

Why I Believe In Evangelism

Introduction. Louis Pasteur, the pioneer of immunology, lived at a time when thousands of people died each year of rabies. Pasteur had worked for years on a vaccine. Just as he was about to experiment on himself, a 9-year-old, Joseph Meister, was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy's mother begged Pasteur to experiment on her son. Pasteur injected Joseph for ten days -- and the boy lived. Decades later, of all the statements Pasteur could have had etched on his headstone, he asked for three words: JOSEPH MEISTER LIVED. Our greatest legacy will be those who live eternally because of our efforts.

To fulfill the greatest of all commandments from the Lord Jesus, we need to go with the gospel to everyone who needs to hear it (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:19-20). Evangelism is an active effort of teaching someone about Christ, and encouraging them to obey Him to gain eternal life. However, the gospel is only for this lifetime. Christ offers complete forgiveness of sin and eternal life, but someday it will be too late to accept it.

Revelation 20:11-15 talks about the final judgment of humankind. This is also referred to elsewhere as the "judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Today I want to talk with you about why I believe in evangelism.

I. *The Majesty Of The Judge*

- A. John describes the throne as a "great white" throne.
 1. It is great because it is God's throne, surpassing all thrones which have been previously introduced and it is white because of God's eternal purity.
 2. The great white throne stands alone, with nothing to challenge, qualify or mediate its sole supremacy.
- B. There is some question about the identity of the One who sits upon the throne.
 1. The Bible teaches generally that Christ will be our Judge (John 5:22, 26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1). Yet, the Father is pictured as the Judge in this passage.
 2. However, the ease with which the New Testament speaks of the judgment seat of Christ and the judgment seat of God (Romans 14:10; cf. Romans 2:2-3, 5; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Revelation 14:7) implies a unity of judgment (John 10:30).
- C. The earth and the heaven fled away from His face.
 1. It has been abundantly foretold that heaven and earth will pass away.

2. This earth with all its sin will be finally judged and destroyed (cf. Psalm 102:25-27; Isaiah 51:6; Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 1:10-12; 2 Peter 3:10-12; 1 John 2:17).

II. ***The Multitude That Is Present***

- A. This scene presupposes the resurrection of all human beings that have lived and died from Adam until the end of time.
- B. The "small and great" means that all those who are important and unimportant will be there (cf. Acts 26:22; Revelation 11:18; 13:6; 19:5, 18). There are no absentees and there are no exemptions (Hebrews 9:27-28; Psalm 139:7).
- C. The principle of judgment on the basis of works is common in the Bible (Psalm 62:12; Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 1:17).
 1. Works are the unmistakable evidence of the loyalty of the heart; they express either belief or unbelief, faithfulness or unfaithfulness.
 2. The judgment will reveal whether or not one's loyalties were with God and the Lamb or with God's enemies.
- D. The "books" were reminiscent of Daniel 7:10 and these "books" symbolize the divine record of the lives and deeds of all who have lived (Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27).
 1. It is God's roll of the faithful, those who were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and have faithfully continued doing His will.
 2. They are full of what God desires to remember and to forget (Revelation 18:5; Jeremiah 31:34).

III. ***The Method Of Judgment***

- A. Because of the Jewish emphasis on proper burial of the dead and fear of possible calamity if this was not done, some have concluded that John speaks of the literal sea in vs. 13.
 1. However, consistency demands that the "sea" be interpreted figuratively. The mass of humanity, represented by the "sea," must also stand before the judgment with those who have died (cf. Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5).
 2. Both Jesus and Paul teach that all will be raised, both the just and the unjust, in the final day (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).
- B. Columnist Bob Green of the Chicago Tribune has a theory about what is wrong with the world. He blames it on what he calls the "Death of the Permanent Record."
 1. He recalls that grade-school children once lived in fear of having their bad behavior noted on their permanent record. Because of this, people learned in their youth to stop before they did some-

- thing deceitful or unethical. They did not stop because they were so good, but for fear of having their actions written down.
2. "Today," according to Bob Green, "people have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a permanent record. In fact, they believe nobody has a right to keep track of the misdeeds."
- C. Death and Hades are personified here (cf. 6:8) Our English word "hell" refers to what the Greeks call "Hades" and the Hebrews call "Sheol." The scriptures use four words to describe the afterlife.
1. "Sheol" is variously translated as "hell," "grave" and "pit." It corresponds with "Hades" and essentially means the realm of the dead although the context can alter the meaning slightly.
 2. "Hades" refers to the realm of the dead. This is not the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the soul. Hades is the intermediate region where we await the final judgment. After we die, our spirit resides in Hades, although there are two separate parts.
 3. "Tartarus" was the name in classical mythology for the subterranean abyss in which rebellious gods and other such beings were punished. In Luke 16, Hades is composed of two realms: one for the righteous ("Abraham's bosom," vs. 22) and one for the wicked ("place of torment," vs. 28). Just as "Abraham's bosom" is analogous to "paradise" (Luke 23:43), representing the abode of the righteous dead, "Hell" (2 Peter 2:4) is analogous to "place of torment" which represents the place of the wicked dead.
 4. "Gehenna" is the word used for "Hell" according to our modern understanding (i.e., a place of eternal punishment). Gehenna was the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. Ahaz and Manasseh, two wicked kings of Judah, sacrificed their sons there to the heathen god Moloch (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6 Jeremiah 32:35). It later became the city dump, with fires continually burning in it. The Jews then made "Gehenna" the name for the final judgment and the place of eternal punishment.

IV. ***The Misery Of The Missing Entry***

- A. Thus far, the beast, the false prophet (19:10), Satan (20:10) and now in vs. 14, death and Hades have been brought to their permanent end. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 54-55). Their destruction leaves no further obstacle to the establishment of the eternal reign of God (cf. Revelation 21:4).
1. The "lake of fire" indicates not only the stern punishment awaiting the enemies of righteousness but also their full and final defeat.
 2. This "second death" represents a separation from God for all eternity. The Christian may face the first death, but if he or she is born again, they will not face the second death (John 3:3).

3. In contrast to premillennial claims, Jesus states that He will judge in the "last day" (John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). The premillennialist claims that there will be a rapture wherein the righteous are taken or "judged." However, this contradicts what Jesus said!
- B. There remains only one group: those not found written in the book of life.
1. These would be all of the rest who had fought with the beast and the false prophet against the Lord, those who had been slain with the sword out of His mouth (19:21), those who had rallied around Satan in his last effort to destroy the saints (20:9) and all others who, in their indifference, had not taken a stand for Him.
 2. The defeat of Satan and his forces against God and His truth is complete and final.
 - a) Only righteousness will exist in the city of God (Revelation 21:27; 22:14-15). When writing to the Philippians, who were members of a Roman colony and therefore Roman citizens, Paul emphasized that Christians are citizens of a heavenly commonwealth and ought to live accordingly (Philippians 1:27; 3:20).
 - b) In Matthew 25:41, Jesus indicated that the eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. In the final judgment all whose names do not appear in the book of life will share their fate. This final note evaporates all theories of universalism.

Conclusion. Do you want anyone in the lake of fire? We cannot keep everyone out, but if we work, there will be fewer people in the lake of fire. It is shameful that human disobedience may, in the end, prove impregnable to the assaults of divine love.

We say we believe in evangelism, so what can we do to evangelize? Most people will not come looking for the gospel! So we can invite people to services, ask God for opportunities, pray for the lost, carry tracts, live a godly life and, of course, teach the gospel as you get the chance.