
I Believe the Son will Judge

DAVE BAST

There is an ad on TV that features the chairman of the Viking cruise ship line. He says, “I have come to realize that time is the most precious commodity we have.” His conclusion? Well, you had better experience life to the full; like, maybe taking a Viking cruise, for example; you think? Well, Christians believe that, not only is our time limited, it is true; so is the world’s time; and there is something we ought to be doing as a result. We will ask what that is today on *Groundwork*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; and Scott, as we usually do at the top of every program, we kind of orient to where we are in this particular program in part of a series on the Apostles’ Creed. So, now we have come to the end of the section about Jesus. In our last program, we talked about his ascension and his heavenly Session at God’s right hand—all the wonderful truths that that brings into our lives; and now we are going to talk about his return. From there, he will come to judge the living and the dead.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and the *there*...from *there*...from heaven, right? So, the ascension put him at the right hand of the Father, and from there he is going to come again to judge the living and the dead. We should point out, Dave, that we do have a number of *Groundwork* programs in our archive that people can listen to if they would like to hear more about the second coming and the return of Jesus. We did a series on the four last things, on the end times, life after death. We have done parables, like the wedding banquet and the ten virgins; we did a parables-of-Jesus’ series; so, we have some other programs on that, but we will focus on this one because this is where the Creed concludes the second section dealing with Jesus, the Son of God, and his work; and as you just said, Dave, a clock is ticking somewhere. The world is finite. We believe it is not going to continue as it is forever...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And Jesus is going to come back and bring a renewal of all things. This is sometimes called the consummation—the ushering in of the new creation—that is going to happen.

DAVE BAST

It is; and his personal, visible return is what is going to trigger that; and this event...which, yes, we have been referring to his coming again or his second coming or his return...there is a technical Greek term in the New Testament; it is called the *parousia*, when he will be with us again in that literal, physical sense.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; *parousia*, I think, means the presence, right?

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He will be back in his renewed, glorified, resurrection body. He will return to this universe—to this creation.

DAVE BAST

You know, here is an important point maybe we should make, just sort of in passing, but we talked in the last program about he is with us...he is with us through his Spirit—through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit *is* Christ with us and within us; but he is not with us in his glorified, resurrection body. That is in heaven; and this preserves one of the basic structures of the New Testament...sort of the...we don't have it all yet. It is true, Christ is with us, but he is also absent from us; and we are longing for that to be resolved, for him to come back and finish the work. So, it has already started salvation, but it is not complete yet.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; the already and the not yet is a standard phrase in theology; but Jesus did predict very often that the curtain would ring down on history. Mark 13, one of the apocalyptic discourses that Jesus had just before his death, he says: ²⁶“At that time, people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory; ²⁷and he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.”

DAVE BAST

And this is also what the angels told the disciples. This is a passage we read in the last program about the ascension; but after the ascension, you know, the apostles are standing there on this hill near Bethany, and they are just sort of gaping up at the sky, because what happened to Jesus? He is gone...he has disappeared; and all of a sudden an angel appears in the story and says to them: ¹¹“Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” So, it is going to be this visible, public, obvious...it is not going to happen in secret. We are going to know about it; we are going to see it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We don't know how long the disciples, or people like the Apostle Paul, thought this would take. My guess is if they knew that we would be sitting here 2,000 years later still waiting, they would be a bit surprised; and yet, they were aware that it might be a long while, and that some people would eventually say: Forget about it. It has been too long. In fact, there is 2 Peter 3, where the Apostle Peter says: ^{3b} paraphrased Look, scoffers will come in the last days... ⁴They will say, “Well, where is the promise of his coming?” (But then, Peter writes) ⁸But don't overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. ⁹The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness; but patience toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... ^{12b}All the elements will be dissolved... ¹³And according to his promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells...or I always liked the paraphrase of Eugene Peterson, that we are awaiting a new creation that will be landscaped with righteousness.

DAVE BAST

Yes, that is a great line. A lot of Christians are thinking, based on passages like this with Peter, that well, everything is going to be burned up...everything is going to be destroyed...it is all just going to be wiped away; and actually, a lot of Christians think: Well, we are just going to kind of live in heaven in some sort of

spiritual existence...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Some wispy, cloudy...yes.

DAVE BAST

But no; it is not incompatible with Peter's language here. He uses what we call apocalyptic terminology or imagery; but we know elsewhere, too, that it is a renewal...a reworking...a recreation of *this* world and *this* universe that God loves and God still holds; and he is not going to throw it away...he is not going to trash it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; it is not a destroying fire, it is a refiner's fire...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is a renewing...a cleansing fire; but when the dust all settles and the fire goes out, we will still see a world of mountains and streams and stars in the sky and of tremendous beauty. Nothing God created in the beginning is going to be lost. In fact, we have pointed out on other programs, Dave, that if we picture that the only thing God can do in the end is just burn this entire universe to an ash and bring us to some place totally different, that would be like conceding victory to the devil...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He is the one who has tried to destroy God's handiwork from the beginning. God's victory will be shown that his handiwork will be restored and made even better than it was in the beginning and in the Garden of Eden.

DAVE BAST

So this is what we look forward to; this is our hope. In fact, Paul calls it, in a wonderful phrase in Titus 2, our blessed hope—the return of Christ; and I think it is worth pointing out that this is what Christians believe is ahead...this is what the world is...how the world is going to end. We don't have a kind of a sci-fi, *Star Trek* vision of just going on and on and on and continuing technology and spreading out to colonize space. We believe that the end will come when Jesus returns; and that is a literal event that is actually going to happen. I mean now, there is a lot of debate about the details, and we have addressed that in other programs. Here, we just want to stress the truth of it, despite the fact that a lot of people, as Peter says, are scoffers...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

And they were already scoffing in his day; how much more so now...where is this second coming? But he points out something interesting about time...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; it doesn't pass for God the way it does for us; so, like I said a minute ago, Dave, I kind of think Peter would be surprised to realize that 2,000 years have passed since the era of the early Church, but on the other hand, Peter himself said: Well, 2,000 years for God...that's like two days. That is nothing. In the landscape of eternity, 2,000 years is a blip. So, God is patient; he is coming back; don't use the passage of *human* time as a way to say: Well, God has obviously forgotten; or it was a myth all along; no, no; be patient. Jesus

himself, you know, was kind of preparing the disciples for a long wait...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

A marathon not a sprint; and so, we are patient.

DAVE BAST

Right; you think of some of his stories about the landowner going away...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

And the servants kind of getting careless; but here is one more point to stress about his return: The reason God is still waiting, Peter says, he is patient...as you pointed out, Scott...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. This is still what the Bible calls the Day of Salvation...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

This is the time when you can still turn to God. When Christ returns, you know, that door is going to be shut.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And in fact, he will come again to *judge* the living and the dead. So, next let's think about what it means that he comes in judgment, and why we don't have to find that to be terrifying. Stay tuned.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and today, Dave, we are looking at the final part of the Apostles' Creed dealing with the Person and work of Jesus; and the last word is he is going to return to *judge* the living and the dead; and of course, you know, even in popular culture...even people who don't go to church much...this idea of judgment day...for many people it could be a very, very fearful prospect; and yet, in the era of the Reformation, when the Heidelberg Catechism was written, the writers framed the question on this part of the Creed: How does Christ's return to judge the living and the dead *comfort* you?

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we are supposed to not be terrified by this prospect; and yet, it is a real event to come.

DAVE BAST

It is; quite frankly, the depiction of the last judgment in the book of Revelation, for example, is pretty scary. John writes: ^{20:11}Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence and there was no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead

were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, whoa...scary stuff...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To a degree; and what some of our listeners may be taken aback by, let's say, especially since the whole Protestant Reformation and the whole message of the early Church is we are saved by grace alone. That was Paul's number one message. When he found out that the Galatians...after Paul had left Galatia...had been taken in by people who said: Oh, you've got to work for your salvation, Paul was furious. He said: You cannot do anything for your salvation; it is all grace. Okay, so then what is this deal in Revelation 20 that everybody is going to be judged according to what they have done?! I guess if I get judged according to what I have done, I am in real trouble, unless we realize, of course, that Jesus is the judge; and Jesus has already transferred his righteousness to us if we are in him through baptism; and that is why judgment can comfort you, as the Catechism said, because your judgment has already been rendered; it fell on Jesus, and he now loves you by his grace, and has transferred his righteousness to your account.

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; the truth is that we can stand unafraid, even in the presence of the Judge, knowing that the judge is Christ. So, we have this sense, maybe just reading that Revelation passage, well God is the judge and God can be pretty scary—God can be terrifying; but, the New Testament makes it clear in a number of places, it is Christ who will do the judging, and Jesus himself says this in John 5, for example:

²²The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son. And Paul to the Corinthians: ² Corinthians 5:10 We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. So, the key thing is, when you stand before that throne, the one whom you know and love, in whom you have put your faith and trust, is the one who died for you on the cross—died for me. His sacrifice covers our sins. His blood, to use biblical imagery, washes our sins away, so we can stand with confidence, but it is true, and we should note that judgment will be based on works...on what we did or didn't do, and Jesus, in fact, makes *that* point in one of his most famous parables.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In Matthew 25, near the end of Matthew, in Jesus' apocalyptic Olivet discourses, as they are called; the famous line: ³¹When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

We remember, Dave, in that parable that...so, we've got sheep and goats, and Jesus ends up saying to the goats: Why are you a goat? Because you passed by everybody in need. I was in prison and you didn't visit me; I was hungry, you didn't feed me; I was naked, you didn't clothe me; and they say: Wait, wait, wait, Jesus; we never saw you; and he said: Every time you saw someone in need, you saw me. But then, the sheep, on the good side, are equally befuddled. They said: We didn't know it was you, either. When did we do that to you? And he said: Every time you did it for somebody else, you did it for me. So, isn't it interesting that there is a little ignorance on both the sheep and the goats...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Except the sheep were just living out their identity in Christ...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

They were just doing what came naturally in Christ. They saw a sister or a brother in need...somebody who was hungry, they fed them...somebody was in prison, they went to go see them...somebody was naked, they bought them a coat. They didn't think they were doing anything for Jesus, but they were.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that was the Jesus in them that motivated them, and that made all the difference; that is why they were sheep and not a goat.

DAVE BAST

Absolutely; and they are all little things, you know. No doubt, the goats had more important things to do. They were busy conquering kingdoms and building the world and making a lot of money and setting up their own personal empires, and whatever; but it is those little acts of kindness and love that prove our faith is genuine. I mean, that is the essential connection between grace and faith and works. It is not so much what you say or claim that proves that your faith in Christ is real, it is how you live it. As you said, those simple acts of daily life that show, okay, you've got it, I've got it...I've got the Gospel...I get it...I want to be like Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this is the point...we have looked at this on *Groundwork*...of the Apostle James, right? Everybody wonders: Is there a disagreement between the Apostle James and the Apostle Paul? Because Paul says you're not saved by works, and James says you are too saved by works. Well, what James meant was, if you have true faith...if you really are a member of Christ's body, you are going to do a lot of good works. It is inevitable; and if you don't do any good works...if you mistreat the poor, if you are nice to the rich and are mean to lower-class people, it just shows you don't have real faith after all. You think you do, but you don't. James says if you have true faith in Jesus, you will act differently. So, yes; you are saved by what you do because if you have real faith, you are going to do all kinds of wonderful things.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely. You know, one more thing maybe we ought to say about the judgment from a biblical perspective. I was interested, Scott, in your comment bringing in the Heidelberg Catechism, which so often talks about how does this doctrine comfort you; how does it give you strength? Because judgment means two different things, really. It can mean punishment for all the wrong that we have done. While we claim the righteousness of Christ, we rejoice that because of him we are forgiven. We don't have to be afraid of that; but it can also mean the establishment of justice...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

The exposure of all the wrongs that have been done. You think of all those secret atrocities that governments have perpetrated, or that individuals...nobody is going to get away with anything in the end.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

God is going to reveal...there will be no more secrets; and justice will be done, and it will be seen to be done; which is why it is always the oppressed and the poor and the downtrodden who long in scripture for judgment: Come, Lord; come and set things to rights; and that is what it will mean, too.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and there are some other practical things we can think about as we wrap up this program. We will do that in just a moment.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

I am Dave Bast, along with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*. Scott, as we try to bring this all home and ask ourselves: Well, what difference should this make...the fact that someday Jesus is going to come back and bring everything to an end, and he is going to judge all people—the living and the dead. This is inescapable. Nobody is going to call in sick on that day and miss the last judgment. We will all be there, and we have already said that shouldn't be terrifying for those who know Christ; but what does it mean in practical terms for us today? Here is what Peter says:

²Peter 3:11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In the light of what is to come, what kind of people should you be? I guess, Dave, if you think that this life is all that there is, and that when you die you are worm food and there is nothing more, and nothing more will ever be heard of you, you may as well go for the gusto...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Live it up; be selfish; grab all the toys you can...

DAVE BAST

Take a Viking cruise.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, there you go. Do whatever you want...

DAVE BAST

Carpe diem.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

Seize the day.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But if you believe that is not so...what Peter is saying here, if we really believe we live under the prospect of Jesus' return to judge the living and the dead, that history has purpose, history has a goal...an end goal, God

has an end goal, well, that is going to make a huge difference in how you live, or it sure should; and so, Peter is saying: Look, live holy lives; be good people; not to earn your salvation, that has already been given to you, but because of your salvation; and because, at the end of the day, it is going to matter. It matters to somebody that you were kind; it will matter to somebody—the big somebody—God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit—it will matter that you did deeds of kindness your whole life; that you bore the fruit of the Spirit. This is really going to matter because Jesus is coming again.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I think we may have mentioned this before. I saw a bumper sticker once that said: Jesus is coming again; look busy. But it is not superficial, right, that Jesus wants to find us busy. He wants to find us being pure and holy; he wants to find us being like him.

DAVE BAST

Right; I think we have often pointed out in talking about this how Jesus tells us to watch and wait; and that doesn't mean just sort of selling all our possessions and go sit on a hill and put on a white robe...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Scan the horizon.

DAVE BAST

Keep watching for him. It means to be about his business, to do what he told us to do. There is an interesting phrase in that verse I just read again from 2 Peter 3, not only looking for or watching for it, but *hastening* the day of God...*hastening* the day, as if we can do something to make it happen a little bit sooner, which is kind of an amazing thought. What he has just said is, you know, one reason God has not come yet is that he is waiting for people to repent. So, maybe one way we can hasten the day is by sharing Christ, so that more people will turn to him and come to him. Maybe another way is by doing the work of creation keeping...creation restoration and redemption, because that is what we know he wants to do.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This may be a bit of a stretch as an analogy, but there is this movie that a lot of people know with Bill Murray. It is called *Groundhog Day*, in which this TV weatherman is trapped in this small town in Pennsylvania, forced to relive the same day—Groundhog day—over and over, you know. Well, what finally got him out of the cycle was when he finally started to become a nicer person. He was a very mean, self-centered person; but when he finally learned how to love...when he finally learned how to give of himself...finally the cycle was snapped and he woke up and it was the next day...finally!

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

There is a little something like that here. There is a purpose to the universe. God is making something out of us. God is making something out of the whole creation. I don't know if we can really hasten the day, but we can live into the day...

DAVE BAST

Absolutely, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

To be already now what God wants us to be in eternity.

DAVE BAST

Try to get this day right...maybe that is the message of the Bible, and that lovely little movie; but you know, there is a famous story...as I was thinking about this program and this phrase from the Creed: From there he will come again to judge the living and the dead...I thought of a phrase from Paul's letter to the Romans: 13:11b Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. He is talking about that end salvation, that final completion of it; and that reminded me of a famous story: The conversion of St. Augustine. He was sitting in a garden. He knew all about the Christian faith. He was drawn to it. He had gone through various philosophies, but he just couldn't kind of pull the trigger and say: All right; I believe. I am going to be baptized. And then he heard a voice outside saying: Pick it up and read it...pick it up and read it; and he had the Bible open before him to Romans 13, to this passage.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹¹Do this, understanding the present time. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. ¹²The night is nearly over, the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave decently, as in the daytime; not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴Rather clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

That is how we live for God in this day.

DAVE BAST

Come Lord Jesus! Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Dave Bast with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we continue our study of the Apostles' Creed by exploring the scriptures that inform our beliefs about the Holy Spirit. Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you; or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

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