

THE JUDGMENT

Toney L. Smith



About the author...

Toney is a 1982 graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching. He has worked with churches in Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Tennessee. He currently preaches at the church in Dresden, Tennessee. He is a frequent speaker on lectureships and gospel meetings. He and his wife Debbie have three grown children all married and two grandchildren, Travis Smith and Toney Lee Smith, III.

Introduction

When man begins to contemplate eternity, very often he will take a position that is comfortable to his lifestyle or to his religious conviction. The Jehovah's Witness' doctrine states:

The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons. (1) Because it is wholly unscriptural; (2) Because it is unreasonable; (3) Because it is contrary to God's love; and (4) Because it is repugnant to justice. (Martin 48)

As comforting as this may sound, it certainly is not the answer, which is to be found in the Bible. In fact just the opposite is taught in the word of God. Notice the reply that Felix gave to Paul; *"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"* (Acts 24:25). If judgment is unscriptural, unreasonable, contrary to God's love and repugnant to justice, why did Felix tremble? The fact of the matter is that he understood that there is to be a judgment day! There will be a day in which all men will be brought into account for all they have said and done (Revelation 20:12-13).

After death what does man's future hold? Is it total annihilation? Man has a deep desire for happiness and an equal dread of misery and punishment. Therefore, he tries to cover over anything that is unpleasant and contrary to what he would like to do. However, in His infinite wisdom and power, God purposed not to permit anyone who would reject His love and grace to escape the unpleasantness of eternal punishment. There is a place which is *"prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41). On the other hand, there is an eternal destiny for those who will accept the grace and goodness of God. Christ affirmed that there is to be a wonderful abode for the faithful. He said in John 14:3: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* Only those who choose heaven over hell can enter therein. All of mankind will make a choice as to his or her eternal destiny. Only those who obey Christ and His commandments will find their eternal abode in the heavenly city (Revelation 22:14; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 John 2:3-4).

Having established the fact of heaven and hell, we must now realize that there will be a dividing

of men as per their standard for living (Matthew 7:21-23; 25:41). This is where the judgment of God comes to play a part in our eternal destiny. God has determined that there will be a day of reckoning. Paul said, "...he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). This day of judgment will begin when Christ comes again. This event will include all men from every nation. It will affect the souls of every single person who has ever lived (Matthew 25:31-41). At judgment the righteous will find entrance into the "*kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34). But the unrighteous will inherit "*everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41). Judgment is just as sure and as inevitable as every other promise of Almighty God (Titus 1:2). One man said, "A man is a rapid traveler upon the road that leads to death, the grave, the judgment and the endless hereafter." How sobering this thought is, for it will be a day of reckoning, a day of rewards, and a day of joy or a day of unspeakable sorrow. This should quicken our minds to make sure that we are prepared for this great and notable day. It will be the day when the Lord comes to reward His servants. This day will be unmistakable and it will begin the promised judgment.

He Will Come as a Thief in the Night

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). There are many false prophets today with regards to the "time element." It is amazing how these religious groups hold to a belief that is clearly in contradiction to the word of God. William Miller said, "I am fully convinced that sometime between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time Christ will come again and bring all of His saints with Him" (Martin 361). Seventh-Day Adventism opposes Matthew 24:36, "*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*" And Charles Taze Russell, a Jehovah Witness leader, said Christ came in 1914 but unseen to men (Lambert 10-11). The Bible teaches that when Christ comes He will be seen by all (Acts 1:9-11). How can anyone possibly say that His coming and the beginning of judgment will be silent and seen by a very few? The Bible loudly declares that this event will be ushered in with a great noise (1 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), that "*every eye shall see Him*" (Revelation 1:7), and "*all that are in the graves shall hear His voice*" (John 5:28-29). No, Christ will not come silently and secretly as some claim, but will come to execute judgment upon all of mankind.

Judgment Will Include Everyone

The Jehovah's Witnesses deny eternal judgment of the righteous and the unrighteous. They deny the reality of hell; "Hell, meaning a place of 'fiery torment' where sinners remain after death until resurrection does not exist. This is a doctrine of 'organized religion', not found in the Bible. Hell is the common grave of mankind. Hell is a God dishonoring doctrine" (Martin 48). The Christian Science religion also denies the existence of the Biblical heaven and hell; "The sinner makes his own hell by doing evil, and the saint his own heaven by doing right" (Martin 123).

The Bible teaches just the opposite of these opinions. Everyone will be there and judgment will not overlook a single person. Notice how clearly God has declared the scope of judgment; "*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" (2 Corinthians 5:10; also Matthew 25:32; Romans 14:12). Notice that in 2 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where the dead and those who are now alive will be involved in the judgment scene. Not one single person will bypass judgment. It will be awesome for all. Some will rejoice while others will rue the days in which they denied God and the commandments contained in His word (Luke 16:24-25).

We Will Be Judged According to the Word

There are multitudes of people today who deny the "plenary, verbal inspiration" of the Bible. They deny its all sufficiency and will look to human creeds, philosophy, and the mind-set of other men as their guide in life. Those who have ridiculed elders, gospel preachers, and every faithful member of the church will be surprised to see that Christ will open the Bible to judge them. What will people do at judgment who have made fun of God's word, or who have looked for a translation that contradicts Biblical truths? I am glad that I will only be judged by His standard and not from man's. John penned; *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"* (Revelation 20:12). Many will be surprised to see that they will be judged from the very standard that they rejected.

The Judgment Will Be a Sad Day for Many

How could I possibly describe the final scene in such a way so as to convey the complete desperation that will face the lost soul? There will be an absolute realization of failure and feeling of utter hopelessness. The Bible describes the scene for the lost as *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Luke 13:7-8).

Some doctrines teach that no one will be lost. Their idea is "universalism and grace only." This might give some comfort in the here and now, but this religious philosophy is not to be found in the pages of holy writ. In fact a casual reading of the Bible shows the absurdity of such an idea. Jesus taught that there are two roads over which men will travel. One is described as wide, leading to destruction and many would travel upon it; *"broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat"* (Matthew 7:13). While the other road is narrow, leads unto life and few will find it (Matthew 7:14). If there were no other passages in the Bible this would be enough to disprove the doctrine of universal salvation.

Every person who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ and lived faithfully therein will be lost eternally. When one rejects Christ and His church he literally rejects the salvation of his own soul! One must believe the truth concerning the church (there is one and only one: Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23), that Christ is the Son of God (John 3:16), and that one is to be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Those who reject the Bible's teachings in these matters will be lost eternally.

We Have a Great Need to Be Prepared for Judgment

The finality that will be experienced on the Day of Judgment is a concept that staggers the

minds of men. We experience many things in this life, but they are momentary and fleeting. Our finite minds cannot see beyond the here and now. But at judgment a judgment will be given that will last eternally. It will be final. No courts of appeal, no lawyers to extend the rewards phase of our eternal destiny. Thus, it is exceedingly clear that everyone must prepare for the certainty and finality of this great day. The Scriptures ask a sobering question in 2 Peter 3:10-11;

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Then in verse fourteen Peter records three things that are necessary for one to enjoy eternity. First we must be at peace with God. This involves being saved (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:12-13); being in the one true church (Ephesians 2:16); and being faithful (James 4:4; Colossians 1:21). Then we must be without spot. Everyone who will spend eternity with God is to be pure (Matthew 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). And then Peter states that one must be blameless. This is not to imply that one will never commit sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 1:8). It does, however mean that we are to always repent and live in such a way that blame can never be placed upon us. Luke affirmed that to be blameless meant to walk in God's word; *"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"* (Luke 1:6).

Conclusion

The coming of our Lord will mark the beginning of eternal rewards or eternal punishment. We will all spend eternity in one of two places (Matthew 7:13-14). What will the Lord's return mean to you? It will be a time of rewards to the faithful (Matthew 25:21). It will be a time of vengeance to the lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Never forget that there is a great day coming. It will either be a sad day or it will be a glad day. What we do in this life will determine our destiny. The Bible clearly shows that one must have faith (Hebrews 11:6), which is obtained by hearing the gospel of Christ (Romans 10:17). He must believe the gospel (Mark 16:15-16), he must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confess that Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10), then be immersed in water (baptized) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). This puts one into Christ (Romans 6:1-11) where all spiritual blessings are to be found (Ephesians 1:3). This is the same process which adds one to the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ (Acts 20:28; Acts 2:38-47; Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18, 24; 1 Corinthians 12:13). After becoming a member of the body of Christ, a person must then live faithfully so as to obtain the eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10).

Surely, we can now see the importance of obeying the gospel and living for the Lord. Our eternal destiny depends upon how we will be judged at the great day of the Lord. Judgment is sure; eternity is an endless time that we all will have. Judgment will be joy for the Christian and sad beyond description for those who have now been obedient. The Father sent His Son so that we might rejoice evermore. Judgment will be a great day for the saved.

Works Cited

Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Bethany, WA: Bethany Publishing Company (1977).

Lambert, O.C. *Russelism Unveiled*. Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House (n.d.).