

3rd Last Sunday
Hebrews 9: 24-28
November 8, 2009

The days are short. It works well up here in the northern hemisphere that we celebrate what we call “end times” this time of the year. The length of the daylight is short and getting shorter. The end times remind us also that the number of days left are also always getting shorter. Individually, with each passing day, each of us has one less day left for this life. But even for this world and the entire creation, there is less time left than there was yesterday.

The words of the Bible I just read talk about the certainty both of death and of the Last Day. But it is certainly interesting that these words see the end of it all as quite a positive thing. It is also true, however, that when Malachi speaks of it – we head that this morning, too – there are some darker tones showing. How can both of these views of the same event – Judgment Day pp stand? Actually, Malachi holds the solution with his God-given description of the Day as the Great and Dreadful Day of the LORD.

Judgment Day Is Both a Great and a Dreadful Day.

Now, this Day that has several Bible names is a certain, sure, definite day. It is called Judgment Day, the Last Day, Resurrection Day, the second appearance and coming of Jesus, The Day of the Lord, the Great Day of The Lord, and the Great and Dreadful Day of the LORD. Each of those names for the day describes something about the day.

But it is definitely a sure day. It is going to happen. We need to know that.

There isn't all that much about the future that we do know with any certainty. The future, especially knowing it, is God's domain. If God doesn't tell us the future, God, in fact, warns us not to try to tell it. He warns us against believing in any kind of good luck, bad luck, superstitions, for example. Almost all superstitions supposedly tell us what is going to happen to us in the future. A famous example of such a superstition is to happen this week – Friday the 13th. I hope none of you fears having “bad things” happen to you this Friday. I hope none of you alters his/her normal daily this Friday because it is the 13th. I hope, if some negative thing happens to you on Friday, you won't think it was because of it's number on the calendar. I hope all of you on Friday will be able to say, as on every day, “This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.” God severely warns against the use of horoscopes, mediums, and all fortune telling.

But our text says, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” Destined, it is set aside and stored up; this is the way it is going to be. This is definite. So, who destined it so? Who has made death and the judgment a sure thing? You know who. It is God Himself. Surely, if man could, he would delay or get rid of death and judgment all together. Human beings cannot get rid of these things though.

As sure as death is, so sure is the Judgment. Not even death can keep anyone from facing the Judgment. As St. Paul says, “We must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ.” Christ, the Anointed One, among other things, has been anointed by God the Father as Judge of all. Our Savior is Judge of all things, as we heard from the Gospel reading in John today.

By the way these verses clearly teach that it is death and then Judgment Day for all people. That Day of Judgment is here called Jesus’ second appearance. Scripture and its Author make no room for a time on Earth for a visible rule of Christ beside His first appearance to die and His appearance as Judge, called His second appearance.

When Jesus appeared the first time, the last days, the end of the ages, the last of the ages started. We are living in those end times, too. They are exciting days because they are framed by Jesus. The last of the ages began when Jesus came the first time. They will end when Jesus comes the second time.

The first time the Son of God came, He worked on our behalf. He even offered Himself as the sacrifice to annul, to do away with sin. His was a sacrifice of atonement. He redeemed, that is, He purchased our freedom from sin, sin’s guilt, sin’s slavery, sin’s punishment – death – and when he finished all that, Jesus entered the holy, eternal sanctuary of heaven. Notice how heaven is here pictured as a holy place, as a place of worship, as a place of unity and fellowship with God our Savior. “Wonderful Place” seems to be a rather colorless, vague description for heaven. Better picture it as a sanctuary, a place of worship, a place of everlasting fellowship with our Lord and Savior.

And Jesus, already in heaven, is there with the Father and the Spirit also on our behalf. “He entered heaven itself, not to appear for us – for our benefit – in God’s presence. This is a wonderful blessing for us already now!

We have internal problems. Sin is in us. And we have external dangers. Satan and his armies are our enemies. We also live in an ungodly, unbelieving world. That is a constant danger. But we are not left alone to fend for ourselves. Jesus in heaven does not mean that He is far away from us. Exactly the opposite! Jesus Christ, the one God-man, is always with His people. He always defends us, guards us, prays for us and blesses us.

We die once on account of sin, for death the just desserts for sin and then we face the Judge. But Jesus died once on the cross as a sacrifice to God for us to win forgiveness of all that sin and Jesus will appear the second time as the Judge. Think about that. The very One to judge us is the One who has already paid for all of our evil and wrong and has already announced the verdict “not guilty” “entirely innocent.” For He not only removed our sin, carrying it away forever, but He also earned perfect righteousness for us all by His obedience.

Unbelief, no trust, faithlessness toward Jesus and His Gospel, which is the verdict of “not guilty, innocent,” separates us from Jesus and all His benefits. Such a one is then on his

own. So, he is lost. He is dead and headed for eternal death. For all such, the only just sentence is dreadful. For all such, the Last Day will be a dreadful day of condemnation.

But for everyone patiently, confidently, anxiously anticipating, looking forward to the second appearance of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, Savior, Lord, Jesus will come with nothing but perfect, complete, eternal salvation, salvation from all sin, all guilt, punishment and death, salvation consisting of full, free forgiveness, and innocence and life and peace and joy forever. For all such, it will be a Great Day! Amen.