

***<sup>5</sup> All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. <sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.***

On August 23, 1944, the sound of an army was in the air on the streets of Paris. To the north, the French armored division under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle and US General Patton rolled toward the city with heavily armored tanks making haste. From the South, the US 4th infantry marched with poise through the Paris suburbs. 20,000 German Nazi troops run for their lives, fleeing from those tanks as they are chased and pursued and fired upon by a combined force of US tanks, French infantry, and English troops.

Today, we examine the Sunday entitled Last Judgement. And it's something that is far more terrifying than an army of tanks and soldiers with guns.

***"This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels."*** What an absolutely terrifying sight. At a fateful moment, one that has been set. One that, if it was known, could be marked on a calendar. God himself, with the sound of the trumpet blast as the sky rips apart and countless angels flood the sky. The graves give back the dead bodies; all those alive look up and see the sight, the moment that has been told of old, where Jesus Christ returns. Every eye upon him. And there he stands as judge.

And the result of this one moment in time has eternal implications for an eternity out of it. ***"<sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might".***

From the time his verdict is rendered, all the evildoers will be sent away into everlasting destruction. They will forever be shut out from the presence of God, from his glory, from his protection, from his goodness, his mercy, all gone, forever and into eternity. No second chance, no do-over. On Judgement day, all evildoers will receive what they have wanted: they will have a life away from God. And God will grant that request. Hell is an individual's freely chosen identity away from God, on a trajectory into eternity.

In the modern age, especially to people who might be new to Christianity, this is perhaps one of the most challenging and most disagreeable doctrines of the Bible. It might even be something that you struggle with. If you would talk to many people in the world around you, you might hear responses similar to this: "I just don't really believe in a God that could send people to hell," "If God is so loving, why does he have the need to judge everyone at

the last day,” or even “It just doesn’t seem fair that God gets to decide where everyone spends eternity.

We, as people of this world and of the current time, really have no trouble with the idea of a God of love. One who cares deeply about all people, one who has a heaven that is perfect and forever, and one who watches over you day and night. But as soon as the Bible starts talking about God as jealous, just, and fair, then that all of a sudden starts to cause some trouble for people.

It’s no wonder that this idea is disagreeable to us as humans. And this description of the just judge coming on the last day brings absolute terror to a sinner like me. It turns the stomach. The thought of it, which is only a glimmer of the power of its actual reality, is enough to drop me to my knees in fear. I drop to my knees, knowing that I am one of those who has not obeyed his word. I am one who has not sought after him with my whole heart; I am one who has deliberately, deliberately known that what I was about to do was wrong, and I did it anyway. On my knees, I plead, Lord have mercy on me. Lord, I do not deserve to be in your powerful presence. Lord, I am lost.

But on August 23, 1944, there was a very different reaction than those of the German troops. As those tanks rolled through, they were met with joyous song. Cheers and smiles welcomed soldiers as they marched through the south. Little children brought colorful flowers and handed them to men and placed them upon weapons of war. For 4 years, their town had been occupied and ravaged by a foreign enemy. And these weapons of war were their freedom.

God’s magnificent power and judgment, the fiery angels bursting forth from the sky, is something we do not meet with shrieks and fear. But with joy and smiles. That’s the way that Paul writes about it:

***“on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”***

Judgment day is something that is so wonderful. It is beautiful for one reason alone, and that is that the one who is coming to judge will judge you as righteous. The judge who comes to separate the sheep and the goats of all people of all time looks down at you as righteous. That God will judge you, but he will judge you as righteous. As worthy. As one who gets to cross over into eternal life. You are regarded as worthy in the sight of a magnificent and powerful God because his righteousness has been granted to you. Through faith that the Holy Spirit has worked by means of the Word and the Sacraments, you have been given the righteousness of Jesus.

Your Savior declared it on the cross, and it is brought to its final and total culmination on the day of the final judgment. It is on the day of judgment that the final verdict comes down. But for you, it’s not scary. Those who appear with the righteousness given by the gospel through faith must be declared righteous by a righteous God. We will be among the Lord. Among those angels praising the Lord God.

In God's final judgment, we see something interesting. We see God's love. Paul writes, "***God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you<sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well.***"

God's judgment is love. When God sees the children who he loves being hurt, being killed, and suffering from the effects of sin, he is angry. He needs to punish those who have troubled his children. We had a god, who was disgusted with violence, enraged with evil, and who would set about a final day when he would destroy it. A God who sees all of your struggles in this fallen world. All of the times that you have been mistreated and hurt, as a result, will take those far away from you. Far away for all of eternity. To the world, it may seem counterintuitive, but God's love is displayed in the judgment, where he puts everything in the right, forever.

To you, as Christians, Judgement day is not something that is scary; it is something that brings us joy. It's something that we can look forward to. It influences and shapes our days here on this earth as well. Only if I have a God who has the power to right all wrongs and judge perfectly and fairly do I have the ability to refrain from seeking vengeance on my own because I know that one day God himself will set things right.

August 23, 1944 the sound of tanks is in the air. The marching of troops is heard in the south. The citizens of Paris shout with joy because their hardship is over. Their friends have come to set them free. Brothers and sisters in Christ, as we see the day approaching when our Lord will come with fire and angels and trumpet blast, to judge the nations, where time itself will cease and eternity is ushered in, look forward with joy. Because your Lord Jesus, has come to set you free.

We look forward to that day and say: Come, Lord Jesus, Come. Amen!