

# The Judgment Seat of Christ

“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.”

II Corinthians 5:10

## Introduction:

1. Last Sunday we considered the positive motive of Jesus Christ’s love that drove Paul (II Cor 5:14-15), and today we consider the negative motive of Christ’s judgment that also drove him (II Cor 5:10-11).
2. When the world last saw Jesus, they judged Him guilty; when they see Him next, He will judge them.
3. Carnal believers and unbelievers alike don’t mind Jesus in a manger, doing miracles, or on a crucifix.
4. No one likes this subject, for it destroys their delusion that life is a game of chasing pleasure; so you will never hear anything about it; and most preachers today do not even believe in judgment and hell.
5. Men dread hearing the words, “You have cancer.” But that is nothing to these: “Depart from me!”
6. If I were to warn you of skin cancer, a bridge out, a bank failure, or a rapist in your subdivision, you would listen intently and take action accordingly; but I am telling you something far, far weightier.
7. And rather than warning you with fallible opinions of men, I am warning you with infallible Scripture.
8. Ted Williams died last week, one of the greatest hitters in the history of baseball, and the world mourns him like a hero. His great ambition for life was to be recognized on the street as the “greatest hitter who ever lived,” which is not something he is concerned about today. Trust the Bible and the glory of God!
9. Let us remind ourselves of the picture of this day the Lord wants us to have in our sight (Rev 20:11-15).

## **I. The PROMISE**

- A. Enoch early foretold the Lord coming in final judgment (Gen 5:21-24; Jude 1:14-15).
  1. Enoch refers to the angels coming with God as His saints (Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17).
  2. His prophecy declares judgment upon all but with the emphasis on the wicked.
  3. His arrival would convince all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds and words.
  4. Did Enoch please God by fearing judgment? Or did he fear judgment by knowing God? Or was he confident knowing of judgment by practical holiness?
- B. Solomon warned of final judgment when concluding his analysis of life (Ecc 12:13-14).
- C. Paul left Felix trembling as he reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, which is the right affect on sinners (Acts 24:25 cp II Cor 5:10-11).
- D. Roman governors or Greek philosophers, Paul spoke of final judgment (Acts 17:30-31).
- E. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give account (Rom 14:10-12).
- F. Elementary facts of the gospel include resurrection and eternal judgment (Heb 6:1-2).
- G. For it is appointed unto all men, since Eden, to die and then face judgment (Heb 9:27).

## **II. The PURPOSE**

- A. God made all things for His glory and pleasure from the beginning (Pr 16:4; Rev 4:11), and this includes the condemnation of the wicked in the day of evil, or judgment.
- B. God created for His own honor and glory, including the vessels of wrath (Rom 9:22).
- C. We do not yet see the display that He will make of Jesus Christ’s glory (I Tim 6:13-16).
- D. In that great day, Jesus will receive unprecedented honor (I Cor 15:24-28; Phil 2:9-11).
- E. The whole plan of redemption is not remedial for man, but revelatory for God Himself.
  1. God did not create, get surprised by sin, and then devise a way to salvage a few.
  2. God created in order to stage a holy, grand drama in which He gets all the glory.
  3. He is the great I AM, and He didn’t and doesn’t need us; and your actions do not take away or add anything to Him (Ex 3:14; Job 22:2-3; 35:6-8; Luke 17:10).
  4. This difference is profound in its affect on your worldview, and it is easy to know (Ps 115:3; 135:6; Is 46:9-11; Dan 4:34; Acts 15:18; Eph 1:3-12; Jude 1:4).

### III. The JUDGE

- A. God ordained the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Judge of the world (Acts 10:42; 17:30-31).
  - 1. Gentiles had great freedom prior to the gospel of coming judgment (Rom 2:16).
  - 2. God has given assurance of Christ's authority and judgment by His resurrection.
  - 3. Paul was not concerned about judgment passed on him by men (I Cor 4:1-5).
- B. God committed all judgment into the hands of Jesus Christ His Son (John 5:22-23,27).
  - 1. The Lord Jesus is the Judge of the quick and dead (II Tim 4:1; Romans 14:9-10).
  - 2. Jesus received this high office as reward for His humility (Phil 2:9-11; Is 52:13).
- C. Jesus Christ is most fit to be the Judge of all (Heb 1:9; 2:14,17-18; 3:2; 4:12; etc., etc.).
- D. Jesus Christ shall show His glorious power and honor at His appearing (I Tim 6:13-16).
- E. The saints themselves will be involved to some extent in the judgment (I Cor 6:2-3).
- F. Godly men in this Judge's Presence do not feel godly, as Peter (Luke 5:8), John (Rev 1:17), Isaiah (Is 6:5), Job (Job 42:5-6), Joshua (Josh 5:13-15), and Moses (Heb 12:21).

### IV. The TIME

- A. It is described as a day – a point in time – that is in the future (Matt 7:22; 10:15; 11:20-24; 12:36; Acts 17:31; Rom 2:5,16; II Peter 2:9; 3:7; I John 4:17; Jude 1:6; Rev 6:17).
- B. Paul taught that the judgment would take place at Christ's appearing, for which we patiently wait (I Corinthians 4:5; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; II Timothy 4:1,7-8).
- C. John saw the judgment occurring at the power and kingdom of Christ (Rev 11:15-18).
- D. The final judgment by Jesus Christ is no longer lingering or slumbering (II Peter 2:3).
- E. It will be at the end, when Jesus Christ comes to put down all rulers (I Cor 15:23-28).

### V. The JUDGED

- A. All men of every sort without exception shall be found at the final judgment of Christ.
  - 1. It is appointed to men once to die, and then they must face judgment (Heb 9:27).
  - 2. John saw the dead both small and great – social position is no help (Rev 20:12).
  - 3. Every one resurrected will face a final judgment by Jesus Christ (John 5:28-29).
  - 4. Solomon applied it as an axiom of life for all men to consider well (Eccl 12:14).
- B. Both the righteous and the wicked shall be judged before Christ at this great day.
  - 1. Jesus told of righteous and wicked being separated before Him (Matt 25:31-46).
  - 2. John saw the final judgment with both wicked and righteous (Rev 11:15-18).
  - 3. Since good works are included, the righteous are there (Ecc 12:14; Rom 2:7,10).
  - 4. Paul included himself and saints in judgment (Rom 14:10-12; II Cor 5:10-11).
- C. The devil and his angels will also be judged (Matt 8:29; II Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 20:10).

### VI. The JUDGMENT

- A. Men shall be judged for their works (Romans 2:6; II Cor 5:10; Rev 20:12-13; 22:12).
  - 1. The character of both kinds of men as a general rule are by works (Rom 2:6-11).
  - 2. While evil works damn our souls, good works cannot save our souls (Ro 11:6).
  - 3. The good works of the righteous cannot be meritorious but rather confirmatory, and they will be remembered and identified (Matt 25:31-46; Ps 15:1-5; 24:3-6).
  - 4. The righteous will not receive the just condemnation for the things done in their bodies, but rather the painful disclosure and summary of our use of His grace.
  - 5. Elect are not saved by works, but they are not saved without them (Matt 7:21).
  - 6. If sin is found in a man, he shall have his part in the lake of fire (Rev 21:8).
  - 7. No sin shall be found worthy of condemnation in the elect by the Book of Life.

- B. Every idle thought and secret thing (Eccl 12:14; Mat 12:36-37; Luke 12:1-2; I Cor 4:5).
  - 1. The folly of youth shall be judged, though it is ever so pleasant (Eccl 11:9-10).
  - 2. Small things you consider insignificant will be important then (Eph 5:3-7).
  - 3. Secret things you thought were well hid from all will be seen (Romans 2:16).
- C. Jesus Christ will give true and righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 32:4; John 5:30).
  - 1. You will not be able to talk your way out of His judgment (Matthew 7:21-23).
  - 2. Even if the righteous forget their good works, the Judge will not (Mat 25:37-39).
- D. This judgment is final; there is no parole, probation, or second chances (Rev 20:14-15).
- E. Jesus does not need a trial or judgment to determine the character or destiny of any.
  - 1. It will be the formal display of the righteous judgment of God (Rom 2:5; 9:22).
  - 2. It is not a fact finding trial but rather a manifestation of facts already known.
  - 3. It will be the supreme and public display of the righteousness and grace of God.
  - 4. It will be public to display Christ's glory (Pr 16:4; Rom 9:22-24; I Tim 6:13-16).
- F. It will rectify all "inequities" of life (Ps 17:13-15; 73:17-20; Luke 16:25; I Tim 5:24-25).
- G. There will be just degrees of punishment and reward, according to the righteous equity of a holy God (Matthew 11:20-24; 23:14; 25:14-30; Luke 12:47-48).
  - 1. God is absolutely righteous, just, and perfect and will not violate His character.
  - 2. Our time of probation here and use of God's grace will be judged (I Cor 15:10).
  - 3. Paul refers to judgment of ministers varying from salvation and a reward to bare salvation through the fire of trial and judgment (I Cor 3:12-15 cp 4:1-5).
  - 4. While all the redeemed will be able to sing of Christ's redemption of their souls, this does not preclude their consciousness of having failed to serve Him better.
  - 5. Our conduct here dictates how we face Christ on His throne (I John 2:28; 4:17).
  - 6. Consider heaven as Abraham's bosom and Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ on the mount of transfiguration. Will they not have honor in heaven?
  - 7. Consider the four and twenty elders. Whomever they may represent or actually be is not as important as how they are distinguished from the rest of the saints.
  - 8. In His kingdom here and now, Jesus makes differences in honor; why not then?

## VII. The DELIVERANCE

- A. The book of life will be the salvation of those for whom Christ died (Revelation 20:15).
  - 1. The legal evidence of redemption will be declared formally for final redemption.
  - 2. While every man will need the book of life for salvation, men will vary in service; so therefore they will receive more or less honor from Christ in heaven.
- B. The first resurrection guarantees deliverance from the horrible second death (Rev 20:6).
  - 1. It is not our good works exceeding our evil works, but rather the work of Christ.
  - 2. If we have been born again and had the fruit of Christ, we need not fear that day.
- C. Paul was confident of Christ as His Surety for this coming day of wrath (II Tim 1:12).
  - 1. Paul's confidence in God was such that He was not afraid of the final judgment.
  - 2. Paul was persuaded that God would faithfully preserve his soul in that great day.
- D. Jesus will come without sin unto salvation to those looking for Him (Hebrews 9:27-28).
- E. Paul describes that day as one where we admire Christ and glorify Him (II Thess 1:10).
- F. John, who may have seen the most, was not fearful of that great day (Revelation 22:20).
- G. The execution of judgment against the righteous goes no further than the chastening we receive here, which is the evidence of escaping condemnation then (I Cor 11:30-32).

## VIII. The OBJECTIONS

- A. How can the righteous be judged for their sins when they are redeemed and pardoned?
1. We are redeemed and pardoned now, but God still sees us as sinners practically and chastens us severely to bring us to repentance and fellowship (Heb 12 5-16).
  2. Redeemed and pardoned, we still confess for practical forgiveness (I John 1:9).
  3. Though God forgave David one way, He judged him in another (II Sam 12:13).
  4. It will not be a judgment of condemnation for saints, but rather one of salvation.
  5. We must rightly divide the word of truth. We deny neither pardon nor judgment.
    - a. We divide legal satisfaction at Christ's death from its final declaration.
    - b. We divide vital perfection at regeneration from our final glorification.
  6. There will be sufficient consciousness of sin, even in heaven, for us to remember and praise Christ for His glorious redemption (Rev 5:9; Eph 2:7).
  7. The judgment of the righteous will be no more than an accounting of what they have done in their bodies in conjunction with being declared righteous in Christ.
  8. A man with eternal life has been passed from death unto life and shall not come in condemnation, but this does not prove an escape from judgment (John 5:24).
  9. There are stages in our legal process of arraignment, judgment, sentencing, and execution, during which a person may be held in prison for quite some time.
  10. The five phases of salvation and condemnation clear up confusion (II Tim 2:15).
- B. Would not judgment of the righteous contradict promises God made of their salvation?
1. God said He will not remember our sins and iniquities (Heb 8:12). God has removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). God has declared us free from condemnation (Rom 8:1). There is nothing to lay to our charge (Rom 8:33). Jesus said, "It is finished," (Jn 19:30).
  2. These promises are true legally, but we are still responsible for sins practically.
    - a. These promises are true for 2000 years, but we are still practical sinners.
    - b. The gospel still warns us of sins and sinfulness (Col 3:5-11; Rom 7:17).
    - c. God sees our sins, and He remembers and chastens us (I Cor 11:29-30).
    - d. Read the warning of those denying present sin and sins (I John 1:8,10).
  3. Jesus Christ abolished death 2000 years ago (II Tim 1:10), but the last enemy to be formally destroyed is death (I Cor 15:26). See death both legally and finally, as Jesus has destroyed the power of death in sin, but He has not yet glorified us.
  4. Jesus Christ destroyed the devil at His death (Heb 2:14), but he will not be formally and absolutely consigned to torment until the judgment (Rev 20:10).
- C. Shall the righteous return from heaven to stand trial for their sins before Jesus Christ?
1. This is no greater difficulty than confident saints here yet facing Christ as Judge.
  2. The wicked will be raised from hell to hear their formal sentencing for eternity, as they are presently held in prison there (I Peter 3:19 cp Revelation 20:13).
  3. The judgment will take place with both righteous and wicked reunited to their bodies in which they will either enjoy or suffer the sentence of their judgment.
  4. The devils are reserved unto judgment, but they shall still receive official and final sentencing at the judgment seat of Christ (II Pet 2:4; Jude 1:6); even though so reserved to judgment, they know a definite time is coming (Matt 8:29).
  5. Until this judgment takes place, even the righteous in glory have not heard the formal announcement by our Lord of their righteousness and salvation from their sins by His blood. Consider Abel hearing Jesus own him as His brother.
  6. This is the great and ultimate end of redemption, and the salvation of the saints would not be complete or proper without the full, formal declaration of it.

7. Though we have an inheritance reserved in heaven for us, all the elect shall receive it formally in that great day (I Pet 3:3-5; Eph 1:8-12; Matt 25:34).
  8. There are stages in our legal process of arraignment, judgment, sentencing, and execution, during which a person may be held in prison for quite some time.
- D. Does not God judge men providentially during this life, rather than at some future day?
1. God does judge men practically, but phases of judgment are not mutually exclusive (Judges 1:7; I Sam 6:19; II Kgs 19:35; Job 21:22; Ps 9:16; Rev 2:22).
  2. Severe judgment came upon Israel and Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but a great judgment is coming (Mal 4:1-6; Matt 3:10-12; Luke 19:42-44; I Thess 2:15-16).
  3. Verses describing practical judgment must be known (Matt 16:27; I Cor 11:32).
- E. Those who reject the judgment of the elect at the judgment seat of Christ slip into error.
1. First, they ignore or corrupt plain Scriptures saying Paul and the elect are there.
  2. Second, they start down the road of Fatalism and Antinomianism, both heresies.
    - a. Fatalists exalt God's sovereignty until man is no longer responsible.
    - b. Antinomians exalt grace until good works are neither good nor needed.
  3. They don't express or live the urgency for Paul's resurrection (Phil 3:8-11).
  4. They don't express or live the urgency of the faithful witnesses (Heb 11:35).
  5. Why are the rich to lay up a good foundation, unless it is judged (I Tim 6:19)?

## **IX. The RESULTS**

- A. There are two resurrections at the same time with very different results (John 5:28-29).
- B. The righteous will enter into everlasting bliss as the children of God (Matthew 25:34).
- C. The wicked will be cast into everlasting torment as the enemies of God (Matt 25:46).
- D. How about things the eyes, ears, and mind of man cannot comprehend (I Cor 2:9)!
- E. You will appreciate Jesus Christ then like you have never appreciated Him here.

## **X. The APPLICATION**

- A. Paul's knowledge of the coming judgment led him to persuade men (II Cor 5:10-11).
- B. Peter wrote that coming judgment should greatly influence our lives (II Peter 3:10-14).
- C. John wrote of fear, hope, and love perfecting our conduct at His coming; but he also wrote that shame and fear could be ours, if we live foolishly (I John 2:28; 3:1-3; 4:17).
- D. If a man truly saw this day by faith, he would be as diligent as Paul in pleasing God.
- E. Our lives are not ours: we owe our Creator, Preserver, and Savior all we are and have.
- F. Paul carefully warns against that day catching us as a thief (I Thess 5:1-11). So beware!
- G. Consider the attitude and actions of the righteous toward His coming (II Thess 1:10; I Thess 1:10; Heb 9:28; Phil 3:20; II Tim 4:8; Titus 2:13; II Peter 3:12; Rev 22:20).
- H. What does "The Book of Life" mean to you (Luke 10:20)? See the sermon by that title.
- I. We must be, from this day henceforth, conscious of thought, attitude, word, and deed being raised before the awful judgment seat of Christ and exposed to His and our minds.
- J. There are things we can do to prepare for this coming day (I Tim 6:19; II Pet 1:10-11).
- K. We cannot presume by our works (Matt 7:22), and we should rather confess we are unprofitable servants who have done only what was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).

### **Conclusion:**

1. If you are playing with sin, you must soberly think about the evidence of death and/or coming judgment.
2. No one who casts their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ shall ever be ashamed (Romans 9:33; 10:8-11).
3. Let us assemble this evening to consider, remember, and praise the Lord Jesus for His redeeming death.