

## LESSON 13 - THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

*"The Kingdom is as a man . . . After a long time the lord cometh, and reckoneth with those servants . . . 'Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness'."*

THE previous lesson showed there is a great community from the ages, most of them resting in death, who await the divine verdict of approval or rejection. When and how will this verdict be given?

Some reply, *'The Lord knoweth them that are His'* (2 Timothy 2:19), implying therefrom that there is no necessity of standing at a judgment seat to answer; that the destiny of all is already settled in God's mind. It is true that God knows, but this does not exclude a set time and place of open, official inquiry and declaration, before the entire host of the "responsible" class who are assembled for this purpose.

### GOD'S WAYS MANIFEST HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

God does not presume on His foreknowledge to bypass arrangements that reveal to mankind His justice and His reasons. All His operations with mankind are designed to manifest and declare and teach. He knows the end from the beginning, and could leapfrog right to that end if He chose, but this would not accomplish His purpose as far as mankind is concerned.

Why, for example, did He allow a faithless generation of Israelites to escape Egypt under Moses' leadership, and had long patience with their wickedness and rebellion, before destroying them in the wilderness? Why didn't He just get rid of them summarily? He knew from the beginning they would be wicked and useless. We see much accomplished by the procedure He followed, both as to contemporary people and later generations.

So it is with the judgment seat.

And why did He so long forbear with the Jews in their constant obstinacy - foreknowing their rejection of all His messengers, and at last His Own Son? And why were such as Ananias and Sapphira brought into the presence of the apostles, and their guilt brought out by their own testimony, before they were destroyed? (Acts 5:1-11). Surely the reasonableness of the process is obvious: so with judgment.

There is also in operation here the very important Divine principle of free will and free choice. While God, through His foreknowledge, knows the end from the beginning, He does not interfere with operation of each person's free will and the ability to choose according to his or her conscience. Each person is responsible for their actions, good or evil; and it is essential to God's purpose that this principle is not restricted in its operation. When we become familiar with God's purpose, and know what pleases Him and what displeases him, we are RESPONSIBLE; and every responsible person will be judged upon the basis of how they have each exercised their free will in the choices which they have made in this life.

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### THE FAITHFUL WILL REJOICE THAT IT IS SO

It is true God knows, but is it not necessary that it should be openly demonstrated to responsible people the basis on which they were approved or rejected? Even apart from the intrinsic reasonableness of the matter, it is dangerous to argue otherwise, because it involves the rejection of a declared first principle of truth: the last day judgment by Christ at his return -- as was shown in the previous lesson.

To those who have, in this life, labored faithfully and patiently in the face of injustice and misrepresentation, it is comforting to know there will be at last an open, public, infallible tribunal to right all wrongs before all.

And it is comforting to know that between this unjust, sin triumphant, evil dispensation, and the glorious, just perfection of the Kingdom, there stands an ordeal and a scrutiny that will, to the vindication of God, prevent the entrance of anything that defiles, whatever its pretensions or claims of human prestige. Wrongful suffering will be avenged before all, unseen faithfulness will be openly acknowledged, unappreciated worth will be at last manifested, and all secret evil exposed and punished and held up to merited execration.

The object of the judgment is to mete out to each, whether good or bad, their just desert --

*"Many will say in that Day, Lord, Lord, etc. . . I will profess, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity" (Matthew. 7:22-23).*

*"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment" (Matthew. 12:36).*

*"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).*

### MANY PARABLES PORTRAY THE JUDGMENT SEAT

Another important line of evidence is in the parables of Christ. In many of them, he illustrates the relationship between himself and his servants, in connection with his departure for a period from the earth, and later return. Some examples will suffice to make the point:

1) The parable of the nobleman who went away to receive the authority of a kingdom --

*"When he was returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded his servants to be called . . . that he might know how much every man had gained by trading" (Luke 19:15).*

Note carefully that it was not just a matter of 'degrees of reward' (as so many contend, striving to get away from the divine truth of that searching tribunal). Rather it was a matter of acceptance or rejection: two servants were commended and rewarded; the third had what he already possessed taken from him (Luke 19:26).

2) The parable of the 'gathering of the servants to give an account': Two are again rewarded, and the third - the '*unprofitable servant*' - is '*cast into outer darkness*' (Matthew 25:30): no possibility here of misrepresenting it as mere 'degrees of reward.'

3) The parable of a king inviting guests to the wedding of his son (the '*marriage supper of the Lamb*' -- Revelation 19:9): When the guests were assembled, the king inspects them to make sure they are acceptably attired. One is found without a wedding garment, and is '*bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness*' (Matthew 22:14). Again, no mere 'degree of reward' but total rejection.

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4) The parable of the net cast into the sea: When it was full (the total calling completed), they drew it to shore and sorted the fish into good and bad -- '*casting the bad AWAY*' (Matthew 13:48) -- not just giving them a smaller reward.

5) The parable of the servants waiting for their Lord's return: The Lord came suddenly (as Christ so often warns he will), and found one unfaithful, and '*cut him in sunder*' (Luke 12:46) -- hardly interpretable as just rewarding him less.

6) The parable of the Ten Virgins awaiting the bridegroom: The bridegroom came; the wise go in with him to the marriage; the foolish are excluded and the door is shut; the bridegroom says to them through the shut door, '*I know you not*' (Matthew 25:12).

*'Many are called'* says Jesus, *'but few are chosen.'* (Matthew 20:16).

When and in what way are the "*chosen*" separated from the "*called*" ? These parables all answer --

*"He shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing and Kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1)*

### GOOD AND BAD RISE AND ARE JUDGED TOGETHER

Some say it is just the living wicked who are called to the judgment seat and punished: just the generation alive at Christ's coming. But Daniel and Christ are in specific agreement in testifying that when he comes the dead shall rise, some to glory, some to shame; some to life, some to condemnation (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29). Paul says:

*"Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness . . . then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Corinthians 4:5).*

The '*things of darkness*' and the '*praise of God*' are both made manifest at the same time -- when the '*Lord comes.*' Paul says further (2 Corinthians 5:10) that at the judgment seat of Christ (where we 'all' must stand) they are to receive in body 'good or BAD'. In his letter to the Romans he says (2:6,9,16) that 'well doing' will be rewarded with 'eternal life' and failure to obey will be rewarded with 'tribulation and anguish' at the same time --

*"In the Day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my Gospel."*

It is clear that the judgment seat of Christ is the great natural boundary line between probation and exaltation; the appointed time of revealing who is who, and separating the righteous from the wicked.

Christ's words, both at the beginning of his ministry (Matthew 7:22) and at the end (Matthew 25:37-44) show the issue is not known till then: the righteous are not assured of their acceptance till then, and the wicked are surprised at their rejection.

All, therefore, must stand at the judgment seat together in a physical condition susceptible of receiving eternal life or eternal death. They cannot be immortal until after having appeared at the judgment seat.

The idea, then, that the righteous dead spring from the grave immediately into an immortal existence (based solely on a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:52, '*raised incorruptible*') is out of harmony with the entire, oft repeated scriptural picture. Both good and bad are received '*in body*' (2 Corinthians 5:10, omitting incorrect italics) at the judgment seat.

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The 'raising incorruptible' is clearly a process -- INCLUDING the judgment.

## SOME "DIFFICULT" PASSAGES?

Not all passages will be as direct and straightforward as those we have just considered. When we encounter a passage that does not appear to be saying the same thing, before we jump to conclusions we must be careful to consider the context and subject matter of the passage. Recall the principles of Bible interpretation which we studied in a previous lesson. Let's look at a few examples:

Example #1:

*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

"The dead in Christ shall rise FIRST" appears to support the concept that the righteous dead rise before the unrighteous dead, the latter being raised at a later time. We have already seen, however, that they rise and stand before the judgment seat together. The 'rising first' here mentioned is in relation to the taking away of the living, as the context makes clear. Paul is concerned with the relationship between the righteous dead and the righteous living. He is not thinking of the wicked at all, who are very unimportant in the eternal divine scheme. He is assuring his mourning readers that the dead are at no disadvantage; they rise before the living are taken away. The wicked are ignored in many passages, as all throughout 1 Corinthians 15. This is reasonable, but they are mentioned enough to give the true picture, and their simultaneous rising and being judged with the righteous is clearly shown elsewhere.

Example #2:

*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:6)*

This may appear to be saying that if those who have part in the first resurrection are "blessed and holy", then the "wicked" do not rise. But there is nothing here to contradict the resurrection and judgment of the wicked. 'Having part' means to receive a reward and a portion in that resurrection, i.e., to be not turned away by Christ. The Bible teaches that there are two resurrections. The 'first' is the resurrection that occurs at Christ's return. The second resurrection takes place at the end of the 1000 years. Note verse 5 - The 'rest of the dead' who 'live not again till the 1000 years are finished' refers to all who die after the return of Christ during the 1000 year Kingdom age: that is, there is no further resurrection until the Millennium's end.

## WE MUST HARMONIZE ALL THE TESTIMONY

Example #3:

*...the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:52)*

When Paul says that the 'dead shall be raised incorruptible,' he is obviously not contradicting his own divinely inspired teaching elsewhere in scripture, and the words of Christ, that the dead shall be raised, assembled for judgment, judged and then (if worthy) rewarded with eternal life. It is important to note that he does not mention the judgment

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“When Paul states "the dead in Christ shall rise FIRST", he is not thinking of the wicked at all, but is assuring his mourning readers that the dead are at no disadvantage; they rise and are simultaneously judged with the living”

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in this chapter at all.

Is he presenting us with a different concept here than elsewhere? Of course not. We must harmonize all together, and make room for all aspects, though some are not mentioned here. To fill in the details, we must put the judgment into the place where he elsewhere says it belongs. Note v.45 (the "context") --

*"The first man Adam was made a living soul: The last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening spirit."*

If we did not have information from other sections of scripture, supplying us with the whole history of the **process** of Christ's birth and growth and life and death, following which the glorification into a '*quickenning spirit*' took place, we would naturally assume from this passage that he began as a '*quickenning spirit*,' just as Adam began as a '*living soul*.'

However, when we observe the complete picture as supplied through the harmonizing of passages, we will not fall into that mistake, because we pay attention to those details given elsewhere. Neither should we fall into the mistake of thinking '*raised incorruptible*' is an instantaneous event right out of the grave, bypassing the judgment seat of Christ. A brief, general statement does not ignore or exclude the involved particulars that are supplied elsewhere in scripture.

### NO "RESPONSIBLE" PERSON CAN ESCAPE THE JUDGMENT

Let us ever remember: There IS a 'Day' appointed when '*God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*' (Romans 2:16). None who possess the knowledge of God's purpose can escape it. All will be there whom God considers to have sufficient understanding of His will to be responsible and answerable and that is a determination only God can make in any individual case. Nothing then will be hidden. All the '*secrets of men*' will then be exposed to searching publicity and light -- except, of course, what has been truly repented of, and struggled against, and forgiven, and in mercy 'blotted out'.

This is a continual comfort to those constantly striving to be faithful and righteous and well pleasing to God. It should be a continual warning to those who have not put, and maintained, themselves in the position of faithfulness and righteousness. Total devotion and service in this so very brief day of probation will mean escape from the cold grave, escape from the terrible last day punishments of the disobedient, and glory and joy with God for ever and ever. Who could possibly be so foolish as to hesitate to make the choice? Tomorrow may be too late.

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Name Mr/Mrs/Miss .....

Address ..... Postal Code .....

\* You may need an additional sheet for your answers if there is not enough space below. Your answers to the following questions will help you - and us - to determine how much you have discovered about your Bible. Please return this form in the envelope provided even if you are unable to answer all the questions. On receipt of it we will forward a further study, as well as some

1. What principle of God's operation shows the reasonableness and necessity of Christ's open judging and rewarding of the assembled responsible?
2. Why did God not destroy the wicked generation in Egypt without explanation?
3. What case in the New Testament illustrates the principle of calling to account?
4. What sayings of Christ show that the verdict is not known to the recipients until after examination and judgment?
5. When shall we give an account of every idle word which we speak?
6. In what scripture passage does Daniel say the dead shall rise together, some to eternal life and some to shame?
7. In what passage does Christ say the dead shall rise together, some to life and some to condemnation?
8. In what scripture passage does Paul say we must all stand before Christ's judgment seat?
9. What 2 chapters in Luke, and 2 chapters in Matthew give parables representing Christ's return, judging the responsible and rejecting the wicked (nobleman, waiting servants, son's marriage, 10 virgins, talents)?
10. In what passage does Paul say, 'Judge nothing before THE TIME' (when Christ will come to bring to light both 'darkness' and 'praise')?
11. 'The dead in Christ shall rise FIRST' in relation to what others?
12. a) What does it mean to 'have part' in the first resurrection?  
b) Can one be raised at the 'first resurrection' without attaining a 'part' or reward in it?
13. Who are the 'rest of the dead' who do not live till the end of the 1000 years?
14. What is the reasonable principle of interpretation that prevents one from making the error of assuming that the dead emerge from the grave incorruptible?
15. a) When was Christ made a 'quickening spirit'?  
b) Would we learn this from 1 Cor. 15 alone?