

Aim of lesson

To explain the Day of Judgment and to find from Scripture the evidence for all its attributes.

Bible background

Romans 14:10, 12; Hebrews 9:27-28

Preparation required

The students' notes give a series of passages which indicate aspects of the Day of Judgment. Consider each of these think about what they say.

It is probably worth bearing in mind that young people like to know exactly what's going to happen when, and how will it work - and we really can't be too certain of the details from Scripture. Be prepared to encourage them to find out what 'facts' there are but also accept that God doesn't expect us to work out a timetable and formula for him to stick to.

The correct balance needs to be maintained in pointing out the results of the judgment, so that the benefits of the kingdom of God are set against the pleasures of this life and the resulting condemnation.

Also the passages about the judgment tend to put a strong emphasis on works - so the correct place and balance of faith in the believer's life needs to be explained.

Suggested outline of lesson

Initial Discussion

Discuss with the group their initial understanding of the Day of Judgment. "Who, how, what, why, when," questions can be used to structure and encourage this.

Scriptural references

Then get the young people to consider the passages in their notes; you could ask them to start at different points to cover the whole. Give them time to work through the references and then encourage them to report back on their findings. This can either be done passage by passage or against topics, such as who, or what or how.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The parable demonstrates that we can't tell who will be in the kingdom of God and who will not because we all look the same, until the 'harvest'. It also shows that the decisions about people are revealed at the Judgment Seat and not before. It will be a time of joy for some and of sorrow for many (Luke 13:28).

Matthew 25:31-46

The sheep and the goats indicate that faith demonstrated by works is vital and that these should be so automatic to us that we are not aware that we are doing them, but sadly we may not be aware that we are not doing them either. This and all the other passages clearly show that there are only 2 types of person - acceptable and not acceptable so it isn't a matter of totting up 'good works' as this parable might suggest. It is not a parable about 'good' and 'bad' sheep, but about sheep and goats - the difference is a matter of birth (as in baptism). Emphasize that good deeds only show which type you are.

John 5:21-30

Christ Jesus has been appointed as the just judge, who is not doing it for his own ends. The Judgment happens after the resurrection. The result of doing good is life and of doing evil is condemnation. When we believe and are baptised we, in a sense, make the transition from death to life, and in a sense our judgment is determined at that point. This needs to be balanced with the teaching of other passages that we have to live out in our lives the standards to which God has called us.

Luke 21:25-27

We should regard the coming of Christ as good news, not something to be frightened of. But we need to make sure that we are ready for him.

2 Timothy 4:1, 8

Judgment will be 'at his appearing'. If we have lived our lives with him in mind, we can be confident that we will, at the Day of Judgment, be accepted.

Romans 14:10-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10

These passages seem to suggest we will be required to give an account of ourselves, but it is not clear what form that will take.

1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 51-54

There is obviously a difference between the risen body and our bodies as they are now. Verse 52 'For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable ...' can cause difficulties, but you need to bear in mind that Paul is talking about the sort of bodies that immortal people will have, not giving a timetable of events. His point is that (presumably after the judgment) we will be different from the way we are now.

Revelation 20:11-15

Here is the final and most complete picture of Jesus opening 'the books', referred to often in Scripture, the book from which by God's grace our sins are erased, and the Book of Life in which by the same grace our names appear.

The dead, wherever they were placed, are raised and judged: some to eternal life and the rest to die again.

1 John 4:14-18, Luke 12:27-34

God wants us to be in his kingdom, and wants to help us to get there. If we can trust him during our lives, and have his kingdom in the front of our minds, there is absolutely no doubt that we will be in it.

Finally ...

Although we would like the students to be baptised and this lesson should clearly encourage them, there may be those who do not yet feel ready and who may be worried about what will happen if Jesus returns before they are baptised. Alternatively they may be worried about younger unbaptised friends, or members of their family.

This can be a real concern for parents, who worry that when Christ returns they will be taken away from their young children. Explain that Jesus knows our hearts and our futures and whatever he does will be just - Hebrews 9:27-28. His prime purpose in coming back is to save and rescue his people, and the ones who will suffer will be those who have deliberately turned away from God and his word.

Relevance to our lives

The signs of the times tell us that there is not much time left to get our lives right with God and to develop our faith, then to put that faith into action daily. We need to be aware of our sins and to have them forgiven first by baptism and then through our prayers through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, when Jesus returns to judge the world and us, we pray we will be worthy by God's grace of a place in his kingdom.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we live in a wicked world which needs to be put right by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know too that however hard we try we ourselves are human, and we keep doing things that we should not. Please forgive us our sins, and help us to commit our lives to your service so that when Jesus comes back we will not fear the day of judgment. Help us to truly long for his return, and to look forward to the time when he will put right everything that is wrong with our world. Amen.

Other suggestions for activities

- Discuss a human court of law and compare it with God's judgment. What are the similarities and differences? God knows- men can only guess. God has always known so doesn't have to go through a long trial process.

In a human court we would have to prove our innocence. In God's 'court' he and the Lord Jesus are on our side. Romans 8:33-34.

- Look at other parables on judgment, like the wedding feast, the ten virgins, the workers in the vineyard.