

"He Will Come To Judge The Living and The Dead"

Whenever we use *The Apostles' Creed* in our service, we confess our faith that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Those words come straight from the apostle Paul's closing exhortation in our Scripture reading, **2nd Timothy 4**. They are important for us all.

One thing the creed says that is clear in the Bible is that...

I. JESUS CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

In **2 Timothy 4:1**, says: *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing (the second coming) and his kingdom (what follows):* The words in **verse 1** are weighty. They tell us this is important!

A. The Bible places a lot of emphasis on living in light of the truth that Jesus is coming again.

In light of his coming and judging **verse 2** says, *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. Verses 3-5* continue. *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.* **2 Timothy** was written to Timothy, but it was to be read to the congregation. Everyone could hear the charge given to the preacher and understand its significance. It underscores the core value of preaching for the church. He doesn't say, I charge you in the presence of God to manage all ministries well, be the CEO of your church and advocate for all the right causes in your community. He says, *preach the word*. Then he warns us about the danger of itching ears that want to hear something more secretive or special, speculative instead of what he calls, *sound teaching*." That word "sound" means "healthy." In the context, the significance of the phrase, in **verse 5**, "*as for you*" stands out. He contrasts what others

may do with what God calls us to do. Some may wander off, but you must keep on. Look at **verse 5**. *As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* Much of what he says to Timothy applies to you. 1.) Keep clear in your thought life. 2.) Do not crumble when you have to suffer. 3.) Keep sharing Christ and the gospel. 4.) Fulfill your particular calling, whatever it is.

B. The emphasis in the Bible regarding the second coming is on being ready for it at any time, all the time.

In **Mark 13:32-37**, Jesus says, *“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. 34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. 35 Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”* The way to be ready is not to figure out the secret of when he will come but to be ready always. He can come at any time. So what do we do? Four times he says, *“stay awake.”*

In **Luke 21:34**, Jesus says, *“watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap.”* The phrase *“lest your hearts be weighed down”* - that phrase is used to describe sleepiness in Scripture. In **Luke 9**, Jesus goes up a mountain to pray. Listen to **Luke 9:32**, *Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, (that phrase uses the same word - weighed down) but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory.* The physical here is a picture of the spiritual. Jesus doesn't want us to be spiritually sleepy. Look at **Luke 21:34** again. Jesus says, *“watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life.* Dissipation, that's waste, a sloppy life. Drunkenness is escapism, quick fixes, and addictions. The cares of this world, that's ambition, anxiety, all the stresses that go with it. All of that makes your

heart spiritually sleepy even if it is physically excited. The mind loses clarity, the eyes of the heart get heavy. You go to sleep spiritually. Jesus says, Don't let that happen. Stay awake.

He will come again, and when he does as the creed says...

II. HE WILL JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

2 Timothy 4:1 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead.* What do we know about the judgment?

First,

A. Everybody will face the judgment of God.

That's the point of the phrase, "the living and the dead." There is a judge who will one day make clear the quality of all of our decisions and the value of all our actions. Your life has been entrusted to you by God, and what you do with it will one day be evaluated by God.

Everybody will face judgment. The second thing we can know is that

B. Faith in Jesus Christ enables you to face the judgment of God without fear of the condemnation of God.

Romans 8:1 says, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Jesus is not saying if you believe in him, you won't be held accountable for your life. He is saying you will not face the wrath of God or any kind of condemnation from God. Jesus took that on himself *for us*. His resurrection is the powerful demonstration of God's absolute acceptance of his sacrifice in our place.

A third thing we can know is that

C. Believers in Jesus, while not condemned, will give an account of their lives.

In **2 Corinthians 5:9-10**, Paul says we make it our aim to please him *because we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.* I imagine that for believers in Christ, the judgment we will face in which we are held accountable for our lives will be part of our final training, revealing the depths of our sin, the mistakes we made, and how and

what he was doing in us to redeem us all along the way. The Bible also says there will be rewards and loss of rewards. It will be important.

A friend of mine has an adult son who has autism. Some time ago he was watching the TV series "A.D" and understanding more about the faith his family shares. The resurrection of Jesus has been on his mind constantly - so one day they were out and about, and she was returning a package to the car, and he was standing by the sidewalk when a man came by walking a dog. The dog decided to just sit down, and the man became furious, and started hitting the dog with his fist. She said her son had this look come over his face she could clearly see from pretty far away, and then he yelled at the man, "*Jesus died! And three days later he woked up! You better stop!*" He didn't even mention that Jesus is coming again to judge. But that "you better stop" is something a lot of people need to hear. "You better stop!" To what might that apply in your life? Can I ask, "Is there something you better stop? Maybe the Holy Spirit is speaking to you...."

The fear of judgment itself can make you want to stop doing wrong, but it cannot change your heart so that you want to love and live for Christ or find the strength to change from within. Only a living relationship with Christ through his Holy Spirit in you can transform your heart and your habits. But taking his judgment seriously can be a catalyst for living in his love more deeply.

1. First, Everyone will face God's judgment, 2. Second, Believers in Jesus will not be condemned, but 3. Third, Believers in Jesus will be held accountable for how they have lived. Then 4. Fourth,

C. If Christ is not your Savior, God's judgment will be devastating.

Jesus often pictured dramatic moments of divine judgment in which he separated the saved from the lost. He said to those who received salvation, things like *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world, enter into eternal life.* To those who did not believe in or follow him, he said things like, *go away into eternal punishment, and depart from me I never knew you.* The same God who tells us there *will be* judgment, promises us it will be righteous and according to grace and truth. He also assures us that faithful servants,

although saved by grace, will be acknowledged and rewarded for their good works with the words, *“Well, done good and faithful servant”*.

CONCLUSION

The anticipation of the second coming of Christ is serious but there is also a deep underlying joy and hope. You see that in **2 Timothy 4:6-8**. Paul is back in prison at this point and he's not getting out except to go to heaven. He talks about people wandering away from sound teaching, and says, He is going to stay faithful in the face of all of it. He writes. *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.* He says there are two things I am doing in light of the second coming. 1.) I am staying faithful. He means he going to keep fighting the good fight. He isn't giving up. 2.) I am loving the thought of his appearing. He's kept his heart's affections such that he longs for the day when Christ returns to rule as king. He will come again. Today would be a good day for him to come again.

Amen.

A Prayer Expressing Faith in Christ

Lord, you alone are holy, holy, holy. You have every right to judge us with righteous judgment. To stand before you on the basis of the quality of our lives, our loves, our alignment with your will revealed in your law would only bring condemnation. So, I thank you for Jesus, my Savior. He took the condemnation I deserve and nailed it to the cross when he gave himself for me. I trust fully in him to forgive me and save me. I praise you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

A Prayer for Spiritual Renewal

Almighty God, Help me to stay wide awake and spiritually sober in this chaotic and exhausting world. Give me a hunger for sound teaching and help me to turn away from all foolish alternatives. Grant me endurance in suffering, for I know it is an inevitable part of this earthly life and that which my Savior himself endured for my sake. No matter what happens or what others do, help me to finish my course and to fight the good fight. I love and long for the appearing of the righteous judge, knowing he is also my gracious Savior, and I trust in him. Amen