

Judgment Day

What About the End?

There is a day set into God's Great Plan when all who ever lived will see God's glory revealed, and His Son will preside in judgment to determine the eternal fate of each individual (Acts 17:30-31). Even Satan and his demons know about that date (Matthew 8:29). Abraham, the father of all faithful, looked forward to the time of his reward. And Paul prepared himself to receive the crown of victory, designed for all the faithful and presented on that day (2 Timothy 4:8). That day follows the return of Christ and the destruction of the material universe. It heralds the beginning of eternity, unimaginable joy for the faithful and undiminishable suffering for the unfaithful. It is the day of judgment spoken of by Jesus and the Holy Spirit (John 5:26-29).

Many who are alive today are looking for the day when Christ comes to set up His kingdom on earth. But they are wrong. Peter said, *"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"* (2 Peter 3:10). With the earth gone, all that remains is the spiritual realm. There will only be two places to go, hell or heaven which are described as *"everlasting punishment and eternal life"* (Matthew 25:46). Each person chooses their destinations while the spirit remains in the body.

Some believe God is too good and loving to punish with eternal suffering. They quote (John 3:16) as though it were the only verse in the New Testament. But God's love and mercy are also just. His justice and righteousness provide punishment to those who deserve it equal to the rewards of those who are granted everlasting life. *"It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed"* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10).

Jesus presented a lesson that included two kinds of death. The condition of being dead in sin and the state of being dead without life in the body. (John 5:24-29). Jesus said that those dead in sin would hear the saving word of God and have a choice to listen to it, obey it and live, or ignore God's word. He said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live"* (John 5:25). Jesus also said that He had been given the responsibility to judge between all people, including those in the grave. Those who refused to obey God will continue, separated from God throughout eternity. The obedient however, will inherit eternal life. If one is not condemned now, he or she will not be condemned on judgement day (Revelation 2:11, 20:6, 20:14). The one who hears, believes, and obeys God's word is justified (Romans 5:1), declared not guilty because Christ has paid the penalty for their sins on the cross.

Jesus said that many would claim to be righteous but are not. *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"* (Matthew 7:21-23).

Jesus explained righteous judgment to His disciples by parables like the three in Matthew 25. Earlier, He explained the parable of the harvest this way, *"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* (Matthew 13:41-43). Jesus further explained that judgment applied equally to everyone. *"The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation"* (John 5:28-29).

On Judgment Day, will you hear these words from the judge? *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord"* (Matthew 25:23).