

## *Part Fourteen*

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# SECOND COMING AND JUDGMENT

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### THE COMING JUDGE

When Jesus was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, surrounded by the excited throng shouting His praise, the people of the city asked, "Who is this?" And some of the crowd answered, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. 21:11).

How far short their description fell! How little they really understood who He was!

Today, far too many people are thinking of Jesus as only a teacher or prophet from Galilee in the days of long ago. They think that He has had some interesting and important effects upon society. They may respect, somewhat, His teaching and His following, but they only think that they know Jesus.

No one knows Jesus who thinks that He belongs to the past, or who considers that we have to do only with the moral and social application of His teaching.

He is far more than a prophet in the past. He is a power in the present. And He is the most certain and significant of all the prospects for the future!

Jesus is living and reigning today at the right hand of the Father in heaven, offering His covenant of mercy and the new birth of the Spirit to all who will receive, calling out of the world a people for His own possession. He is coming again to earth to consummate this age, to receive His redeemed ones unto himself, to purify His kingdom, and to execute the righteous judgment of God upon all the living and the dead.

The gospel of Christ is a message of facts—facts of history, unchangeable as the past naturally is, and sure as historical records and testimony can make them. But they are not just ordinary facts such as may be found in every part of history. They are unique facts of men's experience with God when God came to men in human form in the person of Jesus Christ. They are the incomparable facts of His life and works, revealing His divine person and power and His eternal purpose for all men of every age. Thus the gospel is not merely a record of the past. It is even more than the truth regarding

our present duty and welfare. It points inexorably to the future. It is most important as a preparation for and a promise of things to come. Predictions are an inseparable and most vital part of the gospel, giving meaning to its facts and purpose to its commandments. The promises and warnings of the Lord help to enlighten and to motivate every believer of His Word.

The most important prospects for the future for you and me and everyone are not the prospects of national prosperity or depression or war or conquest of space, but the certain coming of Jesus to end this age and to institute a new order of things.

### *We Can Be Sure of His Coming*

That He is coming is sure because He said so. We, of course, cannot know it or prove it any other way, except to take His word for it. But we can trust Him completely because of the undeniable facts of His first coming which clearly proved His divine character. To anyone who believes in Him as the Son of God, the predictions of His word are plain enough to make us very sure that He is coming back in person in visible form.

He said, "If I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14:3). "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). "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" (Matt. 25:31). "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30b). Under oath in court, on trial for His life, Jesus said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

He made several parables for the purpose of emphasizing the importance of His coming and the need for one's being watchful and ready for it: "As the days of Noah were . . . so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37-42; Luke 17:26-30); the householder and the thief; the faithful and the wicked servants (Matt. 24:43-51); the foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13); the parables of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30); and of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27).

Angels said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Those whom Jesus sent to preach the gospel He also inspired by His Spirit to guide them into all truth and to make known to them

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things to come (John 16:13-15). Throughout their preaching and their writings they taught that Jesus was coming again in person. "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" (I Thess. 4:16. See also Acts 3:20, 21; I Pet. 1:7; 5:4; II Pet. 3:3, 4; James 5:7; Heb. 9:28; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7; I Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; 15:23; Phil. 3:20, 21; Col. 3:4; I Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-18; 5:1-4, 23; II Thess. 1:7-10; 2:1, 8; I Tim. 6:14, 15; II Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13). The apostolic writers not only speak plainly and directly of Christ's coming, but they also refer to His "appearing," "being manifested," His "presence," the "revelation" of Christ, and the "day of Christ" (for example Phil. 1:6, 10; I Cor. 5:5; II Thess. 2:2; Heb. 10:25).

Some men say they count 318 times that Christ's coming is mentioned in some manner in the 260 chapters of the New Testament. No doubt some of that number are obscure references, and of some it may be very doubtful whether they are interpreted correctly when they are applied to the second coming of Christ. But definite and plain predictions of that great event are made literally dozens of times in such manner that they could not be fulfilled in the conversion or death of individuals, in the beginning of the church, the coming of the Holy Spirit, or the judgment upon Jerusalem. They emphatically predict things which have not happened yet and they could not point to a secret or "spiritual" or invisible coming.

### *When? No One Knows*

When He is coming, we do not know, because He has not told us that (Matt. 24:36). He has continually emphasized the need to be ready at all times because no one will know when He is to come (see Rev. 16:15; I Thess. 5:2, 3; Matt. 24:27-51; 25:1-13). He will come as a thief in the sense that His coming will be unannounced, unexpected, and sudden. In the same sense it will be as travail upon a woman with child.

But He has assured us that when He does come it will be evident to all, with power and great publicity, as the lightning in the east is seen unto the west, with a great shout and the sound of the trumpet (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:26, 27, 30, 31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16).

### *Why He Wants Us to Know of the Future*

Our Lord wants us to know some things about the future. He wants us to be warned and prepared for crises that must come. He

wants us to understand the nature of our salvation, and know that this world is not our hope or our permanent home. He wants us to look forward with hope and longing to His coming in glory and to our perfect union with Him whom we love. He wants us to realize that He himself is our destiny and our exceeding great reward. He wants us to have assurance and comfort in the afflictions and sorrows of life. He would have us all to be as strong and steadfast as Paul, by having his kind of faith in the "far more exceeding weight of eternal glory" and by looking with him "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Read II Corinthians 4:16 to 5:11.

Daily consciousness of the imminent return of Christ will surely prompt more godly living, promote more sacrificial giving, produce more patience and even rejoicing under trials, and purify our motives in all that we do. We need to realize that we do all our works under His watchful eye, and we shall soon stand before Him to give account. The heart of Christianity is the vital power of faith, hope, and love—all centered upon Jesus Christ. Anyone who does not believe His word enough to hope for His coming and to love His appearing will surely lack the personal force of Christ in his life.

The predictions of His coming should be even to the unbeliever an inducement to heed more seriously Christ's commands and claims, because His coming is a threat to the disobedient as well as a promise to the faithful.

#### *What Will Happen When He Comes?*

The Lord has revealed only a few particulars and something of the general nature of the great events which will take place when He comes. No doubt there are many things in store for us that we have not been told, because we could not grasp or appreciate them now. Very likely some of the things predicted will not happen just as we imagine them. It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell in what order or how close together the following events will come to pass. But we are told that in connection with His coming or after it: the dead will be raised (I Thess. 4:16; John 5:28, 29); the saved will be with the Lord (John 14:3; I Thess. 4:17); the bodies of the redeemed will be changed into the likeness of the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21; I Cor. 15:52-54; Rom. 8:23-25); the world and the works therein will be burned up (II Pet. 3:11-13); a crown of glory will be given to the faithful (II Tim. 4:8; I Pet. 5:4); Christ will execute judgment upon all men (II Tim. 4:1; Jude 14, 15; Acts 10:42; 17:31; John 5:22-29);

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(II Cor. 5:10); He will reject many who thought they were saved (Matt. 7:21-23; 22:13, 14; Luke 13:25-27; compare Matt. 13:40-43 and 47-50); the door of salvation will be forever closed (Luke 13:25-28); there will be grief and terror in the hearts of many because they are unprepared to meet Him (Matt. 24:30, 50, 51; 25:30; Rev. 1:7; 6:14-17; Luke 13:28; I Thess. 5:3; II Thess. 1:7-9).

Whether or not all men are to be judged at one time, or whether there will be two judgments, or three or five, is relatively unimportant. Probably no man knows just how and when it will all be done, but the Lord will take care of it without our figuring it out. The important matter is to be ready for judgment by being in Christ, and to know that "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 Cor. 5:10).

Let every sinner remember this fact, and contemplate what it will mean: Our Savior will be our judge! He who once served the sentence of death for us, who now makes intercession for us at the throne of God, who invites all to come to Him and be saved—it is He who will come in flaming fire, rendering vengeance upon all who know not God and obey not the gospel! (II Thess. 1:9).

### For Further Study:

- Allis, Oswald T. *Prophecy and the Church*, rev. ed. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1947. Thorough discussion of issues in the interpretation of Biblical prophecies.
- Bales, J. D. *Prophecy and Premillennialism*. Searcy, Ark.: J. B. Bales Books. Expansion of his earlier work on "New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies."
- Hendriksen, William. *The Bible on the Life Hereafter*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959. Deals with the whole range of questions regarding Biblical prophecy concerning the end of the age.
- Hughes, Phillip E. *Interpreting Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976. Gives attention to principles of interpretation of prophecy.
- Ladd, George E. *Jesus and the Kingdom*. New York: Harper & Row, 1964. Deals with Jesus' teaching on His Kingdom and the end of time from viewpoint of historic pre-millennialism.
- Ludwigson, Raymond. *A Survey of Bible Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973. Brief, objective explanation

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of various viewpoints and terms involved in the study of Bible prophecies relating to last things. Former edition was entitled *Bible Prophecy Notes*.

Reese, Gareth. *Let's Study Prophecy*. Moberly, Mo.: Central Christian College of the Bible. Defense of amillennial understanding of New Testament prophecy.

Summer, Ray. *The Life Beyond*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959. Pp. 95-146. Discusses the certainty, manner and time of the second coming. Includes good practical discussion on the effect this doctrine should have on our lives.

## WHEN IS JESUS COMING AGAIN? (Matthew 24)

The purpose of this study is to outline, clarify, and emphasize what Jesus said about the future in His great prophetic discourse in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

Charles F. Kettering, the famous inventor, said, "I'm interested in the future, because I expect to spend all the rest of my life in it."

Although many people are interested in the time of Jesus' second coming, and more should be, no one actually knows anything about it except what is recorded in the Bible. It is written there (Matt. 24:36) that no one knows the day or hour. Jesus said a good deal about it, without setting a time, because really it doesn't matter so much when He comes, as it does that we shall expect Him at all times and be ready.

Christians, especially evangelistic workers, are interested in pointing out the signs that precede that impending and momentous day, because they hope to make everyone heed the warnings, promises, and commands of the Lord and be ready. In their zeal to impress folk of little faith with the fact that Jesus is coming just any time now, some have tried to find more "signs" than Jesus actually gave.

I suppose no passage has furnished more phrases for popular misuse and misunderstanding than this discourse. How many people think that wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famine and pestilence are signs of Christ's coming! All Jesus ever said of these things is that they are not signs, even of the fall of Jerusalem, and the apostles were not to be troubled by them. Read the chapters for yourself and see!

Aren't we inclined to feel that prophecy is of uncertain meaning and therefore anyone is free to guess about it any way he wants to? It may become a matter of sad importance if we teach so many conflicting opinions and arbitrary assumptions that people lose respect for the very subject that we are trying to impress upon them.

The New Testament does teach in dozens of places concerning the second coming as a matter of great importance for us to know about. Christians should look forward to it with joy and longing. (Read Titus 2:13, 14; I Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; II Tim. 4:8; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; Phil. 3:20, 21; I John 2:28; 3:1-3; I Pet. 1:7; 5:4; I Cor. 1:7, 8; James 5:7, 8; Rev. 22:20.) But it will bring judgment, and multitudes unprepared will have sorrow and

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terror (Matt. 16:27; I Cor. 4:5; I Thess. 5:2, 3; II Thess. 1:7-10; Luke 17:22-36; 18:8; Rev. 1:7; 6:12-17; Matt. 25:1-46).

A vivid expectancy of the Lord's appearance is profitable, because it prompts godly living, promotes sacrificial service, provides comfort for the suffering, produces patience and rejoicing under severest trials, and perfects watchfulness with prayer.

Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 constitute one of the most important (and abused) sections of the Bible on this great subject. The following outline gives a whole view of these chapters and seeks to relate their parts properly to each other. They are not mere collections of prophetic puzzles with hidden double meanings, but clear records of Jesus' answers to His friends' questions about the destruction of the great stone buildings at Jerusalem and about a sign of His coming.

### I. The Occasion and the Question (Matt. 24:1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7).

1. Observing the magnificent buildings of Jerusalem.
2. Jesus' dire prediction: "There shall not be left one stone."
3. The disciples' questions:
  - a. "When shall these things be?" (Destruction of Jerusalem.)
  - b. "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

### II. Answers to the Questions.

1. Answer to first question, concerning Jerusalem (Matt. 24:4-28; Mark 13:5-23; Luke 21:8-24).
  - a. Warning of preliminary, unrelated troubles. "The beginning of travail." Beware false alarms (Matt. 24:4-14; Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-19).
    - (1) False Christs, wars, famines, earthquakes do not indicate the end; be not troubled or led astray.
    - (2) Persecutions, apostasies, false prophets, shall afflict the church: "Take heed to yourselves"; endure to the end; trust God for help; the gospel testimony shall go into all the world. (Cp. Col. 1:6, 23; Rom. 1:8; 10:18; 16:19).
  - b. The sign of Jerusalem's end, and how to escape the woes of that terrible time (Matt. 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20-24).
    - (1) "The abomination of desolation standing in the holy place" is "Jerusalem compassed with armies" (Luke



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- 21:20.) "Then know that her desolation is at hand,"
- (2) Let those in Judea flee to the mountains without delay. Pray that the hardships of flight may be lessened; but the unprecedented afflictions of the city must be escaped at all costs. Believe no false prophets, signs or promises; I have forewarned you; the Christ will not come until He is seen from the east to the west.
  - (3) The tribulation shall be excessive, shall threaten extinction of the Jewish people, shall take them captive to other nations, shall leave Jerusalem to the Gentiles, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."
2. Answer to second question, concerning Christ's coming (Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28).
    - a. The time is purposely indefinite; but the event is to be watched for at all times ("Immediately" Matt. 24:29), after a terrible and extended (see Luke 21:24) tribulation.
    - b. But the event itself shall be unmistakable; accompanied by tremendous sights and sounds in all earth and heaven, the Lord Himself shall be seen by everyone, coming in the clouds with power and great glory.
    - c. The angels shall gather the elect from everywhere: look up, your redemption draws near.
- III. The Answers Reviewed in Contrasting Summary (Matt. 24:32-36; Mark 13:28-32; Luke 21:29-33).
1. Parable of the leaves of trees: when spring begins you know summer is coming. Watch for "all these things"—wars, persecutions, false Messiahs, the desolation of Jerusalem—to come to pass in this generation. (all of them did happen before A.D. 70.)
  2. Solemn affirmation of the unfailing certainty of His words.
  3. But "of that day"—Jesus' coming—no one knows. The time cannot be told, even by the Son of God.
- IV. Parables and Exhortations to Be Ready at All Times (Matt. 24:37-51; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36).
1. As in the days of Noah the flood came suddenly upon those who had been warned but believed not, so shall the coming of the Son of man be without any immediate forewarning signs.
  2. In the midst of daily work, suddenly one shall be taken and another left; watch for ye know not the day. (The "elect" shall

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- be taken; compare Matt. 24:31; I Thess. 4:16, 17; I Cor. 15:52.)
3. Parable of a householder unprepared for a thief who came when he was not expected. Be ready, for when you think not, the Lord comes.
  4. The servants of the absent Lord have each his own work to be faithful in till He comes. He may not come as soon as they imagine; but if they think that he tarries and can take advantage of His delay to indulge in sin; He will come when they least expect it and will punish them. "Watch at every season" (Luke 21:36).

Jesus continued these lessons in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew: (1) in the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom, (2) in the parable of the talents committed to servants until the Lord's return, and (3) in the scene of judgment that shall take place when He shall come in His glory. In these He emphasizes that the servants must be prepared to wait patiently and to serve faithfully even though the Master may not come for "a long time." His coming will bring strict judgment and swift vengeance upon all who have not used the intervening time in His service.

### For Further Study:

Foster, R. C. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962. Pp. 1154-1210. Comment on Jesus' predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming.

See commentaries on Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Also see books listed on pages 435, 436.

## A SECRET RAPTURE CONSIDERED

I truly desire to see people awakened to the reality and tremendous significance of the second coming of our Lord. But to put all the emphasis upon a secret rapture and mysterious disappearance of the saved, as if that were certainly the nature of Christ's coming, is to teach as Bible truth what is at best a doubtful, speculative view of the implications of the Bible.

The Lord's coming is surely and clearly taught; so also is the separation of the saved from the unsaved, the resurrection of those in Christ, the transformation of the bodies of both the living and the resurrected saints, and their rising to meet Him, ever to be with Him. But after much restudy of the scriptures, I agree with R. A. Torrey's statement: "the doctrine of the secret rapture of believers does not seem to have much support in scripture."<sup>1</sup>

I have seen the Baptist motion picture on the rapture and have heard the idea for years. I have had no particular reason to oppose it, and have no feeling against, if that is what the Lord wants to do; but I just can't find that the scripture teaches it. I have the *Millenium Bible* by Biederwolf before me; and it makes the fullest study of all the implications which men have found in or read into every prophetic passage. It certainly favors a premillennial view with separate resurrections, a period of tribulation, etc.; but its comments on the rapture are divided, uncertain and confused, not at all strong for a secret rapture.

I Thessalonias 4:13-17 does indeed teach that the saved (both living and resurrected) will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming, but there is no indication that it is silent and secret so that it leaves the rest of the world mystified by their absence. It says that the Lord will come with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. How can we know that this coming to meet His saints is a different coming from that described in Revelation 1:7 where it says: "Every eye shall see Him, and they that pierced Him?" "For as lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:26, 27; Luke 17:23, 24).

Those who hold that Matthew 24:30—"They *shall see* the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"—

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Torrey, *What The Bible Teaches* (London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.), p. 199.

refers to a third coming (or to a second phase of His coming) seven years after He has taken the saved out of the earth, run into serious difficulties. They must make verse 31 refer to a group called "his elect" who are not of the church or the redeemed at His coming. The parable of the ten virgins surely does not indicate that those who are unprepared at His coming will be gathered in later. I Thessalonians 5:3 indicates that the coming of the Lord which brings sudden destruction upon the wicked is to be in a time when they are saying, "Peace and safety," which hardly seems to be at the climax of seven years of terrible tribulations after all the righteous have disappeared.

The Scriptures most cited as teaching this seven years of tribulation are from Daniel and Matthew 24:21, 29, which in their context refer to the Jews and the fall of Jerusalem. In Luke 17:22-37 Jesus told His disciples that they would desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, but would not be able to until He comes upon both the godly and the ungodly by surprise when they are buying, selling, planting and building, apparently unmindful of any impending judgments.

The Bible does not say that Jesus is coming once "for His saints" and again "with His saints." The passage in I Thessalonians 4:13-17, which is supposed to teach the former, says: "Even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." If "to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord" (see II Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23) then, when the Lord comes to unite the dead saints with the living ones and to transform the bodies of both (see I Cor. 15:51; Phil. 3:20, 21), why wouldn't He bring the saints with Him? Isn't it also possible that Jude 14—"The Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones" (This is the ASV and "saints" simply means holy ones) refers to the angels that come with him" (see also Matt. 16:27). Matthew 13:39-41 says He will send the angels to gather the wicked, and Matthew 24:31 also says that when He comes, He will with the sound of a great trumpet send forth His angels to gather His elect from all parts of the world.

The statements about one being taken and another left (Matt. 24:40, 41; Luke 17:34, 35) do not necessarily picture a secret rapture. The word which is translated "taken" in each of these verses is the same word exactly which is used in John 14:3 "I will come again and receive you unto myself." These verses may only say that of people who live and work together here, one will be received by the Lord and the other left out, when Jesus comes for His own.

When the Scripture says that His coming will be as a thief in the night, it explains that it means suddenly and unannounced upon

those who are not looking for Him, but it never indicates that it means stealthily and unseen (see I Thess. 5:1-3; Luke 12:39-46; Matt. 24:42-44; Rev. 16:15). In fact, Peter says: "But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; and the elements shall be dissolved with a fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). All this comes "as a thief!"

There may be some time between events that are associated with the Lord's coming, the resurrection of the saved, the resurrection of the wicked, the judgments of men, destruction of this earth, establishment of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (II Pet. 3:13), etc. But the time tables which man offer on the "rapture," the "tribulation," the "revelation of Christ with the saints," the "millenium," the "judgment of the nations," etc. is all speculative. It is not found in the Scripture and the advocates of all these things cannot find grounds enough to agree among themselves concerning the order and timing of them.

Even the expression in I Thessalonians 4:16—"the dead in Christ shall rise first" does not necessarily depict a second resurrection. The contrast which is stated in the context is between the living believers and the dead believers. The living will not precede the dead, because the dead will be raised first, and then (next) the living will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. Nothing at all is said about the resurrection of the unbelievers in the entire chapter.

I know that Revelation 20:5 says: "the rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection." And I am not at all sure exactly what many verses of this chapter refer to, although their general intent is clear. But I do notice that it does not say, or even clearly imply, that the reigning with Christ for one thousand years is to take place upon the earth. And it does not say, or even clearly imply, that the thousand years of reign begins at the second coming of Christ. It says that John saw the "souls" of martyrs and of undefiled worshippers of Jesus reigning with Him. Jesus is reigning, even now, at the right hand of God, far above all rule, and authority, and power (Eph. 1:20-23). Long ago He told the church in a letter, that He had overcome and sat down on His Father's throne with Him (Rev. 3:21). Jesus said on earth that He was a king, and that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:33-37). He also solemnly promised that the kingdom would come with power while many that heard Him speak were still alive (Mark 9:1). The apostles preached that the Christians of their day

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were in the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13; Rom. 14:17), although they looked forward to the kingdom of the future also (II Pet. 1:11, and others). They considered that the universal gospel of their day fulfilled the prophecy of Amos 9:11, 12 about God's building again the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:15-18). Revelation 1:6 cites it as a fact in John's day that "He made us to be a kingdom and priests." They even speak (rather mystically) of the fact that He has raised us up with Christ and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). The first resurrection of Revelation 20:5 could be the resurrection of the believer when he is "raised with Him [Christ]" and "made alive together with Him" (Col. 1:12, 13; 3:1; Eph. 2:5).

For Further Study:

Hendriksen, William. *The Bible on the Hereafter*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959. Pp. 178-184. Rejects the view that the rapture will be secret and that it will be 1000 years before the resurrection of the wicked.

Ludwigson, R. *A Survey of Bible Prophecy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973. Pp. 133-160. Surveys various views on the time of the rapture—whether it is to be before or after the tribulation.

## JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE JUDGMENT

*The Fact of Judgment*

All the revelation of God to man implies that man is responsible to God for what he does with life and the other gifts of God. Many direct declarations of the Word of God combine to make known to us that all men shall give account to God and receive a just judgment from Him before whom nothing is hid. There will be a day of reckoning for all men at one time or another (See John 5:28, 29; Luke 11:31, 32; Matt. 10:15; 11:22, 24; 16:27; 12:36-41; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:6, 16; 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10; II Thess. 1:6-10; II Pet. 2:9; 3:7; I John 4:17; Jude 6; Rev. 20:12-15; 22:12).

Many Bible students distinguish several different judgments. Indeed, some phases of God's judgment upon sin in this world have already been carried out and are being continually carried out (for example Gen. 3:14-24; John 16:11; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 6:7; John 3:18, 19). Moreover, God's sentence against this sinful world (as well as the guilt of all men) has already been announced (II Pet. 3:10-12; Rom. 2:12; 3:9-23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22). But the complete justice of God is yet to be revealed and the full severity of His sentence is yet to be realized upon those who are outside of the salvation in Christ. Some day He must make known the individuals who are accepted under the terms of that conditional salvation. Still, it is not so important whether there are to be three or five or seven judgments, as it is to be ready for our judgment when it comes.

When the apostles went out preaching the gospel of salvation, the announcement of judgment to come was prominent in their message (Acts 17:31; 24:25). The Holy Spirit was given them that through them He might convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:11); and Peter testified that they were charged to preach Jesus as the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). The fact that the preaching of judgment is not popular today is evidence of unbelief and unfaithfulness in a large proportion of preachers of this day, who fit the description Paul gives in II Timothy 4:3, 4: "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables." It shows the lack of courage to face the displeasure of men and the lack of love for lost souls to bring them face to face

with that from which they need to be saved.

Don't be afraid of scaring someone into accepting Christ. Men are not much interested in salvation until they know that they are lost. Many souls were saved by the preaching of the apostles because they were made to tremble and fear and seek salvation. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). In one of the most evangelistic chapters of Jesus' preaching, He says: "Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yes, I say unto you, fear him" (Luke 12:5). Many do not accept the Savior because they do not accept the judgment and sentence which God has written against them for their sins. Sinners ought to be scared—not falsely—but with a realization of their true danger; at the same time they ought to see that they are loved and to realize God's desire to save them.

### *The Judge*

The same Jesus who was the lowly Son of man, who was the sacrifice for our sins, is now the Lord of lords. He must reign until His enemies become the footstool of His feet, and He himself will be the Judge of all (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; Matt. 7:22, 23; 25:31-46). See also the second Psalm. Jesus shall return to the earth and call all men to judgment before Him. The last time, He will come to judge and to destroy those who will not receive His salvation (II Thess. 1:7-10). To the believers it is very comforting to know that He who will be our Judge is our Savior, the one who has suffered with us a Brother in the flesh (Heb. 2:10-12), and who has loved us so dearly that He died for us, who also has been a "merciful and faithful high-priest" for us. The unconverted should find it all the more fearful to contemplate that in the terrible day of judgment, the only one who might have been their Advocate and Savior will have become their judge. Now is the time to confess and claim Him as a Savior! Then every tongue will be impelled to confess Him as Lord to the glory of God (Phil. 2:10, 11), but not to the salvation of themselves; rather to their own condemnation for having resisted and rejected Him all through life.

### *The Law or Basis of Judgment*

In this account of the judgment (Matt. 25:31-46) Jesus draws a dramatic picture of a conversation with the two groups after their division, which indicates the basis of their fate. We need not suppose that such a conversation must actually take place at the judgment,



or that this is the only matter that will be considered. Certainly the Lord does not mean for this to be used to deny any teaching found in the rest of the inspired scripture.

J. W. McGarvey observes:

The acts here specified are all deeds of benevolence; all belong to the category of good works. We are not hence to conclude that good works alone can secure to us everlasting life, seeing that in the midst of our good works we commit sin, and before the beginning of our good works we lived in sin. Forgiveness for these sins must be secured by complying with the conditions thereof, or we will be condemned on their account, notwithstanding all the benevolence which we can perform. The lesson taught in the passage is this: that works of Christian benevolence, as we have opportunity to perform them, constitute one of the conditions of our acceptance in the day of judgment. They are, indeed, but the outgrowth of faith and love and their absence proves that our faith is dead, and that love has not been born within us.<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 25:31-46 does not mean that men may be saved by works of mercy without confessing Christ, for He Himself said, "No one cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6), and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves" (John 6:53). See also I John 5:11, 12 and John 3:36. For other passages on those who will or will not inherit the kingdom, see Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5; I Corinthians 6:9, 10; II Timothy 2:12; 4:8; James 2:5; Revelation 21:7; Romans 8:1-17.

It is fully and forcefully taught that no one will be saved by the perfect merit of his works, but by the sacrifice of Christ applied to the individual upon the condition of obedient faith in Christ (Rom. 3 to 8; Gal. 3; Eph. 2:1-10, etc.). That kingdom has been in preparation for us from the foundation of the world, and it is the gift of God (Luke 12:32). We do not earn it or create it ourselves; but God gives it on His own terms. Those terms might be summarized in the words "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). Hence at various points in the full revelation of the Christian covenant our salvation is attributed to, or conditioned upon, the following (at least):

1. Grace (Eph. 2:4-9; Rom. 3:24).

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. McGarvey, *A Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.) Pp. 220-221.

## SECOND COMING AND JUDGMENT

2. The Blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9; I John 1:7).
3. The gospel (Rom. 1:16; Acts 11:14; Rom. 10:13-17).
4. Faith (John 3:16; 3:36; 6:47; Rom. 3:28, 30; 5:1, 2).
5. Repentance (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 2:37, 38; 3:19).
6. Christian baptism (I Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:27).
7. Works (by which faith is perfected) (James 2:24; Matt. 7:21-23).
8. Holiness or sanctification (Heb. 12:14; I Cor. 6:9-11).
9. Confession of Christ (Rom. 10:9, 10; I John 4:2, 3, 15; Matt. 10:32).
10. Love (I John 3:10-24; 4:7-21).
11. Obedience (Heb. 5:9; I Pet. 1:22; II Thess. 1:7-9).
12. Benevolent deeds (Matt. 25:31-46; Gal. 6:8-10).
13. Forgiving others (Matt. 18:35; Eph. 4:32; James 2:13).
14. Chastening (Heb. 12:6-11).
15. Remaining faithful until death (Rev. 2:10, 26; Heb. 3:6, 12; 10:23-31).

We are most often said to be saved by faith, but the predictions of judgment consistently say that we will be judged according to our deeds or works. The Lord does not recognize a faith that does nothing. Doctrine is fundamental and essential. Faith is necessary. But both faith and doctrine are in order to life. The Lord gives us doctrine as seed (Luke 8:11); and He gives worship and fellowship with exhortation as watering, cultivation and pruning; but we shall be judged by the fruit produced. See Hebrews 6:7, 8. We cannot produce good fruit without good seed, cultivation and care; but a garden is not praised for the amount of unsprouted seed it can show, or the rank growth of all kinds, but for the good fruit. The word of God is the seed; the plant is faith; the fruit is love working to the glory of God. Some acts of charity alone cannot take the place of the doctrine, regeneration, worship, etc. of true religion; but, on the other hand, all true religion must be or produce the practice of the two greatest commandments (See Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:9, 10; I Cor. 13:1-3).

The first commandment orders unreserved and unlimited love to God, which included much indeed. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (I John 5:3), and "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

God Himself does not need the services of our hands and possessions (Acts 17:25) but He commands us to serve Him by ministering to the needs of those around us since God cares for them, especially Jesus' "brethren" (Matt. 12:49, 50; 28:10; Gal. 6:10). The second

## JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT THE JUDGMENT

commandment is really inseparable from the first; for "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (I John 4:20). The needs of men are always around us. If we care not for the present, visible needs of man, it becomes evident that our lives are not ruled by love to God and to man. Jesus does not care more for service to men's bodies than to their souls; but He can test us by that which all can see the need of, and which all can help to supply, thus proving the reality and fullness of our love, and by that, whether we are begotten of God (I John 4:7, 8).

### *The Destinies*

The Lord always divides men into only two classes—lost or saved—heirs or outcasts—blessed or cursed. He never allows a middle class, and He never seems uncertain of the dividing line. There are just two ways to go—to heaven or to hell—into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, or into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels but shared in by those who rebel against God and make their choice to go to the devil, following his lies and his ways. Jesus says not only that the fire is eternal, but also that the punishment in it is to be eternal; and He used the same word concerning eternal punishment that He used concerning eternal life. One is as long as the other, and both as certain as the eternity of God. Jesus said more about hell than all the rest of the inspired messengers of God. The fate of the lost bore heavily on His heart. Jesus said some unpleasant things about that place of torment (Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:23, 24; 20:18; Matt. 7:19; John 15:6; Matt. 13:31, 41, 42), but He laid down His life to make atonement for our sins so that we would not have to go there.

### For Further Study:

Morris, Leon. *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960. Surveys the Old Testament and New Testament teaching on the doctrine of judgment.

Summers, Ray. *The Life Beyond*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959. Pp. 147-182. Helpful study of the New Testament teaching about the agent, time, objects, basis and outcome of judgment.