* /Lasts forever.
	+ If /else, this pandemic has surely taught us – anything can happen – be prepared for catastrophe – precisely b/c nothing lasts forever.
	+ Bible agrees: this world had a beginning, and it will have an end. All through Rev – hints, warnings, descr of the end of all things.
* Suddenly, here in v11 – happened. The end.

**Let me take you there – set scene:** **v11** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.

* + Back in Throne room – been there so many times. Ch 4.
* **Heaven & earth are gone.** The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.
	+ Mean? Poetic.
		- Glory of God – enough to cause heavens & earth to explode away into oblivion.
	+ Reminded of **Col 1:16**[[1]](#endnote-1) [In Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible…all things…in him all things hold together.
		- Image: J made everything Him – there at centre - holding it all together – b/c his glory should naturally cause everything to flee from his presence. Especially creation in its broken, sinful state.
		- But one day he will let it go. He’ll stop holding all things together. And in a moment, it’s all over.
* Look around – realise, **Throne-room is also a courtroom.**
	+ Great, white throne of God. Jesus the judge seated on it[[2]](#endnote-2). **v12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne
		- Every person who has ever lived – greatest to the least significant. Kings & queens – CEOs of multinational corporations – and the likes of you and I.
		- Those alive when the end comes – those died generations ago.
		- Each person stands before the throne. Everyone on trial.
* **Books of evidence are opened**
	+ The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. Evidence in the case – evidential record – good & bad.
* All this language borrowed from **Daniel 7:9-10**: the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

3 reasons why it’s a WONDEFUL thing that Jesus is judge over us

**#1 His judgement shows his justice**

* Alternative? Evildoers get away with it.
	+ Fred West – sickest serial killer. Suicide. “Escaped justice”.
		- No, /escape. Stand before God & justice done.
	+ What if you were a Bosnian civilian in 1995 when Serbian army attacked – worst genocide in Europe since WW2. What if your sister raped? Your father murdered? And the perpetrators disappeared off /seen again.
* It’s a wonderful thing we have a just judge who has power to put right all wrongs. All want that[[3]](#endnote-3).

**#2 His judgement shows his love**

* Maybe today struggle w idea of God having wrath at all. Isn’t he supposed to be full of love?
* But don’t you get angry s/t when read news? See injustice? And don’t you get more angry the more you love the person who is hurt?
	+ I am righteously angry about child abuse.
	+ I would be far more angry if s/o abused a child I love.
		- My wrath against a child-abuser isn’t at all at odds with me being full of love.
		- My wrath is precisely b/c I am full of love.
* And a God who just ignores suffering & evil is/full of love.
	+ The kind of God who stands by and does nothing – refuses to judge – partaker in evil himself.
* The Bible portrays God’s wrath as flowing from his love and delight in his creation.

**#3 His judgement shows his inclusivity**

* Most ppl assume: good ppl: heaven. Bad ppl: hell. End of. Simple.
	+ All well and good assuming you’ve decided you’re “good”.
* What about bad people? What if you’ve messed up? What if you’ve tried, and failed? What if you’re addicted? What if you’ve messed up relationships? What if you’ve had a train-wreck of a marriage? What if you’ve cheated? Lied? Stolen? What if you’ve killed someone?
* The Christian gospel says – joyfully says – ‘It doesn’t matter who you are or what you’ve done. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been at the gates of hell. It doesn’t matter if you’re the most utterly depraved person you know. You can be welcomed and embraced and forgiven, fully and instantly through Jesus Christ.’
	+ That’s inclusive! Our culture writes ppl off. Our God /.

Back into txt. What does this judgement look like?

* Lots of things unclear about this. Rev full of symbolism. Careful abt jumping to conclusions.
* **God knows everything**
	+ Not sure literal books: point: there is a record of evidence – everything we have done – said – thought – whole life. The Lord knows – no secrets from him. **Rev 2:23** I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.
		- Searches hearts & minds. We /do that. He can & does & will.
* **We will all be held accountable**
	+ Every moment of life – every decision.
	+ How long will that take? /Know. /Time limits in eternity.
		- Maybe /long to reach a verdict: /every page of evidence needs to be read before the case is clear.
		- Maybe only a few brief moments of the deepest thoughts and attitudes of our hearts laid bare[[4]](#endnote-4) – case closed. No point reading any more.
* **Everyone is guilty**
	+ **Psalm 143:1-2** Lord, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy; in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you.
		- Turn it round: No-one is righteous before you Lord, so please listen to my cry for mercy. Not going to plead innocence. Admit guilt. Have mercy Lord – hear my prayer.
	+ **Romans 3:10** There is no one righteous, not even one
	+ **Romans 3:23** all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
	+ Jesus – **Mark 10:18** No one is good – except God alone.
		- And so we all one day will stand before the Most Holy God, our sins exposed. Everyone found guilty.
* **What hope is there?** Everyone condemned to the lake of fire?
	+ Read carefully. Read about the “books”. Also a “book”.
	+ **v12** Another book was opened, which is the book of life. **v15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.
		- It’s not deeds that determine the destination.
	+ What determines eternal destiny: whether or not name is in the book of life.
	+ Mean?
		- Have you received the life that J offers? Has **new life** been gifted to you – and have you received it? In the language of John 3, have you been **born again**?
		- In the imagery of Rev 14 – do you have J name – F’s name **written on your forehead**? Do you belong to him? Are you his?
		- Have you had your **sins forgiven**? The whole story of the Bible is Jesus coming to earth to take the punishment that we sinners deserve – did at cross – bearing the weight of our sin – our failings – our wrongdoing – thought, word, deed.
	+ That’s why J came, to save the world. To save sinners like you and me.
		- He went to the cross and bore **agony - physical suffering**, so that we need never suffer in hell.
		- Worse **agony of separation** from God’s love – so that we need never suffer separation from God’s love.
	+ **John 3:18** God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
	+ He has done everything necessary so that you – today – this morning – can be forgiven of all your sin – and have your name added to the book of life.
		- Approach him today as saviour. One day: approach him as judge – too late for a saviour then.
		- Will you trust him today – will you come?
* **In public? Are all my sins – exposed for everyone to hear about?**
	+ /Certain.
	+ But a courtroom: public place. All desc of judgement in B: vast crowd. Everyone standing before the throne – public.
	+ /See anything abt a quiet 1-2-1 w J.
	+ And J: **Luke 12:2-5** There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.
* Perhaps missing point: Worried abt - shame of having our deepest darkness exposed to our friends – family.
	+ Nothing compared to the shame of exposure before the Most Holy God. All eyes will be upon him - /give a thought abt what other ppl think. It’s what the judge thinks that matters.
	+ J: **Luke 12** I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. IOW: tempting to worry abt what friends – might do to you if they knew the darkest recesses of the real you. Might even want to kill you.
		- But I will show you whom you should fear: fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Fear God. What he thinks - matters.
* If our sins are all exposed in that day, /alarm[[5]](#endnote-5).
	+ Forgiven sins.
	+ Finally seeing the blackness of my sin against the radiance of his purity. And as the book of life is opened: forgiven – righteous.
	+ Most profound worship! What a way to enter eternity!

Do now?

**Live holy lives in anticipation of judgement**

**2Peter 3:10-12** the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

* Since everything around us will be destroyed one day – less focus on that. More on character & godliness of lives – which will be laid bare one day.

**Reach out to other people**

**2Corinthians 5:9-11** We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due to us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

* Penn Jillette, atheist magician/entertainer: *I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and hell and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward . . . how much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?*

**Come to X**

* God, the same God who finds our sin so abhorrent, so sickening, so terrible that one day it must be confined to hell – that same God – chooses to endure hell himself – for us.
	+ He doesn’t just judge evil, he also takes the hell and judgement on himself, for us, at the cross. If we will receive it.
	+ He won’t force it on us. Instead he offers forgiveness to all those who will come, lay down our lives and repent.
* This morning, if you don’t know his forgiveness, if you’ve never tasted of his sweet grace, God calls you to come.
	+ Turn away from your sin & trust in J. Pray to him today – ask him for mercy & forgiveness & help.

When the Bible’s teaching about judgment is dismissed, all victims of injustice, violence, and oppression are then put at risk. If God is a God of love without the accountability of justice, then vulnerable people become more vulnerable, and bullies are encouraged to continue bullying.

We need a God who gets angry. We need a God who will protect his kids, who will once and for all remove bullies and perpetrators of evil from his playground.

 If there is no ultimate accounting for evil, what do we say to the Jews about Hitler? What do we say to little girls who have been sold into the sex trade by greedy, oppressive scoundrels? What do we say to the boy who is abused by his father, or the unassuming widow who is robbed? It’s too simple to merely say that our God is a God of love and nothing else. If God decided to put his gavel down once and for all, don’t we see that this would create many more problems than it would solve? If a judging God did not exist, then we would be living in a world of Darwinian chaos in which the strong eat the weak and only the powerful survive.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-compassionate-truth-about-judgment/>

Quote: *I suggest imagining that you are delivering a lecture in a war zone. . . . Among your listeners are people whose cities and villages have been first plundered, then burned and levelled to the ground, whose daughters and sisters have been raped, whose fathers and brothers have had their throats slit. . . . The thesis: we should not retaliate since God is perfect non-coercive love. Soon you would discover that it takes the quiet of a suburban home for the birth of the thesis that human nonviolence corresponds to God’s refusal to judge. In a scorched land, soaked in the blood of the innocent, it will invariably die.*

Miroslav Volf, Exclusion & Embrace

1. Or Hebrews 1:3 …sustaining all things by his powerful word. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. John 5:22 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cut for time: But problem is, we want it for other ppl, /ourselves. Want justice against ppl who have hurt us, but /for us when we hurt others. We get so angry when s/o goes through a dubious amber traffic light – hearts cry out for justice. But when we do it: hope /notices. But God is perfectly consistent. Sees and will judge all things. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. See also Ecclesiastes 12:14 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. “It should not cause terror or alarm on the part of believers, because even sins that are made public on that day will be made public as sins that have been forgiven, and thereby will be the occasion for giving glory to God for the richness of his grace.” Grudem, Wayne. Systematic Theology, IVP, 1994. p1144.
“It will serve the purpose...of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, his grace and mercy.” Berkhof, Systematic Theology, P731. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)