

With the four verse expositions that follow, we complete our journey through *The Joshua Code: Fifty-Two Verses Every Believer Should Know*, by O. S. Hawkins (Thomas Nelson, 2012). If you're reading through the Bible in 2014, we're also nearly done with that journey . . . and we begin again in just a day or two. Here are a few thoughts from Psalm 119 as we move into a New Year:

11 I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

18 Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law.

27 Help me understand the meaning of your commandments, and I will meditate on your wonderful miracles.

30 I have chosen to be faithful; I have determined to live by your laws.

54 Your principles have been the music of my life throughout the years of my pilgrimage.

60 I will hurry, without lingering, to obey your commands.

73 You made me; you created me. Now give me the sense to follow your commands.

74 May all who fear you find in me a cause for joy, for I have put my hope in your word.

97 Oh, how I love your law! I think about it all day long.

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

112 I am determined to keep your principles, even forever, to the very end.

May it be so, O Lord.

Amen.



The Joshua Code: Fifty-Two Verses Every Believer Should Know

O.S. Hawkins (Thomas Nelson, 2012)

Week 49: Here Comes the Judge!

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,
that each one may receive the things done in the body,
according to what he has done, whether good or bad
(2 Corinthians 5:10).*

The subject of God's final judgment is also one of the most confusing ones in all Scripture. However, when we understand that there are at least three coming judgments delineated in the Bible, it brings more focus and greater understanding of what lies ahead.

THE JUDGMENT OF SIN

The first judgment related to us has already taken place. It is the judgment of the believer's sin. Jesus said, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life*" (John 5:24). Our sins were judged in Christ as He hung on Calvary's cross. He suffered for our sins. He paid our penalty. He took our place and bore the wrath of God's judgment of sin in His own body on the cross. As Paul indicated, "[God] *made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us*" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

THE JUDGMENT OF SAINTS

The fact that Jesus stood in our place at the judgment of sin does not mean we will not stand before Him, the righteous Judge, at the judgment of the saints. This is referred to as the judgment seat of Christ. Paul speaks of this in 2 Corinthians: "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad*" (5:10).

At this judgment, taking place immediately after Christ's return, our works will be judged, not our sins. Our sins were judged at the cross. Our eternal salvation is not at issue at this judgment. Here, we believers will each give an account of ourselves before God, and the degree of our rewards will be assessed and determined by the One who judges all things well. One of the most beautiful aspects about this judgment is that "*we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 John 2:1).

THE JUDGMENT OF SINNERS

The apostle John was the only one of his peers who did not meet a martyr's death. At over ninety years of age, he was exiled to the lonely island of Patmos by the Romans where God opened heaven to him and showed him what was to come. John put it thus: "*I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and the books were opened. . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire*" (Revelation 20:11–12, 15). Only those who have not placed their trust in Christ alone for their salvation will stand before this judgment bar.

Think of the billions of people who will stand before the great white throne. These lost souls will be pronounced guilty, the degree of their punishment will be determined, and they will be cast into a godless eternity of darkness forever. Lost beyond hope, lost beyond help, lost beyond time, lost beyond Christ . . . lost. Forever lost. Let us be about the harvest!!!

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which
we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ
(Philippians 3:20).*

I have no problem believing in hell. But how could there be such a wonderful place like heaven? God has left us a few open doors in Scripture through which we can catch a glimpse of what awaits us there. Let's take a look into what lies ahead for those who trust in Him.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF REALITY

Heaven is real. Throughout time God has implanted within the soul of man a longing for such a place. God has implanted and instilled within the very being of man a desire for more from life than what we have on earth.

The human soul needs heaven, and it alone can finish what we leave unfinished here. Heaven is real. It is a place. Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you"* (John 14:2). It is a real, tangible place.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF RADIANCE

Heaven is not simply a place. It is a prepared place (John 14:2), and it is beautiful. Heaven is a place of unparalleled beauty and radiance. God loves beauty or He would never have made things on this sin-cursed earth so beautiful. It is no wonder that earlier the apostle Paul had said, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF REST

So much of life on this planet is filled with exhaustion, mourning, struggles, and pressures of all kinds. But when we walk down heaven's golden streets, we will never see a hospital. There will be no more sickness. We will never see a counseling center. There will be no more depression or mental illness. We will never see a funeral home. There will be no more death there. We will never see a policeman in uniform or a police station. There is no crime there. There will be no courthouses on the square.

There will be no lawsuits and no one seeking to cheat anyone else out of something that is rightfully theirs. We will never hear the shrill sound of an ambulance siren. There will be no more emergencies. We will never have to lock our homes or look behind us to see who is following us as we walk along. There will be no more fear. We will never see a handicapped parking place or a ramp for a wheelchair. There will be no nursing homes there for we will never grow old. Whatever it is that may rob the joy out of life in this world will be gone—and gone forever.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF RECOGNITION

We will know one another in heaven. In fact, the Bible says we will be known as we are known. When Peter, James, and John stood with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appeared before them in their glorified forms and were readily recognized (Matthew 17). No one will have to introduce me to Paul or Peter or anyone else—and these heroes of the faith will know you and me. It is one thing for us to know the president of the United States, but it is quite something different for him to know us, to call us by name. In heaven we will know and be known.

HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF REWARD

The Bible speaks repeatedly of certain crowns that will be given to believers as rewards in heaven. There is the crown of righteousness given to those who live godly lives and “all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). There is also the incorruptible crown that will be presented to those who run the good race and finish strongly in the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 9:24–27 KJV).

Next, there is the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). This crown is also referred to as the martyr’s crown and is given to those who undergo severe trials and even death on Christ’s behalf and in His service. There is also the crown of rejoicing, known as the soul winner’s crown (1 Thessalonians 2:19–20). This reward is given to those men and women who are instrumental in leading other people to faith in Christ. Finally, there is the crown of glory given to faithful pastors and teachers who teach God’s Word to others in truth and faithfulness (1 Peter 5:4).

These crowns are not to be worn by us as we strut up and down the streets of heaven. In one of the most humbling and beautiful scenes yet to unfold, we will take our crowns and cast them at Christ’s feet. He alone is worthy to receive “power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

Many seem to have the idea that heaven is a long way off. Not really. It is only one heartbeat away. Ten thousand years from today you will be alive . . . somewhere. Heaven awaits all who have come to God by faith alone in Christ. Jesus is the way, the only way, to the Father’s house.

Week 51: Famous Last Words

*He who testifies to these things says,
“Surely I am coming quickly.”
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!
(Revelation 22:20).*

A person’s last words are always intriguing. In this week’s verse, we have the last promise of the Bible from the lips of Christ and the last prayer of the Bible from the lips of John. When, after His earthly mission, our Lord ascended back to the Father, two angels appeared to His followers, saying, “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11). Now, on the last page of the Bible, Jesus closes this Book of all books with the identical theme. This same Jesus promises, “*Surely I am coming quickly.*” And each generation since the first century has been looking for “the Blessed Hope,” His “*glorious appearing*” (Titus 2:13).

The Bible speaks of three major comings. First is the first coming of Christ, born of a virgin in the little obscure village of Bethlehem. He came and “*dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). For thirty-three years Jesus showed us a picture of true love. However, many did not recognize Him. They thought, at best, He was just another one of the prophets.

Next, there is the coming of the Holy Spirit foretold especially by the prophet Joel. This coming took place on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers, never to leave us, empowering us for service. When we come to know Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to reside in us and promises that He will never leave us. As with the first coming of

Christ, when the Holy Spirit came in this manner, many did not recognize Him. They accused those filled with the Spirit at Pentecost of being drunk (Acts 2:15).

The only major coming yet to be fulfilled is the return, the second coming of Jesus Christ. Just as surely as He came the first time, He is coming again. He is coming for His bride, the church. And when He reappears, all believers will recognize Him for who He is, our almighty King. The Bible indicates that no one knows the day or the hour when our Lord will return (Mark 13:32). However, like with the other two major comings, there are signs and indications that this great event may be drawing near.

THE LAST PROMISE OF THE BIBLE

There are thousands of promises in the Bible. But the promise of Revelation 22:20, yet to be fulfilled, marks the climax of history. Jesus said, “*Surely I am coming quickly.*”

THE LAST PRAYER OF THE BIBLE

Having heard this amazing promise from His Savior’s lips, John’s first impulse is to burst out in prayer: “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” (Revelation 22:20) Just five words. Often some of the most powerful prayers are the shortest ones. In this prayer John is anticipating the return of the Lord, which will usher in a new age of peace followed by the reign of Christ on earth, followed by heaven, when time will be no more.

We will never know peace internationally until we have peace on a national level. This will never happen until we have peace on a state level. We will never see peace in our state until we have peace in our city. And peace will never come to our city until it comes to my street. This is impossible unless we have peace on my block. We will never have peace on my block until we have peace in my own home. And no true peace will exist in my home unless I have found peace in my own heart, and that comes only by my knowing the Prince of Peace Himself. Jesus is coming again to bring a kingdom of true and lasting peace among us. Join me in joining John and praying, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*”

Week 52: The Fear Factor

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all
(Ecclesiastes 12:13).*

We have come now to the end of this volume. It is fitting that at this point we hear the words of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.*” Now this statement should make us perk up our ears. Solomon has promised to share “*the conclusion of the whole matter.*” And here it is: *Fear God!* “*Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.*”

A “WHY” QUESTION

All through the Bible, there is one characteristic believers had in common: they lived in the fear of the Lord. All the Old Testament saints walked in the fear of God. Noah was “*moved with godly fear*” when he built the ark (Hebrews 11:7). The secret of the Proverbs 31 lady was that she “*fears the LORD*” (v. 30). The same is true in the gospels. The young virgin Mary sang in her song of praise, we call it the Magnificat, that God’s “*mercy is on those who fear Him*” (Luke 1:50). Fear of the Lord is on most every page in Acts. At Pentecost we read that “*fear*

came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2:43). Paul’s epistles are replete with this same theme. To the Romans he said, “Stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear [God]” (Romans 11:20). In Ephesians 5:21, Paul stated, “[Submit] to one another in the fear of God.” And, finally, in the last book of the Bible, as the final scene of heaven is revealed, John reported that a loud voice from the throne said, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great” (Revelation 19:5).

Thus, we are confronted with a “why” question. Why— when all those Old Testament saints, all those people throughout the Gospels, all those mentioned in Acts, all the instructions in the Epistles, and, finally, heaven itself— is this constant theme of all God’s people a forgotten subject today? Have we lost a sense of the holiness of God?

A “WHAT” QUESTION

What does it mean to live in the fear of God? Does it mean we have to live in constant fright that if we say something or do something wrong, God will hit us with a big club of retribution? Nothing could be further from biblical reality. The most common Old Testament word for fear means “to stand before God with reverence and respect.” The most common New Testament word for fear is closely akin to this. It speaks of a reverential awe that becomes the controlling motivation of our lives.

A “HOW” QUESTION

Finally, how can we put a handle on biblical truth and begin living in the fear of the Lord ourselves? Where do we begin? We begin at the place where we begin everything in the Christian life: the Word of God. Solomon framed the subject best as God speaks through him directly to us: *“If you receive my words, and treasure my commands . . . incline your ear to wisdom . . . apply your heart to understanding . . . cry out for discernment . . . lift up your voice for understanding . . . seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD” (Proverbs 2:1–5, emphasis added).*

In your normal traffic pattern of devotional Bible reading, begin to circle the idea of the fear of the Lord every time you see it. You will be amazed how God will continue to bring it before you. Then you will begin walking in the fear of the Lord. It is a learned experience.

Yes, when the wisest man who ever lived, inspired by God’s Spirit, says, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter,”* it should make us really listen. This was Solomon’s message: *“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.”*

Soli Deo Gloria!