

## **Jesus on Judgment**

Matthew 25:31-46

Series: *Jesus On \_\_\_\_\_: The Only Perspective that Matters*

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

**Illus. Finals** - Next week we are going to be honoring all of the seniors here at our church. Many of you have walked that journey of seeing children graduate and some of you your grandchildren. My oldest will be one of those seniors...she just finished up with her last day of high school on Friday.

I don't mind telling you that this kind of got me twisted up! I remember my high school English teacher telling me when I graduated that "your parents will not see 18-year-old you walking across that stage, they will see first grade you walking across that stage" and boy, was Mrs. Finnimore right!

This is my first go round at this...and I'm going to stop talking about it right now, so I don't start crying!

All this to say is that not just Riley, but all these seniors once they take their final exams will walk across a stage (assuming they passed those exams!), they will receive their diploma and in that moment, they are officially a high school graduate...and it happens just like that!

While it took a while to get here...lots of days of school...lots of homework and tests...lots of ups and downs along the way, there is an official day that is coming soon.

Graduation is on the calendar and it WILL take place. There is an official time this is going to happen, and for those that have done the work and stayed the course, they receive their diploma and will be rewarded accordingly.

This introduction and this time of the year is VERY fitting for the message today. I'm calling the message: **Jesus on Judgment**

We are looking at Jesus's perspective on certain matters and as we are saying in this series, it's Jesus's perspective that truly is the only one that matters.

Jesus had MUCH to say about a future day that is coming...like the seniors whose graduation date is on the calendar, so too is this day of judgment. It's on God's calendar!

If you are taking notes, here is the first point to write down. I'm calling this section of the sermon: **The Certainty of Judgment**

Divine judgment is going to happen. And it's going to take place in the future...it will be a day where every single person will "walk across the stage" so to speak and give an account before God for his or her life.

On this day, we will be held accountable for the words we have spoken:

**Matt. 12:36 – "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak..."**

We will be held accountable for the deeds we have done:

**Matt. 16:27 – "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done."**

More on this in the message today! On this day of judgment, we will also give an account for the motives of our heart – i.e. - WHY we said what we said, and did what we did! This will be a day when everything secret gets exposed!

**Luke 8:17 – "For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."**

This day of judgment is coming and listen to me...it is certain!

The writer of Hebrews in: **Heb. 9:27 – "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment..."**

Now, if there was EVER a sobering message to preach, this is it! It's hard to preach this message with a smile!

Out of all of the messages that have been brought so far in this series (Jesus on money, Jesus on marriage and others) – NONE are as weighty as the one I'm bringing today because we are talking about not just eternity and where we will spend it, but the reality of standing before God one day...just think about that for a moment!

Me...you...a mere creation - made from the dust of the ground, a vapor, standing before the Lord of the universe...the one who created everything out of nothing. We will EACH stand before him and be judged with what we did with AND how we lived this earthly, physical life that he gifted us.

THAT...properly reflected on is extremely sobering. Let's read about this final judgment in:

**Matt. 25:31-46 – "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I**

was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,<sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’<sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’<sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’<sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’<sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’<sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,<sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’<sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’<sup>45</sup> Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’<sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Let’s talk about this judgment and answer a few questions about it. First, let’s answer: **When will judgment take place?**

As noted, this is a day that is marked on God’s calendar. There’s no skipping this appointment or rescheduling it for another day.

**Illus. Rescheduling eye appt.** – NOT rescheduling this!

In scripture, this day of judgment is often referred to as “the Day of the Lord”. It speaks of the return of Jesus and then the ensuing, impending judgment.

And here’s the deal: while it’s marked on God’s calendar – it hasn’t been and never will be disclosed to us. In fact, according to scripture, only God, the Father knows when this day is going to take place.

Jesus’s teaching that we read in Matt. 25, is a part of a larger teaching he did that we call the Olivet Discourse. It covers all of Matt. 24-25, and it’s Jesus teaching his disciples about all that will take place toward the end of time. They wanted to know:

**Matt. 24:3b** – “...the disciples came to him privately, saying, “tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

And so, Jesus begins to give them various signs to look for and it’s in this context he talks about the “coming of the Son of Man” – this is a reference to the “day of the Lord” and day of judgment!

**Illus. “Son of Man”** – the title, “Son of Man” was Jesus’s favorite term to use to describe himself and his ministry. It’s taken from the book of Daniel – which by the way, we are going to take the entire Fall to walk through the book of Daniel – very excited about it! I thought this

would be the PERFECT book for us to go through as election season nears (we're going to talk about living in Babylon!) and it will take us right up to Christmas.

The "Son of Man" is the figure in Daniel's book that comes on the clouds and God bestows upon the "Son of Man" all favor and glory and honor and power.

Jesus using this "Son of Man" terminology – identifying himself as such, says on multiple occasions during the Olivet Discourse, he's returning and NO ONE including himself knows exactly when. Let me give you just a few examples:

**Matt. 24:36-39 – “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. <sup>37</sup> For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”**

It's going to happen when no one is expecting it. People will just be doing their regular day to day activities. In a parable about being ready for the return of Jesus, he tells his disciples:

**Matt. 25:13 – “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”**

From our main text today, we read in: **Matt. 25:31 – “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels are with him, then he will sit on this glorious throne.”**

So, the question of Jesus returning is NOT one of “IF”, it's one of “WHEN”! The date is in God, the Father's outlook calendar, we just don't have access to it and the point of that is we better be ready for it at any moment. More on this at the end of the message.

Let's answer now: **Who is our judge?**

**Illus. Mark Lanier** - Now, if you've been around Champion Forest for any length of time, you know we have in our church, one of the greatest if not the greatest trial attorney in the United States.

Mark Lanier teaches the Biblical Literacy Class and over his 40 year career has tried literally hundreds of cases. I've talked to him about this on numerous occasions, but one of the first things he does when a trial date has been set is find out who the judge is because he wants to know who is trying the case.

- Is the judge fair?
- Is he impartial?
- Does the Judge take the case seriously?
- Does he rule decisively?
- Is he clear on what the rules are for his courtroom?

Well, just like Mark Lanier does his homework on the judges he argues before in courts across America, let's do our homework and find out who we'll be standing before.

Now, we're told VERY plainly in scripture the Judge we are standing before is Jesus.

Paul writes in **2 Tim. 4:1a** – **“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead...”**

Where did Paul get this information? From Jesus himself. Listen to **John 5:26-27** – **“For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.”** (There's the “Son of Man” language again!)

Now, this is interesting here because anyone who reads the gospels will find that Jesus spoke on multiple occasions stating that he came NOT to judge. Listen to:

**John 8:15-16** – **“You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. <sup>16</sup> Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.”**

**John 12:47-48** – **“If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”**

So, which is it? Is he Judge or is he not? Well, the answer is, “YES!” The first time Jesus came, he came not to judge or condemn, but to save!

**John 3:17** – **“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”**

When he returns however – on the great “day of the Lord”, he's coming back to Judge. He will (Matt. 24:31) come in glory and “sit on his glorious throne”. What kind of Judge is Jesus?

You can bet that he is fair. He is perfectly just. Listen to his own words from **John 5:30** – **“I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”**

- Jesus because he is truth, judges in truth.
- Jesus because he is wisdom, judges in wisdom.
- Jesus because he is righteous, judges in righteousness.

If there was ever a person you wanted to stand before, it ain't Judge Judy! That lady is mean! You want to stand before Judge Jesus!

We know his character...his love...his mercy. At the same time though because we do know his character - his holiness...his purity...his righteousness and justice...if there was EVER a person you did not want to stand before knowing who we are in and of ourselves, it's Jesus.

So, we're in kind of a dilemma here, aren't we?! There's kind of a fear when talking about standing before Judge Jesus. We want his mercy side, but do we want the truth and righteousness side?

What are we to do? If you sense a little bit of discomfort in this that's a good thing! It means you are starting to comprehend the weight and the gravity of judgment! This is a serious, sobering reality.

Let's move on and ask this question about judgment: **What will judgment be like?**

Well, it depends. If you are a Christian...if you have placed your faith and trust in Christ, this is the beauty of the gospel – your sins have been transferred to Christ. He took your sins and the consequences of those sins, the wrath of God, on himself.

It's why he died on a cross and shed his blood. The judgment of God for sin demanded a blood sacrifice and only holy blood...the pure blood of Jesus would suffice. He was the sacrifice for your sins.

At the moment of receiving Jesus as Savior...when you place your faith in him – again, this is the gospel, his righteousness is at that very moment transferred to you. Therefore, the judgment of sin for the believer has been removed at Calvary.

And so, Christian – BELIEVER - you stand before Judge Jesus, it will NOT be a judgment concerning WHERE you will spend eternity, it will be a judgment of what you did with your life!

**John 5:24 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”**

If one chooses to remain in their sin and unbelief and NOT trust in Jesus's sacrificial, atoning death...then judgment remains on them!  
And if that person dies in their sin, they will be judged and ultimately condemned!

This is the certainty of judgment! What we have talked about...are talking about WILL take place!

Now, it's VERY important...and I'll talk about this toward the end of the message – you MUST decide what you will do with Jesus on THIS side of eternity!

There is an urgency to what we do with Jesus because again, we don't know when he is going to return – could be at any moment OR when he is going to call us home. Our hearts could stop

beating tonight! Our days are numbered and it's only by his grace that we breathe in oxygen today and are sustained while we sleep at night.

I don't say this to scare you, I say this to emphasize the certainty of judgment and what I'm calling: **The Finality of Judgment**

This decision is yours to make regarding trusting Jesus and following him with your life – but you have to make it on this side of eternity!

Once physical death happens or Jesus returns, the verdict is in, and the judgment is final.

- You don't get a do-over...
- You don't get a mulligan...
- You don't get to plead your case...

The decision has already been made, and once judgment occurs, simultaneously a separation takes place. When you think judgment, think separation!

Say the word, "separation" with me: **Separation**

**Matt. 25:31-33 – “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.”**

Now, according to your end time theology, some view the final judgment as three separate judgments. I do not. I think this judgment that is taking place here in Matt. 25, is the same as what is referred to as the “Bema” judgment in 2 Cor. 5 and The Great White Throne Judgment of Rev. 20.

And what you read on this, is at the end of time when this final judgment takes place Jesus talked about it often - there is a separation coming.

Here, he mentions it's a separation of the sheep and the goats. John the Baptist prophesied of this separation when he was speaking about Jesus in:

**Matt. 3:12 – “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”**

Jesus speaking in a parable about weeds growing along wheat said in: **Matt. 13:30 – “Let both grow together until the harvest (day of judgment), and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”**

Notice the separation! In that same chapter, listen to his words in: **Matt. 13:47-50 – “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every**

kind. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (we’ll come back to this phrasing “weeping and gnashing of teeth in a moment!)

The point is at judgment, separation is coming. What did we do with Jesus?

And listen to me...this is VERY important, what we did with Jesus is NOT signified by what we SAY, but instead by what we DO!

Look back at Matt. 25. Notice how scripture determines:

- the wheat from the chaff...
- the wheat from the weeds...
- the good fish from bad fish...
- the sheep from the goats?

How is this determination of separation made?

**Matt. 25:34-47 – “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ <sup>37</sup> Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup> And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’<sup>39</sup> And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.<sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup> Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup> And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”**

The separation is based on actions! Hear the word of the Lord this morning!

**Matt. 7:21-23 – “Not everyone who says (emphasis mine!) to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that**



**day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’<sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”**

On the day of the Lord...when judgment comes, separation will be based NOT on what we say, but what we have done! This is not a works-based relationship, but it's a themes of scripture that our actions show if our hearts have truly been changed by Jesus.

What we have done in life and with our life shows forth the reality of whether we are truly followers of Jesus or not. Another way to say this is that good works ALWAYS follow salvation...they are a result of salvation...a fruit of salvation, they do not produce salvation!

Make no mistake, a faith that will stand in judgment is a faith that WORKED in life! It's true faith and not lip service faith!

And notice this: **For believers, separation is followed by commendation.**

Believers will not be judged for sin! Remember, that judgment was take care of at Calvary. We will be judged based on HOW we have lived our life and WHAT we have done with our life.

This judgment is sometimes called as we mentioned earlier, the “Bema” judgment from 2 Cor. 5 and Rom. 14. The word “bema” is translated as “judgment seat”.

In the Greek athletic games, the “bema” was a raised platform where judges took their seats in order to see the games taking place and it was from this seat they made their judgment of who won the contests and then presented them with their reward.

For believers, we will stand before God and receive commendation!

**Matt. 25:34 – “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”**

We see this same type of commendation language in: **Matt. 25:21** (the parable of the talents – explain) – **“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”**

We read in the gospels that there are various degrees of reward (Luke 19:11-27) just as their appears to be various degrees of punishment (Luke 12:42-28) – interesting study in and of itself that we don't have time for today!

So, for believers separation is followed by commendation. Notice: **For unbelievers, separation is followed by condemnation.**

For the chaff...the weeds...the bad fish...the goats. Judgment is separation followed by condemnation.

**Matt. 25:41, 46a – “Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...And these (the goats) will go away into eternal punishment...”**

We read that phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” earlier. That phrase is found when speaking of eternal separation from God over and over and over again (Matt. 8:12, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30 Luke 13:28).

The emphasis on separation of God is, it’s so bad, you don’t want it! Separation as described in scripture is terrible! “weeping and gnashing of teeth” – a place of deep regret! “eternal punishment” is the words Jesus used.

To die in your sins, is to die and be separated from God forever and ever, and again, the point we are making here is that this judgment is final.

Just as the actions of one’s life reveals the heart of a true believer, so too does the actions or inaction (Matt. 25:42-44) of an unbeliever reveal their heart.

We will all experience the separation...it’s coming alongside the judgment. We’re all going to across the stage, the question is, “What will we hear after the separation?” Will it be words of commendation or condemnation?

We are going to take the Lord’s Supper in just a moment. And we are told that in taking the Lord’s Supper, we proclaim the Lord’s death UNTIL he comes. In taking this supper, we thank God for his salvation and as believers this supper is a reminder that we can look expectantly to Judge Jesus who will one day return to judge the living and the dead.

As you receive this supper, in light of what we have just heard...I want to encourage you in four ways (**ALL ON ONE SCREEN**):

1. **Be ready** - could come at any moment...perhaps today!
2. **Be wise** - are you making the most of the day? Are you laying treasure up in heaven? Are we sharing our faith?
3. **Be holy** – living above reproach...not wanting to be found doing anything dishonorable should Christ return today.
4. **Be faithful** – God has entrusted so much and to whom much is given much is required. Are we faithful stewards?

Let’s pray.

1 Cor. 11:29 – “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

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