

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. In his message Pastor Mike talked about the importance of the Biblical teaching that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, arguing this isn't just a question of theology, but that it is a question of the nature of reality; if we live in a world defined by truth and justice.
 - a. What did he mean by saying that this is an issue that deals with the nature of reality? Do agree with him? Why or why not?
 - b. How does our belief in the truth that Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead shape our understanding of reality? What are other views about that nature of reality that people can hold?
 - c. Many passages that talk about Jesus' return stress that he will return as a judge. Why is it important to believe not only that Jesus will return, but that he returns as a judge?
2. In our culture many like to talk about Jesus love and grace, rejecting the picture of him as a judge. Yet the Bible is filled with passages that talk about Jesus returning as a judge, as well as passages such as John 5:22-29 where Jesus describes himself as the ultimate judge.
 - a. Why do so many people like to talk about Jesus love and grace, while rejecting the idea that he is a judge? Is the Biblical picture of Jesus as a judge inconsistent with the picture of his love and grace? Explain your answer.
 - b. To many, the idea of God's judgement is seen as about as offensive as you can get. Why is this such an offensive idea?
 - c. Is it unloving for us as Christians to talk about Jesus coming as a judge? Why or why not? Is there a distinction between talking about God's judgement and being judgmental?
3. 2nd Peter 3 tells us that there will be people who will mock and ridicule the idea of Jesus return to judge the living and the dead. Their mockery is primarily of the idea that there is an ultimate authority to whom they will have to give account.
 - a. Practically do you see people in our culture mocking the idea of Jesus' return as judge in this way? How does the teaching of 2nd Peter 3 inform and/or encourage you?
 - b. Peter anticipates that we can become discouraged by God's apparent inaction or slowness in verses 8 and 9. What does he teach in these verses to give us hope and confidence in the midst of times when we can't see God working and are tempted to doubt his coming?
4. There are numerous verses in the Bible that talk about Jesus judging believers (2nd Timothy 4:6-7; 1st Corinthians 3:10-15 & 4:3-5; 2nd Corinthians 5:6-10). What is the judgement which we will face as believers? How should are awareness of that judgement motivate us?
5. In verse 10 Peter tells us that *"the day of the Lord will come like a thief."* What does this mean? Practically, what is he trying to teach us, and how should it impact our lives if we understand and apply this teaching?
6. After teaching about the coming return of Jesus to judge the living and the dead, Peter asks since this is true, *"what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness."* Many other passages do the same thing, tying our awareness of Jesus' return to a challenge to a transformed life (for example, 2nd Timothy 4:1-5; 1st Peter 4:7-10; 2nd Corinthians 5:6-10).
 - a. Practically, how should this kind of awareness of the return of Jesus transform and drive our lives?
 - b. To what degree do you live with and are driven by an awareness of the return of Jesus?
 - c. If your life was defined by the type of awareness of Jesus' return that these passages talk about, how would your life be different? What is keeping you from living that way?