

THE JUDGMENT DAY

DISCOURSE NO. 3

Prosecuting our study of the teaching of Scripture regarding the second coming of Christ and its object; we call attention to the harmonious statements of David and Paul: David says, „He cometh to judge the earth,” (Psa. 96:13.) And Paul says, that „God ... hath appointed a day in which he will *judge* the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained”—Jesus Christ. (Acts 17:30,31.) And again, „The Lord Jesus Christ, shall judge the quick (living) and dead at his appearing and kingdom.” (2 Tim. 4:1.)

The view generally entertained regarding the day of judgment has been, that Christ will come seated upon a great white throne, and will summon before him saint and sinner to be judged, while all nature is convulsed with earthquakes, opening graves, rending rocks, and falling mountains. The trembling sinner will be brought from the depths of everlasting woe to hear his sins rehearsed, and be again remanded to his eternal and merciless doom; and the saints are brought from heaven to witness the misery and despair of the condemned, and to hear again the decision of their own case. All according to the prevailing theory, received their sentence and reward at death, and the general judgment is merely a repetition of it, but for no conceivable purpose. The whole time occupied for this work is thought to be a literal twenty-four hour day.*

*A recent discourse of Mr. Talmage, delivered in the Brooklyn Tabernacle, and published in some of the daily papers, gives quite a detailed account of this common view of the general judgment scene begun and completed within the limits of a single literal day.

These views we believe to be at variance with the general teaching of Scripture, and we will, therefore, present what we believe to be the Scriptural view of the subject.

The term day in the Bible, as elsewhere, is frequently used to cover a long but, definite period of time, as we would say this or that event occurred in Martin Luther’s day. Thus, we read of „*the day*” in which „Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens” (Gen. 2:4): and the forty year *day* of temptation in the wilderness. (Heb. 3:8.) No one familiar with the number and variety of events

which the Scriptures teach are to transpire in the day of the Lord, or judgment day, could possibly believe it to be a twenty-four hour day. Much more reasonable is Peter's explanation that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years with men, and a thousand years with men as one day with the Lord. (2 Pet. 3:8.) This agrees also with Jesus' statement to John (Rev. 20:4) that his *day* or reign is *a thousand years*—at the end of which day Paul says he will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24,25.)

Quite as vague and indefinite an idea also prevails in regard to the term *judgment*. The word judgment signifies more than simply sentencing, or the execution of a sentence: It includes the idea of trial, and a righteous decision based on that trial. Thus Moses judged the people, (Ex. 18:13); Samuel judged Israel forty years, (1 Sam. 7:6); and Paul appealed to Caesar's judgment

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seat to have his case tried before Caesar. (Acts 25:10.) Just so all both quick and dead will have their case tried before Christ, the great Judge, in due time. (Rom. 14:10.)

A *righteous judge* is something greatly to be desired by all, since the mission of such a one is to deliver from wrong and oppression and to bring liberty, peace and happiness to the oppressed. All mankind have been oppressed by sin and the great deceiver, Satan, but we read that Christ comes to give liberty to Satan's captives, to let the oppressed go free, and to destroy Satan. (Isa. 61:1; Heb. 2:14.) He is the righteous judge before whom all will have a fair and impartial trial. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment (justice) in the earth. (Isa. 42:4.) The world and the church, (nominal) deceived by unscriptural theories, think of the day of Christ's presence and judgment as something to be dreaded; but we get a very different idea from the expressions of the inspired Psalmist. He says:

„Let the Heavens be glad
And let the earth rejoice:
And let men say among the nations,
The Lord reigneth.
Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof:
Let the fields rejoice, and all that are therein;
Then shall the trees of the wood sing aloud
At the presence of the Lord,
**Because he cometh
To judge the earth.**
O give thanks unto the Lord,
For he is good;

For his mercy endureth forever.”

For this blessed day of righteous judgment Paul says the whole creation groaneth (Rom. 8:22); yet ignorantly, for as yet they know not the righteous and merciful Judge who redeemed them with his own precious blood, and is, therefore, soon to claim his purchased possession.

Since this coming judgment day is the day of the world’s trial for everlasting life, it is evident that the mass of the world are not now on trial. But while the Scriptures plainly teach that the thousand year day of Christ’s reign, will be the world’s great judgment day, they also teach that the judgment or trial of *the Church* is now in progress, and will be completed during this Gospel Age, before the world’s trial begins.

Judgment began with the church eighteen hundred years ago, as Peter said: „The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God”—church—“whose house are we?” (1 Pet. 4:17; Heb. 3:6.) During the Gospel Age the church’s trial progresses, and at its end the overcomers receive the reward offered during this age. The judgment, trial, began with the Head of this „house of God”—Christ Jesus—who was tempted (tried) in all points like as we are. So Paul, Peter, and all the church have been tried and some have not yet finished their course. This is why the Lord’s children suffer now, while evil doers prosper. During this age Satan is permitted to be the Prince of the world—to rule as he will; therefore it is the ungodly that now prosper in the world, and increase in riches. (Psa. 73:12.) But „all that will live godly shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12.)

O, how often have the Lord’s children wondered why this was so: but all is made plain when we learn that the trial of our faith and patient endurance now, is to result in „praise and honor and glory *at the appearing of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:7); that it is *now our Judgment Day*, and that we are being judged *now*, in order that we may not be judged with the world in the next age. (1 Cor. 11:32.) The great reward of those who finish their course successfully during this age is, that they, joined with Jesus their head, are to be the kings and priests who are to reign during the next age. And to be thus joined in dominion and heirship with Jesus, we are to partake of his divine, immortal nature, being raised spiritual bodies like unto Christ’s glorious body. 2 Pet. 1:4; Phil. 3:21.

Peter urges, then, that we think not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try us as though some strange thing had happened unto us (1 Pet. 4:12); and Paul says, „Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (Heb. 12:6.) It is a wonderful privilege which the church now enjoys, to have their trial in this age that they may enjoy the exceeding great and precious reward in store for the faithful overcomers „at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” We do not believe, according to the prevailing theory of the nominal church, that each member of the body or church of Christ receives his reward at death, else Paul should

certainly have received his there, but with him we believe, that from the time that each one successfully finished his course in death, from that time, there was „*laid up*” for such, a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give them *at that day*—the day of his appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8.) Trial, then, is what the church should expect now, and for their strengthening they should continually bear in mind that the trials of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us—at his appearing. (Rom. 8:18; 1 Pet. 1:7.)

But while the present Gospel Age is the church’s judgment day, Jesus declared that

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is not during this age, when he said: „I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” At his first coming Jesus redeemed or purchased the world from death; but the second time he comes *to judge* the world—to liberate his purchased possessions from the prison of death and to give them their trial for everlasting life. „With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.” (Psa. 98:9.) In this judgment of the world, the saints, those whose judgment is successfully completed in this age, take part, for „Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2.) They live and reign with Christ during

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the thousand years—the world’s judgment day. (Rev. 20:4.)

It is the mistaken idea of some that great calamities, such as earthquakes, famine, pestilence, etc., are judgments of God visited upon the world. We do not so regard them; Jesus corrected this false impression among the Jews when they told him of some of the Gallileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices; „and Jesus answering, said unto them, suppose ye that these Gallileans were sinners above all the Gallileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay ... or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay.” (Luke 13:1-5.)

It is very seldom, indeed, that God visits punishment upon *the world* in the present time. It is still true, and will be so long as Satan is the prince of this world, that the wicked spreadeth himself like a green bay tree. Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish. Widows and orphans cry, but oppressors flourish. But „The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” (Psa. 37:35; 73:7; 2 Pet. 2:9.) And Paul says: „Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.” (1 Cor. 4:5.) Yes, God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ.

Our next inquiry naturally is, Will there be forgiveness of sins in that judgment age? Jesus answers, „All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, (*Gr. aion age*) neither in the world (age) to come. (Matt. 12:32.) Jesus' teaching was, that „unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48.) And the opposite is also true—that where little is given, little is required. During this age the world does not possess the full knowledge of the truth; and only a small proportion of the world have as yet received any of the light; therefore they are not on trial, and the sins which they now commit through ignorance and inherited weakness, shall be forgiven, because of the ransom through the precious blood of Christ. And during the next age, as knowledge will be acquired and strength developed gradually, all imperfections and shortcomings will still be forgiven because of the redemption through Christ, until men reach perfection.

The world when on trial will be affected by their present life just to the extent that they had light, and used, neglected or misused that light. Jesus said: „I am come a light into the world,” and since then „Ye (the church) are the light of the world.” Men are responsible in proportion as they have knowledge—as they see the light; but „This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.” The punishment will be—“They that sin with much light will receive many stripes,” with little light, „few stripes”—“a just recompense.”

The greater the light rejected, the more will be the stripes received. In harmony with this statement is that saying of Jesus, that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who would not receive the Lord's disciples—the bearers of greater light than Sodom and Gomorrah enjoyed. (Matt. 10:15.) And again, „It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Capernaum) ... for if the mighty works,

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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, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” (Matt. 11:22-24.) ... „The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with the Jews and condemn them, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and a greater than Jonah is here—more light, more stripes; the Queen of Sheba will be there, and, by her anxiety to obtain wisdom, put to shame the Jews who attended not to the wisdom and words of a greater than Solomon. The Jew with more light has greater sin and sorer punishment.

But not only will every evil deed, committed against light, receive its just punishment—stripes—but every good deed will also be correspondingly rewarded. Every one is to

receive stripes or favor „according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.” (2 Cor. 5:10.) Many worldly men believe little of God’s word and make no profession of being his children; yet have large hearts full of pity for the weak, poor, and helpless, and take delight in giving a cup of cold water or more to a disciple of Christ. He is as sure of a reward for these good deeds as of punishment for the evil ones. Jesus particularly states and illustrates this, saying: „When thou makest a dinner call not thy friends and rich neighbors, but the poor, maimed, blind, etc.; they cannot recompense thee. Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:14.) Not that those works will justify any, but being *then* justified by faith in the ransom, then made so clearly manifest, these shall be rewarded for those good deeds done before the light of truth was made so clear—for the improvement they made according to the measure of light they had.

Though in the next age full faith in and reliance upon the redemption through the precious blood of Christ will be required of all, yet works according to ability will be the ground of reward. Under the favorable circumstances of that age, it will be possible for mankind to do God’s will more perfectly than we now can, in our present imperfect and oppressed condition, therefore more perfect works will be required and duly rewarded; whereas now, with our limited ability to do God’s will, our faith in the ransom and our effort and purpose to do that will is counted to us for righteousness, and accordingly rewarded.

But Jesus states that there is one sin that shall not be forgiven, viz., the sin against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, whether manifested in the acts of Jesus or his followers, is the great enlightener—of *the church now*, and of the *world in the age to come*.

In Luke 12:47, Jesus explains that willful sinners against a measure of light, shall be punished, not forgiven. „That servant which knew his Lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be *beaten with many stripes*.” This punishment is not destruction, and all other punishment, is designed to be corrective. But if this sin against the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit be continued, to the extent of willfully rejecting the redemption provided through Christ’s sacrifice, when the Spirit has made that truth plain, this willful sin is unto death—the second death—for having rejected the one Saviour in whom alone there is redemption, „there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin.” (Heb. 6:4-6, and 10:26-29.)

But this sin, which is unto death, cannot be committed without full and sufficient enlightenment of the Spirit, which neither the world nor many Christians have yet received. Therefore, though many of the worldly have committed sins which cannot be forgiven, and which are therefore unto stripes, yet we know that none of them have committed the sin which is unto death, because *none* of the world are yet fully enlightened by the Spirit.

Thus will the world be tried, and judged in the age to come—their judgment day. And the same principle applies to the Church in this, our judgment day. To whomsoever much is given, of them is much required. A faithful following in the light of the Spirit's leading will bring us to perfection as new creatures, and in the resurrection we shall be in the likeness of our Lord, „fashioned like unto his glorious body.” If, because of inherited weakness, we fail to do perfectly what, as new creatures, we desire to do—the will of God—we are forgiven through the redemption provided in Christ Jesus. And if we become measurably willful, not fully submitting ourselves to the Lord's will according to our covenant, as his children, we are now chastened with few or many stripes as may be found necessary to reclaim us.

But if we, the Church, being enlightened by and made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and having tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, should now willfully reject the truth thus received, even to the ignoring of the ransom through the precious blood of Christ, counting the blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified a common or unsacred thing, (Heb. 10:29), we should thus become subject to the second death—since „Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins,” and there remaineth no more a sacrifice for those who reject that once provided. This sin is not simply a falling back into a condition of lukewarmness, though that is a dangerous condition, nor is it a sudden relapse under great temptation, but it is open and deliberate apostasy—a willful rejection of the only foundation of hope.

The church's judgment day is now almost ended, and the trial of faith and endurance shall soon bring its rich reward to the faithful, and the beginning of the world's judgment day will immediately follow the reward and exultation of the saints.

While looking at the judgment of the world, let us not forget that ours is still progressing, and let us remember that though we are now part of the Church, we may never „sit with him in his throne”—but that high position is open to any of us, and we may make our calling and election sure. That which is most apt to clog and interfere with us in this race, is mentioned by our Master as a warning to us: „Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life.” Let us then „lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us.”

„Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor once at ease sit down,
Thine arduous work will not be done
Till thou hast gained thy crown.”

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.
(Rev. 20:6.)

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