

WHAT ABOUT THE JUDGMENTS TO COME?

Matthew 25:31-46 II Corinthians 5:10 Revelation 20:11-15

This subject is of great importance to all, and of interest to many. That God will call men into judgment, and that that judgment will proceed upon the record of this present life, is one of the most deeply ingrained convictions of humanity. Man's instinctive consciousness of future judgment is universal. The voices of conscience and the Word of God speak the same language. All men will come into judgment relative to deeds done in the present.

Many are under the impression that the Bible speaks of one great general judgment, at which time all who have ever lived, the righteous and the wicked, the saved and the unsaved, will be gathered before the Throne of God and judged according to their works. However, a careful study of the scriptures will reveal that there are many judgments: past, present, and future. Judgment! What a pungent word! The thought of judgment for every individual, sometime, somewhere, is a thought that arrests and solemnizes the mind, awakens a slumbering conscience and stirs with sacred emotion.

1. Judgments of the past.

- (1) Adam and Eve certainly stood in judgment before Almighty God when sentence was passed upon them in the Garden of Eden.
- (2) Judgment was passed upon the serpent when was sentenced to crawl on the ground and to eat dirt.
- (3) The flood in the days of Noah was a judgment that God sent down upon the wicked.
- (4) The confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel was certainly a judgment sent from God.
- (5) The plagues of Egypt were judgments.

(6) The judgment of sin.

This took place on Calvary when Christ bore the awful weight of human sin and woe. Sin -- that awful cancer in the human soul; that soul-destroying rebellion against the laws and government of the eternal God; that prolific source of all the wickedness, wretchedness and iniquity that blots and blurs God's fair creation -- had to be judged. In His vicarious and substitutionary death Christ paid the penalty for believers' sins. So far as believers are concerned, the judgment of sin was settled forever. It was not only the most important judgment of the past, but it also is the most important of all judgments. This judgment took place on Calvary's hill when God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I Peter 3:18. Christ "tasted death for every man." Hebrews 2:9. "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. Man deserves death. Sin has placed the death penalty upon every man's head, but Christ took man's place. Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ have already been judged so far as sins are concerned. "And their sins and iniquity will I remember no more." Hebrews 10:17. Therefore, God will not bring believers into judgment for sin. The believers' sins are already judged. Of all the judgments of the past, present, or future, there is none so important as the judgment of all believers' sins which took place on Calvary.

2. Judgments of the present.

(1) The judgment of self.

Having come to the cross and found deliverance from the penalty of sin, the believer should enter into the experience of knowing deliverance from the power of sin. The Christian should judge self, with its likes and dislikes, its appetites and ambitions, its ways and waywardness. In I Corinthians 11:31, we find this clear-cut statement: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." If we will judge ourselves when we fall into sin, then we will confess our sins and thereby obtain forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9.

(2) Refusing to judge ourselves brings God's chastening upon us.

Concerning David God said: "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart from him." II Samuel 7:14-15. We should not despise chastening when it comes from God because it is for our own good. The true child of God will thus be strengthened and purified and brought closer to the Lord. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou are rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Hebrews 12:5-7. Christians should judge themselves, confess their sins, and thus escape God's chastening.

3. Judgments of the future.

According to the scriptures, and that is our only source of information and authority, there are yet to be different judgments, with different subjects, to be judged, at different times, in different places, on different bases, and with different results.

No intelligent person can examine the movements of nature, and trace on history's pages the movements of nations, or experience the quiver of his own conscience, without being convinced that there is an eternal law operating from the throne of God which has brought, is bringing, and will bring men face to face with judgment. No honest person can deny the great law of reward and penalty. It is in nature. It is in life. It is written on the statute books of our government. It is written on the blue canopy of God. It is written in the human conscience.

What About The Judgments To Come?

I. The Judgment of The Gentile Nations. Matthew 25:31-46.

Some people are very much surprised to learn that God is to judge nations as well as individuals. Yet, God has always judged nations. Did He not send judgment against Israel? What about Egypt? What about the heathen nations that once dwelt in the promised land? What did He say about the nations that forget God? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm 9:17.

1. When will the nations be judged?

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory." Matthew 25:31. When Christ comes to set up His millennial kingdom, He will bring to judgment the nations concerning their treatment of His brethren. The judgment of the nations will take place at the close of the Great Tribulation or immediately after the Battle of Armageddon.

2. Where will this judgment take place?

The prophet Joel answers this question. "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat." Joel 3:2. "Let the heathen (nations)

be awakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen (nations) round about." Joel 3:12.

3. Why this judgment?

It is to convict and to sentence those nations which have persecuted the Jews. God loves Israel despite her transgressions. He has brought punishment upon her, but He does not want others to persecute "His people." We earthly parents punish our own children, but we will not permit others to do so. Some day, the nations that are persecuting the Jews will learn that they have been persecuting God.

II. The Judgment of Israel.

The fiftieth Psalm speaks of this judgment. "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people." Psalm 50:4.

When will this judgment take place? "When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory." Matthew 19:28.

What will be the basis of this judgment? Their rejection of the Godhead.

What will be the result of this judgment? It will determine who among the children of Israel found upon the earth at the Lord's appearing shall enter the Kingdom.

III. The Judgment Of The Wicked Dead. Revelation 20:11-15.

This will be the Great White Throne Judgment.

1. When will this judgment take place?

It will take place one thousand years after the first resurrection or following the millenium. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Revelation 20:5. This day of judgment for ungodly men will follow upon the second resurrection, which is the resurrection of the wicked.

2. Who will stand before the great white throne?

All the wicked dead of all the ages from the first lost person to the last man or woman dying without Christ. From the graves of every land, from the graves of the islands of the sea, and from the seven seas the bodies of the wicked dead will be resurrected to be united with their spirits that they might stand before Christ in judgment.

No believers will ever stand before the great white throne. The saints will have been with the Lord one thousand years preceding this judgment of the wicked dead. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Revelation 20:6.

3. Who are the wicked being judged?

Those who died in rebellion against God. They have rejected Christ.

4. What is the purpose of this judgment?

It is merely to ascertain the degree of punishment for the wicked.

5. What sentence is pronounced upon all present?

Man's rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately mean God's rejection of all such whose names are not found in the Book of Life. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15. How sobering are the solemn words of impending judgments of all those rejecting Christ!

"The Lake of Fire" is a place where Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet will have been cast. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Revelation 20:10.

IV. The Judgments Of The Satins.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." II Corinthians 5:10.

This judgment is not for the purpose of judging the believer's sins. All of his sins were judged in the person of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary. "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39. "For he hath made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Corinthians 5:21. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." I Peter 2:24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24.

While it is true that the believer's sins have been judged already at Calvary, it is also true that every righteous work and deed of the believer must come into judgment. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Romans 14:10.

The purpose of the judgment of the believer's works is for rewards. Over and over again God declares every righteous deed which we do from the time we are saved shall be rewarded. However, no Christian will ever get any reward for anything he does before his conversion. Rewards do not begin until after salvation becomes a reality. God's Word makes this abundantly clear. "For there shall be no reward to the evil man." Proverbs 24:20.

Only as our works abide will there be rewards for us. Our works cannot abide unless they have been pleasing unto Him. Many will appear before the judgment seat of Christ expecting a big reward only to find that their works, which in life were not in accord with His Will and Word, shall be burned. God's Word says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." I Corinthians 3:13-15.

All believers in Christ have accepted the one Foundation -- the Lord Jesus Christ -- and on that one Foundation they build their lives. We are building day by day; works of thoughts and deeds are being built into the structure of our character. Some of these things, says Paul, are likened to gold, silver, precious stones -- others to wood, hay, stubble.

In building, two things are of great importance -- the material used and the method followed. In the building of Christian character the two things that count are material and motive. Motive, that quality unseen to the eye of man, must of necessity wait for the scrutiny of the Judge -- the Omniscient Christ. Reverend William A. Ashby of London told about passing Spurgeon's Tabernacle one day, after enemy action had destroyed all but the walls and iron girders. He said, "I thought instantly of Paul's words. Here all the perishable had gone -- that famous pulpit, those impressive galleries, those thousands of seats, and the magnificent organ -- all gone. They had been tested by fire. But the great columns of stone, the thick walls, and iron girders which had supported the roof were there. They stood out in noble defiance of a destructive element; they stood the test of the fire."

This is a striking illustration of Paul's teaching, and our testing. Christian, take heed how you build, for the true nature of your work will be manifested because it will be tested.

Even the least thing which a Christian does in the name of Jesus will not be overlooked. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Hebrews 6:10. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Matthew 10:42. It seems but a very little thing to give a cup of cold water, yet the Lord Jesus has promised a reward if it is done in the proper spirit.

Crowns are used in the scriptures as symbols of the rewards which are laid up for believers. Five crowns are offered.

1. The crown of rejoicing.
This is the soul-winner's crown. Those brought to Christ by us will be our crown of rejoicing at His coming. I Thessalonians 2:19-20.
2. The crown of glory.
This is the pastor's crown. It is given only for faithfulness and suffering in the gospel ministry. I Peter 5:2-4.
3. The crown of life.
This is the martyr's crown. It is a reward for faithfulness under trial. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12. Also, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10.
4. The crown of righteousness.
This is the crown for those who love His appearing. II Timothy 4:8.
5. The incorruptible crown.
This is the victor's crown. I Corinthians 9:25-27.