

SOBERING CERTAINTIES

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Introduction

1. God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 33:6; Isaiah 45:18) and yet the day is coming when the universe will be burned up and be no more (2 Peter 3:7, 10).
2. All the things of this world – our wealth, possessions, works, and lusts - are fleeting and they too shall pass and be no more (1 John 2:15-17; Isaiah 40:6-7).
3. We live in a world of uncertainty: “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1). The writer of Hebrews sets forth four things which God has made real, things that are sure; sobering certainties.

1. DEATH IS CERTAIN

We may not like to think about our physical death, but we are reminded of it every day when we turn on the news, and when we lose a loved one. Just as real is spiritual death, which is a reality in this life (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-3; cp. 1 Timothy 5:6) and, unless we are born again, will be fully realized after physical death.

“And as it is appointed for men to die once...” (Hebrews 9:27a).

- a. Many people don’t recognize or think about sin; they trivialize or even dismiss it. But God recognizes sin, and He holds every person accountable (Ezekiel 18:20). Solomon wrote, “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).
- b. Sin is personal transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4; cp. James 4:17). Paul wrote, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).
- c. Death is certain:
 - 1) Physical death is the certain result of Adam’s sin, and it comes all too quickly, and it is no respecter of persons (Romans 5:12; James 4:14; Ecclesiastes 9:2).
 - 2) Spiritual death is the certain result of our own sin, and it comes in this life and is fully realized after physical death, and there is no respecter of persons (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

2. THE JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN

Just as no one likes to think about death, so people blank out thoughts about the coming judgment. While the thought of judgment is terrifying to many (cp. Acts 24:25; Hebrews 10:26-27), Christians can face that day with confidence (1 John 4:18).

“... but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27b).

- a. Everyone can know that God exists by observing the creation (Psalms 19:1; Romans 1:18-21); everyone can know there is life after death because God has put eternity in the heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11). What people know about God causes them to fear death (Hebrews 2:14-15) because they know in their hearts that they will have to give an account for their deeds (cp. Romans 1:32). From observing the creation men can know that God is just (Isaiah 30:18) and will demand a reckoning (John 5:28-29; Romans 14:10-12).
- b. The guilty and the wicked may escape their due punishment on earth (Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:11-12; Psalms 73:19), but a conclusion is coming (Romans 2:5-9). It is the word of God that will be the standard by which we are judged (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:5-11).

c. Thus there is the certainty of exposure (**Numbers 32:23; Ecclesiastes 12:14**).

- 1) God will judge us by the words we have spoken (**Matthew 12:36**).
- 2) God will judge us by our deeds (**Romans 2:5-11**).
- 3) God will judge us by every thought we've had (**Romans 2:16; cp. 1 Chronicles 28:9**).
- 4) God will judge us by our motives (**1 Corinthians 4:5**).

d. The appointment is certain (**Acts 17:30-31**), so let us be sure to prepare for that day by living a holy life (**2 Peter 3:10-14**).

- For the lost it will be the end of opportunity (**cp. Jeremiah 8:20**).
- For the saved it will be the door to eternal glory (**2 Corinthians 5:1**). Those who are prepared are not afraid (**Philippians 1:21-23; Revelation 14:13**).

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (**Acts 17:30-31**).

3. SALVATION TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IS CERTAIN

God is holy (**Leviticus 19:2**) and just (**Psalms 7:11**) and must punish sin (**Galatians 6:7**). If it were not for Jesus bearing our sin in His body on the cross, none would be saved. We are saved by grace (**Titus 3:3-7**).

“... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many” (**Hebrews 9:28a**).

- a. God is just (**Isaiah 30:18**), which means all sin has to be punished, and we know that all have sinned (**Romans 3:23**). “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness” (**Habakkuk 1:13**).
- b. God doesn't want anyone to perish, but desires all men to be saved (**1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9**), and so He sent His Son that we might not perish, but have everlasting life (**John 3:16-17**).
- c. Peter tells us that Jesus “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed” (**1 Peter 2:24**). When Jesus had born our punishment, He cried out, “Paid in full” (“It is finished”), and then He breathed His last breath (**John 19:30**).
- d. After Jesus' resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (**Mark 16:15-16**). It is at the point of obedience that God forgives sin (**Acts 2:36; 22:16**).

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (**1 John 5:13**).

4. CHRIST'S RETURN IS CERTAIN

No one denies that Jesus will return – it is clearly taught in scripture and it is certain. For those who believe it will be a day of rejoicing, but for those who do not know God it will be a day of great terror.

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (**Hebrews 9:28b**).

- a. The universe had a beginning (**Genesis 1:1**) and there is an appointed end (**2 Peter 3:10**). God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained” (**Acts 17:31**).
- b. Just as Jesus ascended in the clouds, so He will return in the clouds (**Acts 1:9-11**). Yet we do not know *when* He shall return. Paul wrote, “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (**1 Thessalonians 5:1-2**).
- c. For those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel, Jesus' return holds forth the certainty of eternal destruction (**2 Thessalonians 1:8-9**). For those who know God and obey the gospel, Jesus' return holds forth the hope of eternal life (**Romans 6:23; 1 John 2:25**).

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**).

Conclusion

1. Very few things in life are certain. Indeed, James says, “Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:13-14).
2. God, though, has assured us of some things that are certain:
 - a. Death is certain.
 - b. Judgment is certain.
 - c. Salvation to those who believe is certain.
 - d. Jesus’ return is certain.
3. It is certain that we will spend eternity either in the presence of God or spend eternity separated from Him. The choice is ours. The person who would choose the former must believe the gospel: Paul explains the gospel: “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that **He was buried**, and that **He rose again the third day** according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). If you believe that Jesus bore your sins in His own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24), then you must repent of your sins and be baptised for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). It is at the point of your obedience that God will wash away your sins (cp. Acts 22:16).

“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth” (Proverbs 27:1).

Copyright©DavidCambridge2019

This sermon outline is based on lesson by Derrel Shaw.