

THE RISEN JUDGE

Acts 17:31

INTRODUCTION

- Art galleries report that the average time a person spends looking at a particular work of art is just three seconds
 - It is said that a picture paints a thousand words
 - Often a visual representation can communicate and impact the heart and mind more effectively than mere words
 - God in his wisdom has revealed his truth to us primarily through *words*
 - But the Bible gives us “word pictures” which descriptively paint for us vivid representations of truth
 - There are certain things in Scripture that go beyond the original object in space and time to become emblems of transcendent truth, such as “the lamb”, “the cross” and “the empty tomb”
 - The empty tomb refers not just to the plot of ground at Jerusalem, but the immense treasury of truth that Christ’s resurrection encompasses
 - Instead of giving it a cursory glance, or even standing at its doorway as John initially did, we ought like Peter, to dive in to it and absorb its profound realities that have power to transform our lives
 - The emblem of the empty tomb presents to us a myriad of divine truths which rivals the cross in significance
- ✓ It speaks of the curse of sin (Romans 5:12)

- ✓ It speaks of Christ's humiliation and lowliness (Matthew 27:59-60; Philippians 2:6-8)
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's death and burial
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's victory over wicked men
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's victory over Satan (Hebrews 2:14)
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's victory over death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's deity (Romans 1:4)
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's glorification (Romans 6:4)
- ✓ It speaks of Christ's High Priesthood (Hebrews 7:16, 25)
- ✓ It speaks of the believer's resurrection (Romans 8:11)
- The empty tomb is the one irrefutable argument that destroys the lies and errors of the infidels and heretics
- But there is another truth that the empty tomb proclaims, that may not be so obvious – *that the day of judgment is coming when God will judge mankind by Jesus Christ*
- This aspect of the resurrection is overlooked or omitted by many today who will be speaking about Easter
- Paul was invited by the Greek philosophers to expound to them his "new doctrine"
- They took him to the Areopagus (Mars Hill) and he declared unto those idolaters the Unknown God

- He spoke of God's creation of all things, his governing and preserving of the creation, his nearness to man, that he is knowable, and man has a duty to seek after him, and God commands all men to repent
- But it was Paul's reason in v.31 for the need of repentance that sent them into outrage
- Paul essentially said that, "You must repent because there is a coming day of judgment, and we can be certain of this because of Christ's resurrection."
- The concept of a resurrection brought not only objection but derision from the philosophers who considered it to be entirely absurd
- Knowing the vital place the doctrine of the resurrection holds in Christology and soteriology, it should be no surprise when unbelievers vehemently attack it
- It is not so much the fact of Christ being raised from the dead 2000 years ago that the world cannot abide, but the necessary implication of it – that there must then be a day of judgment
- The idea of a final judgment is utterly abhorrent to the unbeliever and he makes every effort to rid his conscience of its truth (Psalm 10:11; Isaiah 28:14-18)

Note five truths regarding the day of judgment:

I. IT IS RESERVED UNTO A DAY

- A. There are multiple future judgments, which span over one thousand years
 1. The Judgment Seat of Christ for believers after the Rapture (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Romans 14:10-12)

2. The Judgment of the Nations at the Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31-46)
3. The Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Peter 3:7)
 - a. This is the final, comprehensive judgment of all the wicked dead
- B. God is working out his eternal plan and purposes and they will be fulfilled according to his schedule
 1. When God sets an appointment, it will not be cancelled or changed
 2. Just as God sent his Son to save the world when “the fulness of time was come” (Galatians 4:4), so too he will send his Son to judge the world in his perfect timing

II. IT IS RIGHTEOUS IN ITS DETERMINATIONS

- A. God’s justice demands a final reckoning for those who violate his law
 1. Even fallen man’s sense of justice retains a desire for crimes to be punished
 2. The atheist world-view eliminates any ultimate justice, seeing many criminals die without ever being caught or punished
- B. This judgment will be according to a perfect standard
 1. Sinners will be judged by God’s law (Romans 2:12)
 2. They will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48)

3. Anything short of perfect compliance to this standard will result in eternal damnation
- C. Christ's judgment will be the most perfectly righteous judgment (Psalm 9:7-8; 96:13; 98:9)
1. His sceptre is one of righteousness (Hebrews 1:8)
 2. As the Judge of all the earth, he always does that which is right (Genesis 18:25)
 3. He judges without partiality (Acts 10:34)
 4. His judgment will not miss or overlook any evidence (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36)
 5. On this day the righteous judgment of God will be revealed (Romans 2:5)

III. IT IS RELEGATED BY DEITY

- A. Jesus Christ is the appointed Judge
1. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22,27)
 2. He takes not this authority to himself, but receives it of the Father
- B. He judges both as God and Man (Philippians 2:9-11)
- C. He judges alone
1. There will be no judicial panel, or bench of judges, but one solitary Judge (cf. Isaiah 63:3)

IV. IT IS RATIFIED AS DEFINITE

- A. The resurrection of Christ assures mankind that the judgment will take place
 - 1. The word for “given” (*paraschon*) is a legal term for furnishing and bringing forth evidence
 - 2. The word for “assurance” (*pistin*) indicates confidence
 - 3. The resurrection is a fact of history
 - a. Those who objectively examine the evidence are forced to acknowledge this
 - b. Those who deny Christ’s resurrection are “willingly ignorant”
- B. The resurrection proves that all other religions are false and incapable of giving eternal life
 - 1. Christianity is not merely one religion among many, but is set apart from all other belief systems, in that Jesus Christ, the God-Man, rose from the dead, and lives for evermore

V. IT REQUIRES OF US A DECISION

- A. Paul presented a clear, forthright appeal to the Athenians
 - 1. He would not compromise his message for his sceptical audience, but clearly preached to them the doctrine of Jesus Christ and the way of salvation
- B. The requirement of repentance
 - 1. Today, few churches preach repentance
 - 2. Others have redefined repentance to be mere a “change of mind” from unbelief to belief

3. But Biblical repentance is a change of mind regarding sin, that results in turning from sin unto God
4. “Repentance unto life is a saving grace (Acts 11:18), wrought in the soul by God’s Spirit, whereby a sinner comes to have a true sight and sense of sin (Ps. 51:3-4; Acts 2:37), and of his own lost and undone condition by nature, and also apprehends by the illumination of the Holy Ghost, the tender mercy of God in Christ (Joel 2:13); which works in him godly sorrow and grief for his sin (2 Cor. 7:10), causing him to also hate and loathe it, and to turn from it unto God (Jer. 31:18-19)”
5. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)
6. *“God has enacted a law in the High Court of heaven that no sinner shall be saved except the repenting sinner, and He will not break His own law. Though all the angels should stand before God and beg the life of an unrepenting person, God would not grant it.”* (Thomas Watson)

CONCLUSION

1. Many religious leaders appear on the television at this time of the year proclaiming the empty tomb is a message of *hope* to the world
2. While it does certainly give hope of life beyond the grave, this hope only applies to those who repent and believe
3. For the rest of the unbelieving, impenitent, Christ-rejecting humanity, the empty tomb is a message not of hope, but of judgment, condemnation, wrath, damnation and everlasting misery

4. Such a message will provoke mockery and abuse, and does not often attract large numbers of converts, yet it is the truth
5. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he repents and lives (Ezekiel 18:23)
6. God has been so good to rebellious sinners in creating and sustaining us, and for sending his Son to die for us – such goodness should lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4)
7. But to despise such goodness is to “treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5)
8. There are two states in which man can face the judgment of God – in the guilt of his sins, or justified by the blood of Christ
9. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? (Hebrews 2:3)