And if we would recognize that the adjuster is coming, that should impact how we make those decisions.

We should live as if one day we have to answer to Jesus for what we do.

We should talk to other people as if one day God ask why did you talk to someone I'm made and then I love that I died for that way?

We should pray, as if one day we will have to answer to God for how we prayed, and for our lack of prayer for the way that we are prideful in our prayers.

But if we are trusting in the gospel, and we are trusting in the blood of Jesus, as our only hope.

Then we should approach today and we should approach tomorrow motivated to live with hope to live differently, not out of fear.

Not out of terror and not as if our eternal destiny is in the balance, if we do it right or not.

But we should approach the future and we should approach today knowing I know I get to be with Jesus and I know that he will forgive me and he will love me no matter how much I failed today.

But I'm gonna choose today to live in a way that I know him.

It should make us want to obey Jesus and it should make us wanna follow Jesus because we know that we already have been saved.

It is the love of Jesus that should motivate us to not sin.

Not fear of judgment.

Sometimes people treat it like it means they can sin all they want.

And they don't have to care about doing what is right.

They can get drunk all they want, watch pornography, curse, and do whatever

That would be like if I knew my wife would never leave me and would always forgive me.

And I decided to repay this unconditional love by having constant affairs, overworking, and abandoning my kids.

Instead, her love should motivate me to love back freely.

It is the same thing with Jesus.

His never-ending grace inspires us to love more. And to obey more.

Everyone will face God's judgment (v. 11-13).

Failure will lead to eternal death (v. 14-15).

Jesus is the only escape from judgment (v. 15).

Plenty of Revelation has been up for debate and interpretations.

The antichrist, bowls, rapture, mark of the beast, and how we understand the 1,000 years.

But this section is not up for debate.

It is one of the essentials of the faith that one day we will all face the final exam.

And the only way to pass is to put your faith in Jesus.

Trust in Christ alone, and then we can face the future with no fear.