

THE STORY OF MAN'S DESTINY #4

"JUDGMENT DAY" (CONT'D)

INTRODUCTION.

This lesson continues our study of "Judgment Day". There are several additional scriptures that speak of "judgment", that we need to consider and incorporate into the study.

First, let us briefly review what we have already seen about this subject.

a. We presented the traditional concept of judgment which teaches that every human being of all time will be brought before a "judgment bar", where the righteous will be brought down from heaven and the wicked up from hell, and judged again as to their eternal destiny. We pointed out the inconsistency of this.

b. We learned that the assignment of a penalty for sin as well as the execution of that penalty, are both expressed as "judgment".

c. We identified many times in the Bible where judgment was visited upon people. Examples were: Antediluvians, Sodomites, Judah, Ahab, etc.

d. We saw that Adam and Eve were judged as guilty of violating God's law in the garden and a full execution of the assigned penalty was carried out upon them. They were judged at that time; not in some future time.

e. We saw in Rom. 5:18, that judgment *came* (in the garden) upon all mankind through Adam's disobedience. That is, through Adam, we have (already) been judged as sinners and we have (already) been sentenced to the penalty of death.

f. From Jn. 3:18, we learned that we are already condemned (judged) if we have not believed in the saving grace of Christ.

g. Finally, we have seen that all mankind is already judged (as sinners) through the transgression of Adam, and the only hope for us is a pardon from our "sentence of death" by the right and power of Jesus Christ. And he has promised a complete pardon on the condition of our complete faith in him and his work of atonement for whosoever believeth in him.

AN APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH. HEB. 9:27.

Heb. 9:27, reads: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment". This is a verse of scripture that is most often referred to in support of a future judgment day. So much has been read into this verse that simply is not there. Let's examine it carefully to see just what it does say.

Prevailing theology reads this verse to say: "We die and after this we are judged". That is not what it says. Further, proponents of a future judgment bar don't really believe that after you die, then comes the judgment. What they really believe is: "After a resurrection comes the judgment event". But the verse says nothing about a resurrection. The verse reads: "it is appointed once to die". It is not saying that it is appointed that some time you will die. Rather, it is saying: "there was a time when it was appointed that we would die". The action of this verse is "the appointment", not the dying. You only need to certify when this appointment with death was issued. The only obvious answer is that it was appointed in the Garden of Eden. So, in reality the verse reads: "It was appointed in the garden that we would die, and subsequently it was carried out or executed". Isn't that exactly what happened? It was when Adam sinned against God that he was (then) appointed to die. He did not have to wait until some future date to learn that death was his appointment. Following this appointment of death upon Adam, it was carried out. Adam lived 930 years and he died. If the "judging" process (of determining our guilt or innocence) has not already taken place (in the garden) then why are we (already) condemned as sinners and why do we die? There is only one rational answer to the question. The court (of God's divine will) has already convened; we are already found guilty and the verdict has been rendered. Subsequently, the sentence has been carried

out on the entire human family ever since. You do not try someone the second time for the same offense as orthodox theology requires. It teaches that after you die, you are sentenced to a life of bliss or a life of torment. Then, at the last day of time, calling you back from your (already assigned) eternal abode (of palace or punishing), you have to stand trial all over again to see if the former judgment was correct. Shall we charge God so foolishly?

We have an appointment with death. It was determined in the garden. It is irreversible, except in the case of the “governor’s pardon”. Sin is the reason for the appointment. In Adam we all die. The wages of sin is death. There is no discharge in that war. We are condemned already if we do not believe on the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18). Through one man’s offense, “judgment came upon all men to condemnation”. (Rom. 5:18). But to those who believe: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Rom. 8:1. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 5:1. Through the wonderful grace of God, the judgment of death can be set aside and we are given new life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

II Cor. 5:10. 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. This is a very powerful verse of scripture regarding our lives and actions as professing Christians. If we understand its application, we will be much more committed as to how we conduct ourselves in the church of God. The question this verse raises is this: What and where is the judgment seat of Christ and when do we appear before it?

To help us understand this verse, let us first look at a time in Paul’s life that is described in Acts 18:12, and Acts 25:10. In these verses, Paul is standing before a judgment seat. In Acts 18, he is preaching in Corinth, and the Jews, angry and upset, bring him “before the judgment seat of Gallio”. In Acts 25, standing before Festus, Paul said that he stood before Ceasar’s judgment seat. In each case, he was before a ruler of a province with authority to pass judgment on violations of Roman law. In Acts 25, he was before Festus at Caesarea. Ceasar was in Rome, but the authority of Festus in Caesarea, derived solely from Ceasar in Rome. The point is that Paul was before the authorized place that could rightly judge his case. The Jewish religious tribunal had no authority over him, he being a citizen of Rome. Paul had appealed to Ceasar himself, as was his legal right as a Roman citizen, and thus he was ultimately carried to Rome to appear before him. Nero was Ceasar at that time.

Our verse of scripture (II Cor. 5:10), requires that we (Christians) must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. With this in mind, let me call your attention to I Pet. 4:17. “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? It is very important that we clearly understand the expression: “judgment must begin at the house of God”. The prevailing understanding of judgment is generally believed to be someone uttering forth a pronouncement of some form of chastisement or castigation against some perceived violation. Preachers often use a “fist - pounding - emphasis” to denounce the practice of some sin. (And sin surely needs denouncing). However, the best possible way for “judgment to begin at the house of God”, is for church members to live discreet, holy, obedient lives before a world of sin. Noah built an ark and lived righteously and it condemned the world.

In Jn. 12:48, Jesus said: “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”. And where is this word that Jesus has spoken? In the church and only in the church. There is no other voice of “judgment” except that of the truth of the gospel, declared through the auspices of the church. The church is the body of Christ; Christ is the head. The “judgment seat of Christ” is in and through the church and the proclamation of the eternal gospel through and by the church of the living God. There is no other message, instruction, “law”, or plan of life, except through the gospel of the Lord Jesus in the church. I call your attention to Mt. 16:19, where Jesus told Peter that whatsoever he would bind on

earth would be bound in heaven: and whatsoever he would loose on earth would be loosed in heaven. Jesus was not anointing Peter with a kind of papal authority to personally rule earth and heaven. He was speaking of the preaching of the gospel of Christ, that it was the sole rule, judge and authority in his kingdom.

Now let us consider this principal of “the church being the judgment seat of Christ”, that we must all appear before. First, consider a very extreme and awesome example. It is found in Acts 5:1-11. Ananias and Sapphira both lied about the amount of money they said they were giving to the church. Both of them died immediately and were buried. Peter was the spokes person, addressing their gross sin, early in the beginning of the church where purity and holiness should reign. In other words, they were before the judgment seat of Christ, then and there.

Next, consider the letters of Paul to the Corinthians. Many troubles, conflicts, divisions and sins were in this church (and all others to this day). Paul’s letters to them was the inspired word of God relating to their spiritual needs. In other words, the judgments (counsel and wisdom) of God for their needs were in those letters to the church. They stood before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in their bodies (relative to their obedience to the gospel). And thus it is with all the other scriptures, given for reproof, correction, exhortation, justification, etc. There is no condemnation applicable, except that of the word of God. Neither is there any justification other than that authorized by the word of God.

Finally, the practical application of II Cor. 5:10, to you and I, is, I believe, as follows. We are already judged as sinners if we are out of Christ and we are sentenced to die for our sins. If we come to Christ, and are saved by his atoning power in our hearts, in response to our faith and obedience to the gospel, then we are translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. In his kingdom, our lives are ever and always before his throne of grace, from which the gospel is mediated. If we obey it, we are justified. If we disobey it, then just like Adam, we are judged by it. When you choose to disobey a principal of the gospel, such as gossiping, prayerlessness, unfaithfulness, etc., then the inevitable results are that God’s message of truth will hold you accountable for it. It is universally so. That is where the judgment seat of Christ is: through his word in the church. And we (Christians) must appear before it for the mediation of the judgment of Christ for our lives. Where else would you suggest that a Christian must come for accountability for the conduct of life.

The church should be very careful here not to fall into the same error as the dark-age church which came to believe that it had divine jurisdiction over the state and all of the affairs of men, even those who were not a part of the “organized church” as it was then known. First of all, God’s domain is within the church and that is where this judgment seat is and that is where this exercising of divine proclamation of God’s saving justice is to take place. In addition God does have ultimate rule and disposition over the unbelieving world. That is already judged and condemned as we have repeatedly shown. And a final execution of divine judgment is certainly in store for a world of intolerable, irreconcilable wickedness. The best frame of reference for this judgment seat of Christ is to consider what should take place every Sunday morning in pulpits. There the revealed message of God for his people should be proclaimed. It may be evangelical in nature or pastoral, instructional or even one of correction or reproof. Be that as it may, and as foolish as it may seem, (ICor. 1:17-24) God has chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. His word is the rule for all judgment of good or bad, saved or lost. The proclamation of this word, only by his divinely revealed will and moment, is the way Jesus Christ adjudicates every need and condition within his kingdom. In no way should this “judgment seat” be presumed to be delegated to a man, a group or board of elders, as though they were responsible for meting out final judgment upon the saved or lost condition of anyone. That is God’s prerogative and is never delegated to anyone.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT. REV. 20:11.

There is probably no passage of scripture in the Bible that has been as dramatized, fantasized, imagined and preached in bone - chilling messages, about things that are nowhere to be found in it,

as there has been about this verse and the entire 20th chapter of Revelation. It would take several messages to fairly analyze the contents of this chapter, which we do not have time for here. (Please refer to the prophecy section of this web site for a lesson on this chapter). For our purposes now, I will simply state what I believe this verse is describing and leave the rest until later.

This 11th verse gives us two unimaginable events that we must deal with if we are going to apply it as modern theology does. When the great white throne appeared, the visage of the face of him who sat on it was such that 2 things happened. (1) The earth vanished. (2) Heaven vanished. Immediately, you have two figures of awesome magnitude. How do you contemplate the earth and heaven just fleeing away at the sight of the throne? Keep in mind, that if we are to take the judgment scene as some literal event as orthodoxy requires, we must also apply a literal application to the vanishing act of the earth and heaven. On the other hand if this throne is symbolic of some historical judgment scene (rather than a last day literal event) as I believe that it is, then you have an altogether different kind of information to deal with. In addition, it will also require that all of the other things in this 20th chapter be dealt with in a symbolic manner. For example, the chapter mentions a chain, bottomless pit, Satan tied up and cast into a pit, for 1000 years, beheaded souls, a beast, his mark, a resurrection, a second death, and many more terms. The very terms and expressions themselves require us to think in symbolic terms, since a literal application will in no way work. Just think of the earth and heavens literally vanishing and you realize that there has to be another answer, a symbolic one. Take the 1000 years for example. Theologians have placed this period of time from before the time of Christ to somewhere out in the future still. We certainly cannot believe all of these, so just where is it?

Frankly I think that the vast majority of all Christendom is totally unprepared to deal with the symbolism and events set forth in this chapter. And yet it seems to be the one that they turn to the most often. Unless you are prepared to adequately apply and explain all the terms of the chapter, then you are not prepared to explain anything about a white throne judgment scene. I am not trying to be abrasive towards anyone's lack of understanding of this chapter; many people just honestly don't know. The trouble is that many who don't know, are making all kinds of bizarre explanations that will not work.

Until a further opportunity to deal with the chapter in detail (which we will do, including all of the points of the chapter), I will simply state what I think it describes. It is a scene out of the history of the church of the dark ages. For hundreds of years, the church was a system that held control not only over ecclesiastical domain, but also over civil domains. It was a time when the church was in serious violation of the word of God. It ruled as the sovereign of the world. This judgment scene is a time, near the end of the 18th century, when this stranglehold of the church on the consciences of men along with her control over civil powers as well, was broken. It was broken under the providence of God and her cruel and sinful power was brought down, ended. It was judgment upon a system of the church itself that was in total disobedience to God. Yes, God does bring judgment upon his own people, just like he did in the Babylonian captivity and also in the overthrow of Jerusalem. No one is above the law of God. The church of the dark ages had violated the word of the Lord, and God held them accountable for it. The penalties that followed this judgment scene are an outpouring of the sentence of divine justice for the apostasies of the past.

I am aware that most theologians are teaching that this chapter tells of a time of a 1000 years of peace, where people will have an easier time to get saved. It isn't going to happen. Today is the day of salvation. There is not a better time nor a better plan than the Lord Jesus has already provided for you. This white throne judgment portrays for us the judgments of God upon the church of the dark ages that had so blasphemously disobeyed God's word. The time of its occurrence, I believe, is near the end of the 18th century, a point we will thoroughly certify when we get to that study. It is not a picture of the last day of time.

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS. MT. 25:31-33

“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".

Before we discuss this scripture, it would be a good time to remember that down through Biblical history there have been many judgment days, none of which were at the last day of time. However, they were at certain terminal points in the history of certain generations, nations or individuals. They included such as Adam, Antediluvians, Sodom, Judah and many more. When the morals, sins, character, depravity and other irreversible conditions of a society of people reach a place (as they did in Noah's day) where there is no hope of a general reformation of souls, then judgment comes. Jesus came to such a generation of people. For so long they had corrupted and rejected God's law. Then Jesus, the Savior, came, and they rejected and crucified him. Jeremiah had seen this and predicted judgment upon them years before. In the 24th chapter of Matthew, Jesus told of the judgments to come on their nation. After describing the calamities that would befall them, he defined it as coming to pass within their own generation. Thus, within their own life time (in 70 A.D.) the Jewish state, along with Jerusalem was destroyed. The process reduced them to less than a human existence. Thereafter, they were wandering nomads, with no place to call their own.

Meanwhile, Christians were delivered from the awful destruction that was visited upon the Jewish nation that had rejected Christ. The sheep were indeed separated from the goats. Perhaps some will have a problem with the expression that all nations were gathered before him. If so, read Acts 2:5, that tells us that at Pentecost, there were Jews from every nation under heaven present in Jerusalem for this event. Moreover, are we not at this very moment always before his "throne of judgment"? Was not Adam, the Antediluvians, Sodom and all others of all time always before his throne of divine justice? The very specific nature of this passage of scripture, I believe, is created under the circumstances that the preaching of the gospel of the everlasting kingdom of God, was now set in place. Men everywhere now had a chance again to choose to eat of the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their choice set their judgment as sheep or goats.

It was the work of the gospel in the hearts of the people that separated them from each other. According as to how people responded to Christ, and his death, burial and resurrection and also to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, so were they divided unto sheep and goats. That is still the way that it is today.

THE RECORD OF HISTORY.

History is a wonderful teacher, if you listen to her lessons. On This subject of "judgment", history has spoken volumes to us of retributive justice brought against generations of ungodliness. Let's review some of them again. First, there was Adam, with blessings beyond number, yet he made a choice to violate the express will of God. As a direct result of this disobedience, death and corruptibility were set in motion and ultimately he died. The sad reality of his case is, that the same sinful nature, being transmitted by his seed to his off-springs, passes down to every generation following him. Consequently, all of the human family has "inherited" sin and death from Adam (Rom. 5:12-18).

Following Adam has been an unbroken lineage of sin's dominion which has resulted in the oft repeated acts of gross disobedience against God. The Antediluvians were wicked to the point of hopelessness and judgment fell on them, extinguishing everyone but Noah and his family. Later on was the gross wickedness of Sodom upon whom God rained down fire and brimstone. Cain violently slew his brother and God put a mark of judgment on him for life. Then Pharaoh and the Egyptians were drowned in the sea. The voice of the prophets so often spoke of impending judgments on the nations that had rejected God and brought suffering on his people. The Babylonian captivity of Judah was predicted by the prophets for their incorrigible sins. And we all know about the hand writing on the wall, bringing swift judgment upon Babylon for her treatment of God's people. The nation of the Jews met with an international and irreversible judgment of a horrendous overthrow, all because they would not heed the word of God. Then when the church of the dark ages ruled with

unbelievable cruelties, blasphemies, atrocities and a total rejection of God's word, it was visited during the 18th century with judgments and overthrow, the likes of which history seldom witnesses. With such an obvious record of history, declaring the judgments of God upon any society that, time after time, departs from God's moral and spiritual laws, and falls into a pit of irreconcilable wickedness, resulting in an outpouring of divine judgments of a permanent nature, I think our very own generation should take notice of the pattern through the ages. The execution of divine wrath against irreconcilable wickedness is ripe and sure to come, swift and permanent.

A warning is appropriate here, however. When there is a 9/11 attack; a tsunami; a Katrina or some other sad and destructive event, many preachers rush to the podium to characterize such events as divine judgments. They have done this throughout history, usually to their own embarrassment later. We may rest assured that judgment for sin will come. It may be the usual judgment of death that rests upon all of us, or it may be specifically designed for the overthrow of a godless generation for its intolerable wickedness. Our job is to preach against the pits of wickedness and let God take care of the judgment. He will do a complete job, like the flood, with permanent consequences.

LOOKING BACK AT JUDGMENT DAY.

We have consumed two full lessons on the subject of "Judgment Day". There could be more. After considering many thoughts, scriptures and events, in this concluding paragraph, I want to re-emphasize again the most compelling thought describing our judgment day. That would be the principal we considered first of all that our judgment day was convened in the Garden of Eden. Through the sin of Adam and the verdict of guilty upon him and the subsequent sentence of death, you and I also were judged guilty of sin and death is its penalty. Who can question or doubt that it was by one man that sinned that death has passed upon all men for that all have sinned. Regardless as to what theology or tradition one may embrace, the facts are inescapable and the realities of all scripture and all history bear indisputable testimony that the entire human family was condemned in the garden and sentenced to death. We do not have to wait to have some future verdict read to us; we are condemned already (Jn. 3:18). It follows then, that if we are already condemned and sentenced to die, we would charge God foolishly to teach that he is going to judge us the second time for the same sin.

Instead of this, what God *will* do the second time is give us another opportunity to eat of the tree of life and live. He will do this by granting us a pardon from our judgment of sin and death by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are not already condemned, and brought before our judgment day in Adam, then there is no purpose or need for a pardon. You don't talk about pardon, release, freedom or redemption to someone who is not guilty, condemned and sentenced.

Through Adam judgment came upon all men to condemnation. Through Christ, to all who have believed in him, there is therefore now no condemnation. We were judged by the word of God in Adam and sentenced to death. We can be judged as fully pardoned in Christ and set free from sin and death. Which are you: condemned or pardoned?

SERMON OUTLINE.

THE STORY OF MAN. LESSON #6

“JUDGMENT DAY” (CONT’D).

I. INTRODUCTION

A. REVIEW 7 POINTS WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT JUDGMENT DAY.

II. AN APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH. HEB. 9:27.

- A. REVIEW THE APPOINTMENT AND THE EXECUTION.**
- B. ANALYZE THE VERSE OF SCRIPTURE.**

III. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. II COR. 5:10.

- A. A POWERFUL VERSE REGARDING ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHRIST.**
- B. PAUL AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GALLIO AND FESTUS.**
- C. INTRODUCE I PET. 4:17, ACCOUNTABILITY THRU THE CHURCH.**
- D. JN. 12:48. THE FUNCTION OF THE GOSPEL IN JUDGMENT.**
- E. THE CHURCH AS THE JUDGMENT SEAT: ANNANIAS; CORINTH.**
- F. AS CHRISTIANS WE ACCEPT THE JUDGMENT OF CHRIST.**
- G. A WORD OF WARNING.**

IV. THE WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT. REV. 20:11.

- A. THE ORTHODOX INTERPRETATION OF THE SCENE.**
- B. THE NECESSARY SYMBOLISM OF THE SCENE.**
- C. THE HISTORICAL APPLICATION OF THE SCENE.**

V. THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS DIVIDED. MT. 25:31-33.

- A. THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL IN JUDGING SHEEP AND GOATS.**

VI. LOOKING BACK AT JUDGMENT DAY.

A. OUR JUDGMENT DAY WAS INB ADAM.

VII. THE HOPE OF PARDON THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST.