

JUDGMENT

TWO WAYS TO LIVE: STEP 3

PASSAGE

John 3:1-21

STRUCTURE

- Last week – this week
- Intrinsic to God’s nature: God is just (Ex 34:6) He does not leave the guilty unpunished.
- So we start this week with a problem
 - NB – we might do, but God doesn’t feel awkward about justice
 - Integrity – God is good – in *all* his aspects
- Not just this first sin, but all sin, is against him [CS LEWIS], because it occurs in his order and against his authority.
- The punishment for sin is death.
 - Could stop there, but there’s further things that are helpful to explore.
 - Three questions which help our foundations go deeper, and might help us to explain this to others.
- **Question: What do we mean by death?**
 - The Bible talks of two deaths:
 - Spiritual death, when we are estranged from God
 - Physical death, when our bodies give up (are estranged from our spirit?)
 - Both are direct consequences of sin.
 - “Born again” (John 3) – spiritual rebirth // Resurrection body – physical rebirth
- **Question: Isn’t this an overreaction? Too heavy-handed?**
 - Spiritual death as natural consequence – “punishment for not going to the doctor / not breathing is death” (Col 1 – God sustains creation) (Job 34 – if He withdrew his breath...)
 - This is our state: we “already stand condemned” (John 3:18) – Augustine talks of this in terms of a terminally ill patient refusing treatment
 - The contagious nature of sin. (Gen 3+) – like letting in one COVID case
 - The good finality of death. What’s the alternative? [Orwell - *If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.*]
 - After all, what was the fruit of eating from the tree? Open eyes, but shame, fear, and distance from God.
- In fact – God’s judgment is so perfect that even in punishment he also blesses in part
 - Evil was never meant to be eternal (unlike good / perfection)
 - Death AND judgment together usher in the possibility of a perfect future
- **Question: What’s the answer?**
 - Next week – Peter Teagle. But I want to show how the Scriptures use this pattern of setting a bleak scene in order to explain the good news more fully.
 - Leading us on to second halves of those quotations – Jesus Christ

Romans 7:24-25: What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Heb 9:27-28: Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.