

# Eternal Judgment

by Derek Prince

Book VII *of the Foundation*  
*Series as presented on the*  
*Study Hour Radio Program.*

THE WHOLE TRUTH TO



THE WHOLE CHURCH

# Eternal Judgment

by Derek Prince

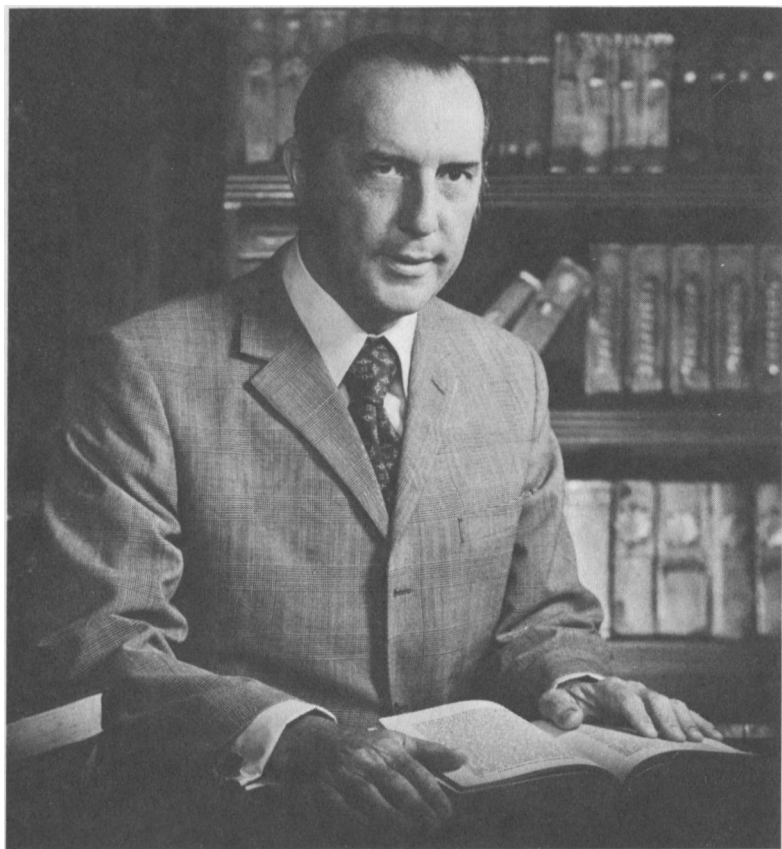
**Every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for  
ever.**

**Psalm 119:160**

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DEREK PRINCE  
King's Scholar, Eton College  
B.A., M.A. Cambridge  
Formerly  
Fellow of King's College,  
Cambridge



# Preface

The ministry of "The Study Hour" is summed up in its motto: "The whole truth to the whole church."

The Study Hour seeks to present in a clear, systematic way the great basic truths of the Bible, without bias, and without compromise. It seeks to serve every section of the Christian Church, without reference to denominational titles or affiliations.

For this reason, the Study Hour is undenominational in its whole approach and program. It is a faith project, not dependent upon any single group or denomination.

Derek Prince, the Expositor of the Study Hour, was educated in Britain as a scholar of Greek and Latin at Eton College and at King's College, Cambridge. From 1940 to 1949 he held a Fellowship (equivalent to a Professorship) in Ancient and Modern Philosophy at Cambridge University. He has also studied Hebrew and Aramaic, both at Cambridge University and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Converted from Philosophy to Christianity while serving as a soldier in World War II, Derek Prince has since devoted his life to the study and teaching of the Bible. He has served at various times, as a minister, educator and missionary, in four continents—Europe, Asia, Africa and North America.

He is thus uniquely qualified to interpret the great doctrines of the Christian faith in a way that combines mature scholarship with practical wisdom and experience.

With a few changes, these messages are printed here exactly as they have been delivered over the air on the *Study Hour* radio program.





# I

## "God The Judge of All"

*The Father Commits All Judgment to the Son—The  
Eternal Standard Is God's Word—Four Principles of  
Judgment by the Word*

Welcome to the Study Hour.

Our textbook—the Bible.

The study which we shall now bring you is Number 48 in our present series, entitled "Foundations".<sup>1</sup>

In this series of studies we have been systematically examining the six doctrines which are listed in Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 and 2, and which are there called "the beginning, or the foundation, of the doctrine of Christ". The six doctrines there listed are as follows: Number 1, "repentance from dead works"; Number 2, "faith toward God"; Number 3, "the doctrine of baptisms"; Number 4, "laying on of hands"; Number 5, "resurrection of the dead"; Number 6, "eternal judgment".

In our last seven studies we have thoroughly examined the fifth of these foundation doctrines—that which is called "resurrection of the dead".

In our present study we shall now begin to examine the sixth and last of these foundation doctrines—that is, "eternal judgment". In this study we shall consider the following two aspects of divine judgment: first, the general revelation which the scripture gives concerning God as the Judge of all; and second, the main principles according to which God's judgment is administered.

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<sup>1</sup> The previous 47 studies in this series are published as six successive books, under the titles: "FOUNDATION FOR FAITH"; "REPENT AND BELIEVE"; "FROM JORDAN TO PENTECOST"; "PURPOSES OF PENTECOST"; "LAYING ON OF HANDS"; "RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD". See back cover of this book.

For an introduction to the teaching of the Bible concerning God as the Judge, we may turn to Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22 through 24:

**But ye are come unto the mount Sion, unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,**

**To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,**

**And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.**

These three verses present a picture of God in his heavenly dwelling, and of the saints and redeemed who dwell with Him there. The key to the proper analysis of these verses is the number **three**.

First of all, the verses fall naturally into **three** main parts: first, a description of God's dwelling place; second, an enumeration of those who dwell there with God; third, a presentation of God Himself.

Then, each of these **three** main parts falls naturally into a further **three-fold** subdivision.

The description of God's dwelling is three-fold: first, "**the Mount Sion**"; second, "**the city of the living God**"; third, "**the heavenly Jerusalem**".

The enumeration of those who dwell there is likewise three-fold: first, "**an innumerable company of angels**"; second, "**the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven**"; third, "**the spirits of just men made perfect**".

Concerning these three groups, we may offer the following brief explanation. The "angels" here referred to are those who "kept their first estate", joining neither in Satan's first rebellion, nor in the universal wickedness of both men and angels in the period before the flood. The "church of the firstborn" represents

the saints of the New Covenant, who, through the experience of the new birth, have their names written in heaven and thus have become a firstfruits of God's new creation in Christ. The "spirits of just men made perfect" represent the saints of previous ages, who, through a lifetime's walk of faith, were gradually made perfect.

Finally, the presentation of God Himself in these three verses is likewise three-fold: first, **"God the Judge of all"**; second, **"Jesus the mediator of the new covenant"**; third, **"the blood of sprinkling (that is, the sprinkled blood of Jesus), which speaketh better things than that of Abel."**

As, with the eye of faith and the light of scripture, we survey this heavenly scene here presented to us, we observe in the midst and centre of it all one solemn, majestic, and awe-inspiring Figure—**"God the Judge of all"**. Here God is revealed to us in His sovereign, eternal authority as Judge—Judge of all—Judge of heaven, and Judge of earth—Judge of angels, and Judge of men.

However, if God were revealed only as Judge, then there would be no place here for sinful men—neither for the perfected spirits of the Old Testament, nor for the reborn saints of the New. In mercy, therefore, the revelation of God's Word leads us on from the Figure of God the Judge to the Figure of Jesus the Mediator—Jesus the only One who can come between a righteous, holy God and lost, sinful men, and reconcile the one to the other. And the picture is completed by the revelation of the blood of Jesus—being both the means and the price by which reconciliation has been achieved.

In this picture, the blood of Jesus is contrasted with the blood of Abel. There are three main points of contrast. First, the blood of Abel was shed without his own will or consent, spilled suddenly by a murderer's blow, without warning; whereas the blood of Jesus was freely given of His own consent, as the price of man's redemption. Second, the blood of Abel was sprinkled upon the earth; whereas the blood of Jesus was sprinkled before the mercy seat in heaven. Third, the blood of Abel cried out to

God for vengeance upon his murderer; whereas the blood of Jesus pleads for mercy and forgiveness for the sinner. We see, therefore, that this revelation of God as Judge of all is tempered by the revelation of God's mercy and grace manifested in the mediatorial office and the shed blood of Christ. This revelation of God as a God of judgment tempered by grace and mercy is in harmony with the total revelation of scripture upon this theme.

Throughout the entire Bible it is plainly stated that, by sovereign, eternal right, the office of "Judge" belongs to God Himself. This theme runs through the whole of the Old Testament. For instance, in Genesis chapter 18, verse 25, Abraham says to the Lord: **"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"** Again, in Judges chapter 11, verse 27, we read: **"The Lord the Judge be judge this day."** And in Psalm 58, verse 11: **"Verily he (God) is a God that judgeth in the earth."** Again, in Psalm 94, verse 2, the psalmist says to God: **"Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth."** And in Isaiah chapter 33, verse 22: **"For the Lord is our judge."**

However, the truest and most perfect expression of God's eternal nature is not in judgment but in grace, not in wrath but in mercy. This truth is illustrated in the prophecy of God's impending wrath and judgment, given in Isaiah chapter 28, verse 21:

**For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.**

Here the prophet Isaiah pictures the Lord rising up to administer wrath and judgment upon His adversaries. However, Isaiah calls this a "strange" work and a "strange" act. Two different Hebrew words are here translated by the English word "strange". The meaning which these two Hebrew words have in common is that of "alien". The administration of wrath and judgment is alien to God's own nature. It is not something which He Himself naturally desires to do. It is rather the inevitable response of God to the unthankful and unholy behaviour of man.

It is the warped and twisted character and conduct of man, the creature, which calls forth this strange manifestation of wrath and judgment from God, the Creator.

As we move on from the Old Testament into the New, we enter into a fuller revelation of the motives and methods of God's judgment. Renewed emphasis is laid upon the fact that judgment and wrath are alien to the abiding nature and purpose of God. In John chapter 3, verse 17, Christ says: **"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."** Again we read in the Second Epistle of Peter chapter 3, verse 9: **"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."** These scriptures—and many others like them—reveal that God delights to administer mercy and salvation, but that He is reluctant to administer wrath and judgment.

However, the New Testament revelation takes us still further along this line of truth. The reluctance of God to administer judgment finds expression also in the way in which God's judgment will ultimately be carried out.

In the first instance, and by sovereign eternal right, as we have already seen, judgment belongs to God the Father. This is plainly stated by the apostle Peter, in his First Epistle chapter 1, verse 17, where he speaks of **"the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work."** Here judgment of all men is plainly stated to be the office of God the Father.

However, in John's Gospel chapter 5, Christ reveals that the Father has chosen in His sovereign wisdom to commit all judgment to the Son. In John chapter 5, verses 22 and 23, Christ says: **"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."** Again, in verses 26 and 27 of the same chapter, Christ says:

**For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.**

Here it is explicitly stated that the office of judgment has been transferred from the Father to the Son. Two reasons are given for this. First, because with the office of judge goes also the honour due to the judge; and in this way all men will be obliged to show the same honour toward God the Son, as they would toward God the Father. Second, because Christ is also the Son of man, as well as the Son of God; that is, He partakes of the human as well as of the divine nature, and thus in His judgment He is able to make allowance, from His own experience, for all the infirmities and temptations of human flesh.

However, such is the grace and mercy of the divine nature in the Son, as in the Father, that Christ, too, is unwilling to administer judgment. For this reason, He in turn has transferred the final authority of judgment from His own Person to the Word of God. This He Himself plainly states in John chapter 12, verses 47 and 48:

**And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.**

This shows clearly that the final authority of all judgment is vested in the Word of God. This is the impartial, unchanging standard of judgment to which all men must one day answer.

The same revelation concerning God's Word is given already in the Old Testament. For David says to God, in Psalm 119, verse 160: **"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."** This is to say, all the standards and the principles of God's judgment are contained within His Word; and, like that very Word, of which they are part, these standards and principles of

judgment endure unchanged forever.

With this in mind, let us consider briefly the main principles of divine judgment which are revealed in God's Word. The four main principles of God's judgment are all stated by Paul in the first twelve verses of Romans chapter 2. They may be summarised as follows:

First, God's judgment is **"according to truth"**. This is stated in Romans chapter 2, verses 1 and 2:

**Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.**

**But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.**

Paul is here speaking primarily to religious people, who judge other people by one standard, and themselves by another standard. Paul says that this is not the way of God's judgment. God's judgment is "according to truth". If we see and acknowledge the truth of God's judgment as applied to others, we must apply precisely the same truth to ourselves and our own lives. God's standard does not vary. It is always "the truth"—that is, the revealed truth of God's Word. For Jesus Himself says to the Father, in John chapter 17, verse 17: **"Thy word is truth."** This revealed standard of God's truth applies just as much to the one who judges as to the one who is judged.

Secondly, God's judgment is **"according to deeds"**. In Romans chapter 2, verse 6, Paul says that God **"will render to every man according to his deeds."** This principle of divine judgment is repeated many times over in scripture. For example, Peter says in his First Epistle chapter 1, verse 17, that **"the Father... judgeth according to every man's work."** Again, in the account of the final judgment in Revelation chapter 20, verse 12, we read that **"the books were open... and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."**

The use of the words "books" in this connection is interesting and illuminating. In modern English the word "book" normally denotes a number of paper pages, bound together at one edge. However, in New Testament times, a "book" normally took the form of along sheet of parchment, leather, or other material, which was kept rolled up, and was unrolled in order to be read. A scroll of this kind, sealed with seven successive seals, actually plays a prominent part in the imagery of the book of Revelation itself. Amongst the various means developed by modern technology for recording and transmitting information, there is one which resembles an ancient scroll far more closely than a modern "book" does—and that is an electromagnetic recording tape. This is kept rolled up in precisely the same manner as an ancient scroll, but must be unrolled in order to transmit the information recorded on it.

With this picture of an electromagnetic tape in mind, it becomes easy for us to realise that there is an individual record kept in heaven of the entire life of every human being. Just as a man's words may be recorded and preserved on earth by means of an electromagnetic tape, so on a special "book", or scroll, in heaven God preserves a complete and flawless record of the entire life of every person. According to this record of his deeds preserved upon this heavenly scroll, each person will one day be judged.

However, we must be careful not to limit the meaning of the word "deeds" merely to external actions, such as can be observed by other human beings. The whole Bible makes it plain that God, in His judgment of man, takes into account not merely external actions, but also the deepest and most secret thoughts, impulses and motives of the heart. In Romans chapter 2, verse 16, Paul speaks of **"the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."** Paul brings out the same thought again in First Corinthians chapter 4, verse 5, where he says:

**Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things**



**of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.**

This same truth is actually contained in the revelation that judgment will be by the Word of God, for we are told in Hebrews chapter 4, verses 12 and 13:

**For the word of God is quick and powerful... piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit... and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

**Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.**

Thus we see that God's record of men's deeds covers not merely their external, observable actions, but also their thoughts and intents, the deepest motives and impulses of their minds and hearts. And it is in this all-embracing sense that God's judgment of men will be "according to their deeds".

The third principle of God's judgment is stated in Romans chapter 2, verse 11: **"For there is no respect of persons with God."**

To have respect of persons means to be influenced in judgment by some external accident or relationship of a person, such as does not necessarily give a correct indication of that person's real character and conduct. There are many such external things, by which men are often influenced in forming their judgment: such as race; religious profession; social position; physical appearance; wealth; education; and so on. However, God's judgment is not influenced or diverted by any of these things. This is summed up in the statement of First Samuel chapter 16, verse 7:

**For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.**

Not only is God Himself never moved by respect of persons; He also strictly charges all those who exercise judgment in human affairs never to yield to this influence. There can scarcely

be any principle of scripture which is stated more often than this. It is mentioned at least nine times in the Old Testament, and at least seven times in the New Testament—that is, a total of sixteen times in all.

The fourth principle of God's judgment is stated in Romans chapter 2, verse 12:

**For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law....**

Applied generally, this means that each person will be judged according to the measure of moral light and understanding made available to him. Those who have had the full knowledge of God's moral standards revealed to them through the law of Moses will be judged by that law. But those who did not have the fuller revelation of the law of Moses will not be judged by that law, but only in accordance with the general revelation of God granted to the human race as a whole through the wonders of creation.

This general revelation of God through creation is referred to by Paul in Romans chapter 1, verse 20:

**For the invisible things of him (that is, of God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse....**

Paul here states that a general revelation of God's nature—that is, His "eternal power and Godhead"—is given, through creation, to all men everywhere, irrespective of race or religion, who attain to normal understanding. This, therefore, is the basic standard by which all men will be judged. However, those who receive an additional and special revelation through God's Word will be judged by the higher standard of moral knowledge thus granted to them. Thus, judgment is according to light—according to the measure of moral knowledge granted to each person.

This same principle of judgment according to light is

contained in the words of Jesus to the people of His own day, recorded in Matthew chapter 11, verses 20 through 24:

**Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:**

**Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.**

**But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.**

**And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.**

**But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.**

Jesus here shows that the sinful cities of the ancient world—Tyre, Sidon and Sodom—will be judged according to the measure of moral knowledge available to them in their day. On the other hand, the cities of His own day—Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum—will be judged according to the much greater measure of knowledge granted to them in their day. For this reason, the judgment of these latter cities will be much severer than the judgment of the former.

Let us bring this principle down to our own day. We who are alive today will be judged by the measure of moral light and knowledge available to our generation. For those of us who live in modern professing Christian countries, such as America or Britain, there is probably a greater measure of moral knowledge more easily available than there has been to any previous generation in earth's history. For this reason, the standards by which we shall be judged will be the highest of all. To us in our generation apply the words of Jesus in Luke chapter 12, verse 48:

**For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much,**

**of him they will ask the more.**

We may briefly summarise the conclusions of our present study, as follows:

By sovereign, eternal right, God the Father is the Judge of all. However, the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, Jesus Christ; and Christ has, in turn, made the Word of God the final standard by which all will be judged.

God's Word reveals four main principles of divine judgment:

First, God's judgment is according to truth.

Second, God's judgment is according to deeds; and a complete record of all men's deeds will be produced at the judgment.

Third, God's judgment is without respect of persons.

Fourth, God's judgment is according to light—according to the measure of moral knowledge available to each person.

\* \* \*

In our next study we shall consider those judgments of God which are revealed and worked out in human history.

## II

# God's Judgments in History

*Historical Judgments Distinguished From Eternal Judgments—Examples of Historical Judgments: Sodom And Gomorrha; Ananias and Sapphira; Israel; Rahab*

Welcome to the Study Hour.

Our textbook—the Bible.

The study which we shall now bring you is Number 49 in our present series, entitled "Foundations".

We are at present engaged in examining that part of Christian doctrine which is called, in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 2, "eternal judgment".

In our previous study we considered two main aspects of divine judgment: first, the general revelation which the scripture gives concerning God as the Judge of all; and second, the main principles according to which God's judgment is administered.

The conclusions which we reached on these two points were as follows:

By sovereign, eternal right, God the Father is the Judge of all. However, the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, Jesus Christ; and Christ has, in turn, made the Word of God the final standard by which all will be judged.

God's Word reveals four main principles of divine judgment:

First, God's judgment is according to truth.

Second, God's judgment is according to deeds, and a complete record of all men's deeds will be produced at the judgment.

Third, God's judgment is without respect of persons.

Fourth, God's judgment is according to light—according to the measure of moral knowledge available to each person.

Having established these main, general principles of divine judgment, we shall now go on in our present study to point out two absolutely distinct and separate stages in which God's judgment is administered to the human race. The first of these two stages is God's judgment in time—or in history—that is, that part of God's judgment which is carried out upon the scene of human history. The second of these two stages is God's judgment in eternity. It is this second stage of judgment which is referred to in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 2, and which is there called "eternal judgment". Eternal judgment is not carried out upon the scene of time or of human history. Eternal judgment is the judgment which awaits every human soul in eternity, after time and history have closed.

The main purpose of our present studies is to examine the teaching of scripture concerning the second stage of God's judgment—that is, God's judgment in eternity. However, it will be helpful to begin by a brief examination of the first stage—that is, God's judgment in history. In this way, as we carefully observe this logical and scriptural distinction between God's judgment in history and God's judgment in eternity, we shall be able to reconcile certain statements of scripture which have sometimes been considered inconsistent with each other.

In Exodus chapter 20, verses 4 through 6, we read the following commandment and warning given to Israel by God:

**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:**

**Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me:**

**And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.**

Again, in Jeremiah chapter 32, verse 18, the prophet Jeremiah reminds the Lord of His promise here given to Israel, for he says:

**Thou shewest loving kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them....**

These passages of scripture, and others like them, clearly teach that—in certain cases, at least—the sins of one generation cause the judgment of God to come upon succeeding generations, as far as down to the third or fourth generation; and, conversely, that the righteousness of one generation can cause the blessing of God to come upon many thousands of their descendants. Such passages as these all deal with God's judgments in time—that is, in history.

However, in order to obtain a complete picture of God's total judgment, we must also consider the many passages of scripture which deal with God's judgment in eternity. A very clear picture of this given in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel chapter 18, verses 1 through 4, we read the following message of the Lord through the prophet to His people Israel:

**The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying,**

**What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?**

**As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.**

**Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.**

This passage indicates that, when God through His prophets rebuked Israel for their sinful and backslidden condition, the people tried to excuse themselves by placing the blame for their present condition upon the sinfulness of preceding generations. They implied that the present national decline of Israel was due

to the sins of their ancestors, and that therefore God could not justly hold them responsible for their present moral condition. However, God, through this message by Ezekiel, entirely rejects this form of excuse. Although national decline may have been brought about by the failure of preceding generations, God clearly warns them that He holds each one of them individually responsible for his own personal moral condition; and that each one of them will be judged—in eternity, that is—solely for his own character and conduct, and not at all for anything that his ancestors may or may not have done.

This warning is repeated yet more clearly and emphatically a little further on—that is, in Ezekiel chapter 18, verse 20:

**The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.**

Notice that the whole application of this passage is individual and personal. **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."**

This is not the judgment of a nation or a family; this is the judgment of each individual soul—the judgment by which the destiny of each soul is settled for eternity.

This point is again clearly brought out in verse 24 of the same chapter:

**But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.**

The final words of this verse—"in them shall he die"—indicate that God is here speaking of the condition in which each individual soul passes out from time into eternity. God says that the condition of each soul at this moment will decide the destiny



of that soul thereafter for eternity. The soul that dies in sin can never thereafter be admitted into the presence of God.

This is confirmed by the words of Jesus to the Pharisees, recorded in John chapter 8, verse 21: **"Ye shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come."** All those who die in their sins can never thereafter be admitted into the presence of God.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 11, verse 3, the same truth is presented under the picture of a tree falling: **"If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."**

The tree falling corresponds to a man dying. **"In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."** The position in which the tree falls decides the position in which it will thereafter lie. The condition in which a man dies—the condition of his soul at death—decides what will thereafter be his condition throughout eternity. In this respect, each soul is answerable for himself alone and responsible only for his own condition.

Thus, these three passages which we have just considered—in Ezekiel, in John, and in Ecclesiastes—all deal with the eternal judgment of God upon each individual soul. The destiny of each soul is settled by the condition in which it dies.

On the other hand, the passages which we considered earlier—in Exodus and in Jeremiah—dealt with the judgments of God in history, worked out from generation to generation in the experience of families, of nations and of whole races.

Viewed in this light, we see no conflict or inconsistency between these two presentations of God's judgment. In history, the behaviour of one generation has an important effect, for good or for evil, upon the course of succeeding generations. This is part of God's judgment in history. But in eternity, after time and history have closed, each soul will answer to God solely for his own character and conduct. No soul will be justified by the righteousness of another; and no soul will be condemned for the wickedness of another. This is God's judgment in eternity.



For the remainder of our present study we shall now consider briefly certain examples of God's judgment in history, as presented in the Bible.

There are a number of God's judgments, recorded in scripture, which can best be described by the word "exemplary". That is to say, judgments of this kind set forth God's attitude towards certain sinful acts or conditions in such a clear and dramatic way, that they constitute a warning to all those in succeeding generations who might be tempted to follow in sins of the same kind.

One clear example of this kind is provided by the judgment of God upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha in the time of Abraham. One of various New Testament passages referring to this event is found in the Second Epistle of Peter chapter 2, verse 6. Peter says here that God, **"turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample—or a pattern—unto those that after should live ungodly."** Here Peter states definitely that the sudden, dramatic, complete overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha was an example—a pattern—setting forth the attitude of God towards the sins of which these cities were guilty.

In Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 49, we find a very interesting account of the basic moral and social conditions which produced the decline of Sodom, for God says:

**Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy.**

God here specifies **four** basic causes of Sodom's moral decline:

1. pride;
2. fulness of bread;

3. abundance of idleness;
4. and a lack of concern for the poor and underprivileged in their midst.

Out of these basic causes there grew up that particular form of sexual perversion which has ever since been called by the name of "sodomy". The amazing accuracy of the Bible is once again confirmed as we observe how, in many of the great population centres of our modern civilisation, the same moral and social causes are producing the same forms of sexual perversion. The Bible does not suggest that this form of sin will in every subsequent case be visited with the same dramatic form of historical judgment; but it does teach that the unchanging attitude of God towards this form of sin has once for all been demonstrated by His judgment upon Sodom. In the light of this revealed judgment of God, all who thereafter turn aside into this form of sexual perversion are left without any excuse. Even though no open judgment of God may fall upon them on the scene of time, their judgment in eternity will be all the more severe on that account.

Another dramatic instance of God's exemplary judgments is provided in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, recorded in Acts chapter 5, verses 1 through 10. Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were what we should call "religious hypocrites". They sold a possession, and brought part of the price to the apostles as an offering to the work of God. This, by itself, was to be commended. However, their sin consisted in pretending that the money which they brought represented the full price of the possession which they had sold. They did this in order to gain the praise and favour of the apostles and their fellow Christians.

However, by the supernatural revelation of the Holy Spirit, Peter discerned their hypocrisy, and charged first Ananias, and later Sapphira, with lying and seeking to deceive the Holy Spirit. Such intense conviction of sin thus came upon them that each, in turn, fell down at Peter's feet, dead.

The effect of this dramatic judgment of God is described in Acts chapter 5, verse 11: **"And great fear came upon all the**

**church, and upon as many as heard these things.”**

Of course, there is no suggestion that God will always judge behaviour of this kind by professing Christians in such a swift and dramatic way. But the unchanging attitude of God towards lying and hypocrisy on the part of professing Christians is by this incident set forth as a warning to all succeeding generations of the church.

On a larger scale, the record of God’s people, Israel, from the time of Moses down to the present day, abounds with examples of God’s judgments in history. At the time when God first gave the law to Israel, before they ever entered into the promised land, God warned them, through Moses, of the judgments that He would bring upon them if they should thereafter turn away from Him in disobedience and rebellion.

One such passage of prophetic warning to Israel is found in Leviticus chapter 26, verses 14 through 45. God first warns Israel of various judgments for disobedience that He will bring upon them, while they are still in their own land. Then—in verses 27 through 33—He warns them that continued disobedience will bring upon them judgments yet more severe, by which they will be scattered abroad as exiles from their land:

**And if ye will not for all his hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me;**

**Then will I walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.**

**And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.**

**And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcases upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.**

**And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odors.**

**And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it.**

**And I will scatter you among the heathen, —or the**

**Gentiles—, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.**

Through the invasion of Palestine by the Roman armies under Titus in 70 A.D., and through subsequent invasions, every detail of this prophecy was exactly fulfilled in the experience of Israel.

In the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews there were reduced to such straits of hunger that they literally ate the flesh of their sons and their daughters. Thereafter, all their sanctuaries and religious centres were destroyed. Great numbers of the people were massacred; others were sold into slavery and scattered abroad as exiles. Gentiles from the surrounding countries moved in and took possession of the land thus left desolate.

In Leviticus chapter 27, verses 36 and 37, God goes on to warn Israel of their pitiful condition during the ensuing centuries of their dispersion amongst the Gentiles:

**And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.**

**And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.**

Once again, as we look back over the history of Israel, we see that every one of these prophecies has been fulfilled, over and over again, in the shame, the fear, the degradation, and the persecutions that have marked eighteen centuries of dispersal.

However, before the prophecy closes, God also gives a promise that His mercy will never be fully or finally withdrawn from Israel, for He says, in verse 44 of the same chapter:

**And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant**

**with them: for I am the Lord their God.**

Just as surely as God's warnings of judgment have been fulfilled, so has His promise of mercy been fulfilled, even in the midst of judgment.

Viewed thus in the light of prophetic scripture, the whole history of Israel becomes a demonstration on a worldwide scale of both the judgment and the mercy of God; for even in the midst of judgment God still delights to administer mercy.

Perhaps the most striking example in the Bible of mercy in the midst of judgment is contained in the story of Rahab, as recorded in chapters two and six of the Book of Joshua. From the standpoint of both background and environment, Rahab had everything against her. She was a harlot, belonging to a race appointed to judgment, living in a city appointed to destruction. Yet in humility and faith she dared to cast herself upon the mercy of God; with the result that she and her whole household were spared, and she herself, through marriage to an Israelite, became a member of the direct line from which the genealogy of Christ was derived.

Thus the case of Rahab proves that no soul is necessarily damned by background or environment. No matter how dark may be the background, or how corrupt the environment, personal repentance and faith on the part of any individual will cancel God's judgment and call forth His mercy instead.

We find, then, that history, illuminated by scripture, unfolds the outworking in human affairs of both the judgment and the mercy of God. Even in the midst of the severest judgments, the underlying purposes of God are still those of grace and mercy. For this reason, the scripture's revelation of God at work in history is summed up in Psalm 107, verse 43: **"Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord"**—more literally, "the covenant-keeping mercies of the Lord." For the believer, the supreme lesson of history is the revelation of God's unchanging faithfulness in working out His covenants of grace and mercy.

However, we must not make the mistake of supposing that full and final judgment upon all men's actions is administered upon the scene of time. Paul states this clearly in First Timothy, chapter 5, verses 24 and 25:

**Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.**

**Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.**

A similar warning is contained also in Ecclesiastes chapter 8, verse 11:

**Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

In these passages we are clearly warned that God's judgments are not fully revealed in time. This applies both to the punishment of the wicked, and to the reward of the righteous. For the full revelation of God's final judgments, we must pass beyond the scene of time and out into eternity.

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In our next study, therefore, we shall go on to examine the revelation of scripture concerning the final stage of God's judgment—that is, eternal judgment.





### III

## The Judgment Seat of Christ

*Christians Will Be Judged First—Not for Condemnation  
But for Reward—Works That Will Stand the Test of Fire*

Welcome to the Study Hour.

Our textbook—the Bible.

The study which we shall now bring you is Number 50 in our present series, entitled "Foundations".

We are at present engaged in examining that part of Christian doctrine which is called, in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 2, "eternal judgment".

In our previous study we pointed out that the judgment of God upon the human race is administered in two distinct and separate stages. The first of these stages is the historical judgment of God—that part of God's judgment which is carried out upon the scene of time and of human history. The second stage is the eternal judgment of God—that part which is carried out in eternity, after time and human history have closed.

The historical judgments of God are examples, or patterns, in which the unchanging principles of God's judgment are demonstrated and worked out on the scene of human history, in the experience of individuals, of families, of cities and of whole nations and civilisations. Upon this scene of history we observe again and again that the righteousness or wickedness of one generation may have a definite and manifest effect, for good or for ill, upon the course of succeeding generations.

However, we are clearly warned that God's judgments are not fully revealed or worked out upon the scene of time. This applies both to the punishment of the wicked and to the reward of the righteous. For the full revelation of God's final

judgments, we must pass beyond the scene of time and out into eternity. Here, in the eternal judgments of God, each soul will answer to God solely for his own character and conduct. No soul will be justified by the righteousness of another; and no soul will be condemned for the wickedness of another.

In our present study we shall now go on to examine the way in which, according to the revelation of the New Testament, the eternal judgments of God will be carried out.

The New Testament reveals three main, successive scenes upon which eternal judgment will be carried out. Each of these scenes is marked out from the others by one distinctive feature—that is, the type of seat upon which the Judge will sit while carrying out judgment.

In the first scene, the seat upon which the Judge will sit is called **"the judgment seat of Christ"**. Those to be judged here will be Christ's own followers and servants, the true Christians.

In the second scene, the seat of judgment is called **"the throne of Christ's glory"**. Those to be judged here will be the Gentiles remaining upon earth at the close of the great tribulation, prior to the setting up of Christ's millennial kingdom upon earth.

In the third scene, the seat of judgment is called **"a great white throne"**. Those to be judged here will be all the remaining dead who will be resurrected at the close of the millennium.

We shall begin by considering the picture given in the New Testament of the first of these three judgment scenes—that which is to be carried out before **"the judgment seat of Christ"**. As we have said, those to be judged here will be the true Christians. To some it may perhaps appear surprising that Christians are to be judged at all—even more so that they will be the first to be judged. However, this is in perfect agreement with a principle stated by the apostle Peter in his First Epistle chapter 4, verses 17 and 18:

**For the time is come that judgment must begin at the**

**house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?**

Here Peter, writing as a Christian, says that judgment must begin at "us"—that is, at "the house of God". It is obvious that by these two phrases he is referring to the true Christians. This is further confirmed by the fact that those thus referred to are contrasted with "them that obey not the gospel of God"—that is, with the unbelievers. Peter therefore clearly states here that the first judgment will be that of the true Christians.

The scene upon which this judgment of Christians will be carried out is referred to by the apostle Paul twice, in very similar language in two different passages of his epistles.

In Romans chapter 14, verse 10, Paul says:

**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.**

A little further on, in verse 12 of the same chapter, Paul continues: **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."**

In these two verses the phrase, "thy brother", which occurs twice, and also the phrase, "every one of us", make it absolutely clear that Paul is here speaking only about the judgment of Christians. Paul's thought is that, as Christians, we do not need to pass final judgment upon one another, because Christ Himself will do that upon each one, and each one of us will have to answer for himself to Christ. As always, where we are considering eternal judgment, it will be an entirely individual matter. This is stressed by the emphatic phrase which Paul uses: "every one of us"—that is, "each one of us individually".

Again, in Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 10, Paul uses very similar language to describe this judgment of Christians, for he says:

**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 he hath done, whether it be good or bad.**

Once again, both the language and the context make it plain that Paul is here speaking only of Christians. Again, too, there is the same emphasis upon the individual—"every one of us".

Paul also states plainly here that the things which will be brought up for judgment at this time will be "the things done in the body"—that is, the acts and the behaviour of each Christian during his life here on earth.

Paul further indicates that every act performed by a Christian while here on earth must fall into one or other of two categories—either "good", or "bad". There is no third category, no neutrality. Every act of a Christian has definite value of some kind—either positive, or negative. Every act that is not performed in faith and obedience, for the glory of God, is unacceptable to God, and therefore "bad". It is upon this simple basis, clearly revealed, that, as Christians, each one of us must expect to be judged.

In both these passages which we have examined, speaking of the place which Christ will occupy while judging Christians, Paul uses the phrase, "the judgment seat of Christ". The Greek word here translated "judgment seat" is "bema". This word suggests a raised platform, used for public address. In other passages of the New Testament, it denotes the place of judgment used by the Roman Emperor, or by one of his deputies, to hear and pronounce judgment on cases brought before them.

For instance, in Acts chapter 25, verse 10, when Paul exercises his right as a Roman citizen to be judged by the Emperor, he says: **"I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged."** The word which Paul here uses for Caesar's "judgment seat" is "bema"—the same which he uses elsewhere for the place from which Christ will judge all Christians.

What will be the nature of the judgment thus administered to

Christians by Christ upon His judgment seat?

In seeking to answer this important question, we must first of all state clearly and emphatically that this judgment of Christians conducted upon Christ's judgment seat will not be a judgment of condemnation.

This vitally important fact, that the true believer in Christ is cleared from all fear of final condemnation, is plainly stated in various passages of the New Testament.

For example, in John chapter 3, verse 18, we read:

**He that believeth on him (Christ) is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

Here there is a clear and sharp distinction. The true believer in Christ is not condemned: the unbeliever is condemned already, on the ground of his unbelief.

In John chapter 5, verse 24, Christ Himself gives the same assurance to each sincere believer:

**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.**

Here Christ gives a definite, three-fold assurance to every believer who accepts in faith His word through the gospel. Such a believer already has everlasting life; he has already passed from spiritual death unto eternal life; he will never come into condemnation.

In Romans chapter 8, verse 1, the same assurance of freedom from condemnation is repeated by Paul:

**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**

All these passages make it plain that true believers in Christ

will never have to face a judgment of which the outcome will be final condemnation. In fact, the true believer in Christ will never need to be judged at all for sins he has committed. When a person comes as a sinner in faith to Christ, receiving Him as Saviour and confessing Him as Lord, the whole record of that person's past sins is thereupon immediately and eternally blotted out by God Himself, never to be remembered any more.

This promise of God to the repentant sinner is given twice in two successive chapters of Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 43, verse 25, God says: **"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."**

Again, in Isaiah chapter 44, verse 22, God says: **"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins."**

Notice that in both these passages there is mention both of "sins" and of "transgressions". "Sins" are wrong acts that are committed without any necessary reference to a known law; "transgressions" are wrong acts committed in open disobedience of a known law. "Sins" are therefore compared to a "cloud", but "transgressions" to a "thick cloud". That is to say, "transgressions" are the darker of the two. However, God's grace and power are more than sufficient to blot out both the one and the other.

In a previous study we have stated that there is a complete record preserved in heaven of the life that every human soul leads here on earth; and we have compared the type of "book" on which this record is made to a modern electromagnetic tape. The parallel extends not merely to the way in which the record is made, but also to the way in which it may be erased. On a modern electro-magnetic tape, such as I am using for this broadcast, if there is any error made, this may be simply and completely erased in a few moments by running the recording head past that particular stretch of tape a second time. In addition, there is an instrument called a "bulk eraser" which can in a few seconds completely erase the whole recorded contents

of an entire tape. As a result of using this instrument, a completely clean, new tape is produced, on which a new message may be recorded, without any trace remaining of the previous message on the same tape.

So it is with the heavenly record of the sinner's life. When a sinner comes for the first time in repentance and faith to Christ, God applies His heavenly "bulk eraser". The whole record of the sinner's former sins is thereby instantly and completely erased, and a new, clean "tape" is made available, upon which a new life of faith and righteousness may be recorded. If at any time thereafter the believer should fall again into sin, he needs only to repent and confess his sin, and God erases that particular section of the record, and once again the tape is clean.

This provision of God for sins committed by Christians after they have come to know Christ as Saviour is stated by John in his First Epistle chapter 1, verse 9: **"If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

And again, in the same Epistle chapter 2, verses 1 and 2:

**My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.**

These passages teach that if a believer in Christ sins, and thereafter repents and confesses his sins, both he himself and the record of his life are completely cleansed and renewed through the merits and power of Christ's shed blood and atoning sacrifice.

This logically explains why the true believer in Christ need not fear that the result of judgment for him will be condemnation. God's provision to cleanse both the sinner himself and the record of his sins means that there will be no record of sin remaining, upon which any just judgment of condemnation could be based. Thus, as Paul says, **"there is therefore now no condemnation for them which are in**

## **Christ.”**

If, then, there is no possibility of final condemnation for the true believer, for what purpose will Christians be judged? The answer is that the judgment of true Christians will be not for condemnation, but for rewards. The true Christian believer will be judged not in respect of righteousness, but in respect of service rendered to Christ.

The reason why the believer will not be judged in respect of righteousness is simple and logical: the righteousness of the true believer is no longer his own, but the righteousness of Christ Himself, imputed to him by God on the basis of his faith.

This is stated by Paul in First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 30, where he says that Christ is by God **"made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."** Notice that: Christ Himself is by God made our righteousness.

Again in Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21, Paul brings out the same truth, for he says: **"God hath made him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."** Notice that: we are made **"the righteousness of God"** in Christ.

Obviously, where the believer receives salvation on this basis, it would be utterly illogical for God to judge, or even to call in question, His own righteousness, imparted to the believer.

We conclude therefore that the judgment of true Christian believers will deal not with their righteousness, but with their service rendered to Christ. The purpose of the judgment will not be to decide upon either acquittal or condemnation; but rather to assess the reward due to each believer for his service to Christ while on earth.

This judgment of believers for rewards is described by Paul in First Corinthians chapter 3, verses 11 through 15:

**For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid,  
which is Jesus Christ.**

**Now if any man build upon this foundation gold,  
silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;**



**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.**

Notice what Paul states clearly here: this is a judgment not of every man's soul, but of every man's work. Even if a man's works are totally burned up, yet his soul will be saved. The reason why such a man's soul is safe is stated by Paul in the first verse of this passage: **"other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."** This judgment concerns only those who have built their faith not upon their own works or their own righteousness, but upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His righteousness. So long as their faith remains unmoved upon this foundation, their soul is eternally safe.

So far as believers' works are concerned, we notice that these are here placed by Paul in one or other of two categories. On the one hand, there are: gold, silver, precious stones. On the other hand, there are: wood, hay, stubble. The basis on which these two categories are separated from each other is the ability to stand the test of fire. The items in the first category—gold, silver, precious stones—will be able to pass through the fire without being consumed. The items in the second category—wood, hay, stubble—will be consumed in the fire.

One thought immediately emerges from contrasting these two categories: quality is of infinitely greater importance to God, than quantity. Gold, silver, precious stones are all things that are normally found in small quantities, but are nevertheless of great value. Wood, hay, stubble are all things that take up much space and are obtainable in large quantities, but are of little or no value.

Just what is the nature of the fire by which the works of Christians will be tried?

Let us remember that the glorified Christ Himself will be

sitting upon His judgment seat, and that each one of us will stand directly before Him. We shall see Him then as John saw him in the vision of Revelation on the island of Patmos.

The central part of John's vision of the glorified Christ is recorded in Revelation chapter 1, verses 14 and 15:

**His head and his hair was white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;**

**And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.**

In this vision, Christ's feet like fine brass in a burning furnace typify the fires of tribulation and anguish in which He will judge the sinful acts of the ungodly; while His eyes like a flame of fire typify the penetrating and consuming insight with which He will judge the works of His own believing people. In the fiery rays of those eyes, as each one stands before His judgment seat, all that is base, insincere and valueless in His people's works will be instantly and eternally consumed. Only that which is of true and enduring value will survive, purified and refined by fire.

As we consider this scene of judgment, we may well ask ourselves each one, as Christians: How may I serve Christ in this life, so that my works will stand the test of fire in that day?

There are three points concerning which each one of us should examine ourselves. These three points are:

1. Motive;
2. Obedience;
3. Power.

First, we should examine our own motives. Do we do what we do to please ourselves, for our own satisfaction and glory? Or do we sincerely seek to glorify Christ and to do His will?

Second, we should examine ourselves on the point of obedience. Are we seeking to serve Christ according to the principles and the methods revealed in the Word of God? Or are we fashioning our own forms of worship and service, and then

attaching to them the name of Christ and the titles and phrases of New Testament religion?

Third, we should examine ourselves in respect of power. In First Corinthians chapter 4, verse 20, Paul reminds us: **"For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."** Are we seeking to serve God in the inadequacy of our own carnal will and strength? Or have we been renewed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, so that we can say like Paul, in Colossians chapter 1, verse 29: **"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily?"**

Upon the answers to these questions of motive, obedience, and power, will depend the issues of our judgment in that day when each one of us shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

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In our next study we shall continue to examine, in greater detail, the scriptural principles according to which Christian believers will be judged and rewarded.



## IV

# The Judgment of Christian Service

*How Christian Service Will Be Rewarded—The  
Parables of the Talents and the Pounds—Angels Will  
First Eliminate All Hypocrites*

Welcome to the Study Hour.

Our textbook—the Bible.

The study which we shall now bring you is Number 51 in our present series, entitled "Foundations".

We are at present engaged in examining that part of Christian doctrine which is called, in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 2, "eternal judgment".

In our previous study we pointed out that the eternal judgments of God will be carried out in three successive scenes.

The first scene will be the judgment of Christian believers before the judgment seat of Christ.

The second scene will be the judgment of the Gentiles at the close of the great tribulation, carried out before the throne of Christ's glory.

The third scene will be the judgment of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium, carried out before a great white throne.

Concerning the judgment of Christian believers before the judgment seat of Christ, we pointed out that this will be a judgment not for condemnation, but for reward. No true Christian believer need fear that the outcome of his judgment here by Christ will be final condemnation. The reason for this is that the righteousness of the true believer is not his own, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by God. So long as the

Christian's faith remains unmoved upon this foundation of Christ, his righteousness will not be called in question by God, and therefore the salvation of his soul will be assured.

Before this judgment seat of Christ it is not the believer's soul that will be judged, but his works. All the works of service to Christ performed during his earthly life will be passed in review, and will be submitted to the test of fire.

Only those works which survive the test of fire will be counted worthy of reward. All the rest will be burned up.

In our present study we shall now go on to consider in greater detail the principles according to which believers will be rewarded for their service. These principles are set forth by Christ Himself in the form of parables. The two main parables setting forth these principles of reward are the Parable of the Talents, and the Parable of the Pounds. The Parable of the Talents is found in Matthew chapter 25, verses 14 through 30; and the Parable of the Pounds is found in Luke chapter 19, verses 11 through 27.

The central theme of each of these parables is the same. Each concerns a man of wealth and authority, who commits a certain sum to each of his servants to administer on his behalf, and then takes a journey to a distant country. After a considerable lapse of time, this wealthy man returns, and proceeds to hold an individual reckoning with each of his servants as to the way in which each has handled the money committed to him. In each of these parables, three servants are mentioned individually: the first two to be mentioned are faithful in administering their master's money; the third is unfaithful.

In the parable of the talents, the distribution of the talents is described in Matthew chapter 25, verse 15:

**And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability....**

Notice that this verse reveals the principle according to

which the talents are distributed: **"to every man according to his several ability."** That is, God distributes to each believer the maximum number of talents that his own ability will permit him to use effectively. God does not give to any believer either more or less talents than he is able to use effectively.

In this parable the first two servants each achieved an increase of one hundred per cent. The servant who had received five talents gained five more; the servant who had received two talents gained two more. It would appear from the wording of the parable that the Lord assessed the faithfulness of these servants not by their net gain, but by their percentage increase. That is to say, the servant who gained five talents was not considered more faithful than the servant who had gained two talents, although his net gain in talents was greater. Rather, each of these servants was considered equally faithful, because each had achieved the same proportionate increase—that is, one hundred percent.

This is indicated by the fact that the words of commendation spoken to these two servants are precisely the same. The commendation of these two servants is recorded in Matthew chapter 25, verses 21 and 23, and exactly the same words are used in each verse:

**His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**

The fact that exactly the same words of commendation are used to these two servants would seem to indicate that each of them was considered by his lord to be equally faithful. Each of them had originally received the maximum number of talents that his ability would allow him to use effectively; each of them had achieved the maximum gain possible—that is, one hundred percent. It is on their faithfulness, as expressed in the percentage increase achieved, that their judgment is based. The fact that one had originally received five talents, and the other two, is not the basis on which their faithfulness is assessed.

In this parable of the talents, the third servant merely hid the one talent which he had received, and later brought it back to his lord in exactly the same condition in which he had received it. For this, he was not merely deprived of any reward, but he was also totally and finally rejected and cast out from his lord's presence.

The words of this third servant's condemnation and rejection are recorded in Matthew chapter 25, verses 26 through 30:

**His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:**

**Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.**

**Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.**

**For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.**

**And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

There can be no doubt whatever about the meaning of these words. This third servant not merely received no reward; he was actually deprived of the one talent which he had originally received, and he himself was totally and finally rejected and cast out from his lord's presence.

Let us now turn to the parable of the pounds in Luke chapter 19.

In this parable, ten servants are mentioned, although only the cases of three of them are described in detail. Originally, all ten servants received the same amount committed to them by their Lord—that is, one pound each.

Of the three servants whose cases are described, the first gained ten pounds; the second gained five pounds; and the third



merely hid his pound away, and eventually brought it back in the same condition in which he had received it.

It would appear that each of these three servants possessed equal ability, since each received the same amount committed to him. However, they were not equally faithful. The first gained twice as much with his pound as the second. For this reason, his reward was twice as great.

The rewards of these two servants are described in Luke chapter 19, verses 16 through 19:

**Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.**

**And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.**

**And the second came saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.**

**And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.**

We notice that, in two respects, the reward of the first servant was greater than that of the second. First of all, the first servant was specifically commended by his lord as a **“good servant”**; the second servant received no such special commendation. Secondly, the first servant was given authority over ten cities; the second servant was given authority only over five cities. That is to say, their rewards were in exact proportion to the increase which each had achieved.

One further conclusion which we may draw from this parable is that rewards for serving Christ faithfully in this present age will consist in positions of authority and responsibility in the administration of Christ’s kingdom in the following age. In other words, faithful service in the present age leads to continued and extended opportunities of service in the next age. For those who truly love Christ there can be no greater joy or privilege than that of continuing to serve their Lord. For those who are faithful, this privilege, begun here in time, will be

extended throughout the ages of eternity.

In this parable of the pounds, as in that of the talents, the third servant was unfaithful and failed to make any use at all of the pound committed to him. The words of his condemnation are recorded in Luke chapter 19, verses 22 through 24:

**And he saith unto him, Out of thy own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:**

**Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?**

**And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.**

In this parable, as in that of the talents, the unfaithful servant not merely received no reward; even the one pound which he had originally received was taken away from him. The final end of this servant with the one pound is not revealed in this parable. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that, like the unfaithful servant in the parable of the talents, he was totally and finally rejected and cast out from his lord's presence.

In both these parables alike, failure to make active use of the talent, or the pound, committed to each servant, is described by the very strong word "wicked". In each case, the lord commences his judgment of the unfaithful servant by the phrase, **"Thou wicked servant,..."**

From this we learn that, by God's standards, "wickedness" consists not merely in actively doing that which is bad, but just as much in the failure to do good, when it lies within our power to do it.

This is implied in the definition of "sin" given by the apostle James in his Epistle chapter 4, verse 17:

**Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.**

Here James explains clearly that "sin" consists not merely in doing that which we know to be bad, but also in not doing that which we know to be good. In other words, the sins of "omission" are not less serious than the sins of "commission".

The same thought is contained in a prophetic revelation of God's judgment given in Malachi chapter 3, verse 18:

**Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.**

Here we find a clear and sharp distinction made by God Himself between the "righteous" and the "wicked". The "righteous" are defined as those that serve God; the "wicked" as those that do not serve God. Once again, the lesson is plain: not to serve God is, in itself, "wickedness".

It was this "wickedness" that led to the condemnation and rejection of the unfaithful servant in each of the two parables which we have studied. In neither of these parables did the rejected servant do anything evil; in each case the ground of his rejection was merely that he failed to do the good which it was in his power to do. In both these parables, Christ clearly indicates that this same principle of judgment will be applied to all those who claim to be His followers and servants.

In our previous study, we examined the passage in First Corinthians chapter 3, verses 11 through 15, where Paul speaks about the Christian whose works are totally rejected and burned up in the fire of judgment, yet he himself is saved. On the other hand, in the parables which we have now considered, of the talents and the pounds, it appears that the unfaithful servant is not merely deprived of any reward, but he himself is rejected and cast out forever from his lord's presence.

This naturally leads us to ask an interesting and important question. What is the difference in God's estimation of these two cases? Why should it be that, in the case described by Paul, the man's works are rejected, yet he himself is saved; whereas, in the parable of Jesus, the unfaithful servant not merely loses

his reward, but is himself also rejected and cast out?

The difference would appear to be this. In the case described by Paul, the man actually did try to do something active for his master; in fact, the examples given of wood, hay, and stubble suggest that he did a great deal. However, his work was not of the kind or quality that would stand the test of fire. Yet this activity of his—though misguided, and unrewarded—did at least serve to prove that his actual faith in Christ was genuine; and for this reason the salvation of his soul was assured, even though his works were burned up.

On the other hand, the unfaithful servant with the one talent did nothing at all for his master—either good, or bad. This failure to act at all clearly showed that his profession of faith and service was vain and insincere. As James says in his Epistle chapter 2, verse 26, **"faith without works is dead."** A faith that does not result in activity of any kind is a dead faith; it is empty, worthless, insincere. Not merely does it fail to produce any works of service which can be rewarded; it even fails to secure for the one who professes it the salvation of his own soul. A person who professes faith in Christ without ever seeking to serve Christ actively is, in reality, a hypocrite.

For this reason, the judgment of such a person as this is to be cast **"into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** A careful examination of passages concerning similar judgments, in Matthew chapter 24, verse 51, and Luke chapter 12, verse 46, will show clearly that this place of outer darkness, with its weeping and gnashing of teeth, is the place reserved for the hypocrite and the unbeliever. The unfaithful servant who does nothing at all for his master must take his place in this same category: he is in reality a hypocrite and an unbeliever. The place appointed for him is outer darkness.

\* \* \*

This judgment upon the hypocritical servant leads us on to one further important conclusion in connection with the events

that will lead up to the judgment seat of Christ. Before the true Christians are ever admitted to the place of Christ's judgment seat, all hypocrites and false Christians will first be separated out from amongst God's believing people, and will receive the judgment due to them for their hypocrisy and falsehood.

This fact is clearly revealed in two parables concerning the kingdom of heaven, related by Jesus in Matthew chapter 13. These two parables are: the parable of the wheat and the tares; and the parable of the dragnet cast into the sea. In studying these, and also other parables in this chapter, it is important to realise that the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven", denotes the whole of professing Christendom here on earth, including both the true and the false believers. However, it does not include people who make no profession at all of faith in Christ.

The parable of the wheat and the tares is clearly and completely interpreted by Jesus Himself, in Matthew chapter 13, verses 37 through 43, as follows:

**He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;**

**The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;**

**The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.**

**As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.**

**The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;**

**And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

**Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

Here Jesus definitely teaches that the tares represent "the children of the wicked one"—the hypocrites, the false Christians

—growing up in the midst of the wheat, who represent the true Christians. He goes on to say that, in the judgment at the end of this age, the first thing that will happen is that the angels will sever out all false Christians from amongst the true, and will cast them into a place of fire, where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. Only after this has been done, **"then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."** In other words, the false Christians will first be separated out, and cast into a place of fiery judgment; then, after that, the true Christians will receive their open rewards.

The same truth is revealed also in the parable of the dragnet, in Matthew chapter 13, verses 47 through 50:

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:**

**Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.**

**So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,**

**And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

In this parable, the dragnet being drawn to the shore represents the whole of professing Christendom as it comes to the end of the present age. Within Christendom thus represented there are people "of every kind"—both "good" and "bad", both "just" and "wicked".

At the close of the age, the first thing that happens is that the angels sever out the "wicked" from the "just", and cast these wicked ones into a place of punishment. Only after that, do the "good" and the "righteous" go on to receive the blessings and rewards of eternity with Christ.

In this revelation we see yet another reason why the judgment conducted before the judgment seat of Christ will not result in final condemnation for any who appear there. Before this judgment by Christ Himself of the true believers takes place,

the angels will already have severed out and cast into a place of punishment all hypocrites and false Christians. Thus those who appear before Christ's judgment seat, to receive their rewards, will be only the true and righteous believers, the salvation of whose souls is eternally assured through their sincere faith based on Christ's own righteousness.

This process of severing out the hypocrites and false believers prior to the judgment of the true believers is prophetically referred to in Psalm 1, verses 4 and 5:

**The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.**

**Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**

In this prophecy, the ungodly are compared to the chaff, while—by implication—the righteous are compared to the wheat. Before the wheat is gathered into the barn, the chaff is first driven away. Before the righteous enter into their eternal reward, the wicked are first severed out from amongst them and cast out into a place of punishment.

For this reason, the psalmist goes onto say, the ungodly and the sinners will never be allowed to take their place in the judgment of the righteous—that is, before the judgment seat of Christ—nor will they thereafter ever be admitted to the congregation of true believers in eternity.

We may state this conclusion, more briefly, as follows: Only true, sincere believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Prior to this, by the intervention of angels, all hypocrites and false Christians will have been purged out and cast into a place of fiery punishment.

\* \* \*

In our next study we shall consider the two remaining scenes of judgment: that is, the judgment of the Gentiles before the millennium, and the judgment of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium.





## V

# The Last Two Judgments

*Israel's Special Judgment in the Great Tribulation—All  
Remaining Gentiles Judged Before Christ's Millennial  
Throne—The Final Judgment Before the Great White  
Throne*

Welcome to the Study Hour.

Our textbook—the Bible.

The study which we shall now bring you is Number 52 in our present series, entitled "Foundations". This will be the final study in this particular series.

In this study we shall complete our examination of that part of Christian doctrine which is called, in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 2, "eternal judgment".

We have already pointed out that the eternal judgments of God will be carried out in three successive scenes.

The first scene will be the judgment of Christian believers before the judgment seat of Christ.

The second scene will be the judgment of the Gentiles at the close of the great tribulation, carried out before the throne of Christ's glory.

The third scene will be the judgment of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium, carried out before a great white throne.

In our previous studies we have examined the first of these three scenes—that is, the judgment of Christians before the judgment seat of Christ.

In our present study we shall now go on to examine the two remaining scenes—that is, the judgment of the Gentiles at the

close of the great tribulation, and the judgment of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium.

Let us begin with the judgment of the Gentiles. This judgment is described in Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 through 46.

The actual scene on which this judgment will take place is brought before us in the first three verses of this passage—that is, in Matthew chapter 25, verses 31 through 33:

**When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.**

**And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:**

**And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**

In order to understand this passage correctly, it is necessary to clear up the meaning of the Greek word here translated "nations". This is the Greek word "*ethne*". In the King James version, this is sometimes translated "nations", and sometimes "Gentiles". It means, in fact, the members of all nations except Israel. In this particular passage, a more correct and literal translation of the first part of verse 32 would be: **"and before him shall be gathered all the Gentiles."** This brings out the important point that the Gentiles are not necessarily to be gathered here before Christ in large ethnic groups—for example, all the Germans in one place, all the French in a second place, and all the Russians in a third. The passage states merely that all the members of the Gentile nations—in other words, all Gentiles—will here be gathered before Christ for judgment. All these will be here be judged, not in groups as nations, but each one individually. This is in line with the principle which we have already established—that in every instance the eternal judgments of God concern individuals, not racial groups. Each individual will be required to answer solely for his own life and conduct.

In First Corinthians chapter 10, verse 32, Paul refers to three different groups which together make up the whole human race as reckoned by God in this present dispensation. Paul says here:

**Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.**

The Jews are a special nation, separated out by God for purposes of His own from all other nations. The Gentiles are all the remaining nations, except Israel. The church of God consists of all true believers who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ. These are no longer reckoned by God according to their original nationality, whether Jew or Gentile, but as being **"a new nation"** in Christ.

Now the scripture clearly specifies that the judgment which we are now considering, before the throne of Christ's glory, will be for Gentiles only. That is to say, no member of either of the other two groups will appear here for judgment. There will be no Jews, and no true Christians. This fact agrees with the general revelation of scripture concerning the close of this present age.

There will be no true Christians at this judgment, because all these will already have been raptured and will have entered into their reward, before this judgment ever takes place.

There will be no Jews present at this judgment, because by this time Israel, as a nation, will already have passed through her own special judgment, and all Jews who survive this special judgment, will have been reconciled to God through the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Messiah.

In considering this special judgment of Israel, it is interesting and important to establish two general principles, revealed in scripture, according to which God deals with the human race, in blessing and in judgment. These two principles may be briefly stated as follows. First, a principle of blessing: God normally blesses the Gentiles through the Jews, but He blesses the Jews direct. Second, a principle of punishment: God normally punishes the Jews through the Gentiles, but He punishes the Gentiles direct.

These two principles will direct God's dealings with the human race at the close of the present age.

First, in the closing stages of the great tribulation, God will judge and punish Israel, for the last time as a nation, through the instrumentality of the Gentiles. Then, when this final judgment of Israel is complete, God Himself will intervene directly in judgment and punishment upon the Gentiles.

This final judgment upon Israel, after they have returned as a nation to their own land, is described in Jeremiah chapter 30, verses 3 through 9:

**For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.**

**And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.**

**For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.**

**Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?**

**Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.**

**For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:**

**But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.**

Notice the order of events here foretold by Jeremiah.

First, God will bring Israel back to their own land.

Second, there will there be for Israel a time of national peril and distress, more terrible than any that they have previously passed through.

Third, the Lord Himself will eventually intervene against the "strangers"—that is, the Gentile persecutors of Israel—and will save Israel from them.

Fourth, the national kingdom of Israel will again be restored upon the throne of David, under the direct control and blessing of the Lord Himself. This period of the restored kingdom will be the millennium.

This final attempt of the Gentile nations to destroy Israel, and the direct intervention of the Lord to save them, are further described by the prophet Zechariah.

In Zechariah chapter 12, verse 3, the Lord says:

**And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.**

The same prophetic vision is continued in Zechariah chapter 14, verses 2, 3 and 4:

**For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle...**

**Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.**

**And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives....**

Here again we see clearly that the present age will close with a concerted attack against Israel and Jerusalem by the Gentile nations, but that the Lord himself will intervene to save Israel, and that this intervention will culminate in His personal return to the Mount of Olives—the very point from which He ascended into heaven at the commencement of this present dispensation.

As a result of this final period of national peril and distress, all rebellious elements will finally be purged out from amongst Israel, and those who survive this final purging will then be ready to be reconciled in repentance and humility with their

God.

This final purging of Israel by the Lord is described in Ezekiel chapter 20, verses 37 and 38, where the Lord speaks to Israel in connection with their return to their own land, and says:

**And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:**

**And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me....**

The phrase used here, to "**cause you to pass under the rod**", refers to the process by which a shepherd used to inspect each one of his sheep individually before admitting them to the fold. As a result of this purging process, all rebels will be purged out from Israel, and those who are left will be brought into a new covenant relationship with the Lord—that is, the new covenant through Jesus Christ.

This final purging process through which God will bring Israel is also described in Zechariah chapter 13, verses 8 and 9:

**And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.**

**And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.**

So terrible will be this final purging period of tribulation that only one third of all the Jewish people in the land of Israel will survive, but that surviving third will then be reconciled in mercy and forgiveness with the Lord.

The intervention of the Lord against the persecuting Gentile nations, and His final reconciliation with Israel, are further described in Zechariah chapter 12, verses 9 and 10, where the Lord says:

**And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to**

**destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.**

**And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born.**

It is the Lord Himself here speaking in the first person concerning Israel, and He says: **"They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced...."** Here is one of the clearest prophecies in all scripture of the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. However, at this point Israel will at last acknowledge their terrible error, and in great mourning and repentance they will be reconciled with their Messiah, whom they have so long rejected.

In the New Testament, this final reconciliation of Israel to God is described by Paul in Romans chapter 11, verse 26:

**And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.**

After Israel have thus passed through the fires of the great tribulation and been reconciled again to God through Jesus Christ, there will be no further need for God to judge them. Thereafter, when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom and takes His seat upon the throne of His glory, He will need only to judge the Gentiles remaining alive on earth at the close of the great tribulation.

At this judgment, those Gentiles who are counted worthy to enter the period of Christ's millennial kingdom upon earth, will be set by Him on His right hand, as the sheep, and will then hear Christ say to them: **"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...."** The kingdom thus described by Christ is His earthly kingdom of the millennium.

The Gentiles who are rejected by Christ at this judgment

will be set on His left hand, as the goats, and will hear Him say to them: **"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...."** They will be sent forth not to sheol, or hades, but direct to the place of final punishment of all the lost—the lake of fire. Into this lake "the beast"—that is, anti-Christ—and his false prophet will already have been cast.

The principle by which Christ will at this judgment divide the sheep from the goats is made plain. To the sheep He says, in Matthew chapter 25, verse 40: **"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."** Here we must understand the phrase "these my brethren" to denote the brethren of Jesus after the flesh—that is, the Jews. To the goats He says, in Matthew chapter 25, verse 45: **"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."** Here again, the word "these" must be taken as referring to the Jews.

During the close of the great tribulation, as we have already seen, there will be a general, organised persecution of the Jews. Those Gentiles who wilfully associate themselves with this attack against the Jews will for this be rejected in the judgment that follows. On the other hand, those Gentiles who, in the midst of the persecution, show compassion on the Jews, will for this be granted mercy in the ensuing judgment, and will be allowed to enter into the earthly blessings of Christ's millennial kingdom.

Thus we see that all those who are accounted worthy to enter into the period of Christ's millennial kingdom will have first passed through the refining judgments of God. First, Israel will be purged in the fires of the great tribulation. Then, at the close of the tribulation, the Gentiles will be purged by Christ's own direct intervention and judgment.

After these purging judgments upon both Jew and Gentile, there will ensue a thousand years of peace and plenty with Christ ruling as a king over all the earth.

At the close of this period of one thousand years, Satan will



make one final attempt to organise the Gentile nations in rebellion against Christ and His kingdom, but this rebellion will be brought to nought by the direct intervention of God.

At this time Satan himself will at last be banished for ever from earth and will be cast into the lake of fire, to join the anti-Christ and the false prophet, who will already be there.

With this defeat of Satan's last rebellion, all the rebellious amongst those living at that time upon earth will be purged out; and it will then remain to judge the dead of all previous ages. For this purpose, all the dead, who have not previously been resurrected, will at this time be called forth for judgment. In this way the scene will be set for the third and final phase of God's eternal judgment. This scene is described in Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 through 15.

**And I saw a great white throne, and him that 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, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of these things which were written in the books, according to their works.**

**And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.**

**And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

**And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Here is the ultimate end of all sin and rebellion against the authority and the holiness of almighty God: it is to be cast for ever into the lake of everlasting fire. Only those may escape this final judgment whose names are written in the book of life. The names recorded in this book of life are the names of those who have accepted the grace and mercy of God made available to man solely through faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. All

those believers who lived in the ages before the cross looked forward by faith to that atonement. All those believers who have lived since the cross have looked back by faith to the same atonement.

The only place of reconciliation between God and a sinful world is the cross of Jesus Christ. Apart from the cross, there is no other way of reconciliation to God. All those who have not come to God in faith through the cross of Christ can have no other claim upon God's mercy and forgiveness.

They must therefore be judged according to their own works, and on the basis of these works be rejected for ever from the presence of God.

At the close of this final judgment will be fulfilled the eternal purpose of God, through Christ, as revealed in Colossians chapter 1, verses 19 and 20.

**For it pleased the Father that in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell;**

**And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.**

These verses reveal that it is the final purpose of God to reconcile to Himself by the blood of Christ all things in heaven and in earth. However, this reconciliation does not extend beyond the confines of heaven and earth. It does not concern those who have been consigned to outer darkness and the lake of fire.

By the close of this final judgment, all those who have accepted by faith the propitiatory blood of Christ's cross, will be eternally reconciled to God. Conversely, all those who have not been reconciled in this way will be eternally rejected. Cast out from heaven and earth they must take their place in the lake of fire.

With this solemn revelation of God's Word, clearly setting forth the irrevocable and eternal destinies of both the righteous and the wicked, it is appropriate that we bring to a close this

series of studies, which we have entitled "Foundations".

In this series of fifty-two studies we have considered the following main topics:

First, the place of Christ Himself as the only true foundation of the Christian faith.

Second, the place of the Bible, as God's Word, in the life of every Christian believer.

Third, the six great foundation doctrines of the Christian faith, as enumerated in Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 and 2. That is: repentance from dead works; faith toward God; the doctrine of baptisms; laying on of hands; resurrection of the dead; and eternal judgment.

By means of this systematic study, we have thoroughly laid that scriptural foundation of doctrine upon which the faith of every Christian may be firmly built.

With this foundation laid, it then becomes possible to obey the further exhortation of Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1: **"Let us go on unto perfection."** That is, let us continue to build upon this foundation until we have achieved in our lives a completed edifice of Christian doctrine and practice.

The same Word of God which provides the needed foundation also shows us how we may go on to the perfection of the completed edifice.

Therefore, to all those who have followed with me in these studies, I will offer this final word of exhortation, taken from the lips of Paul, in Acts chapter 20, verse 32:

**And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.**

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