

The Final Judgment

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INTRODUCTION

Our world is filled with misunderstandings and blatant heresies concerning the subject of the final judgment. Some feel there is no life beyond the grave and the idea of eternal rewards is only the figment of man's imagination. They feel that the doctrine of the final judgment is only a threat to hold men in a more peaceful state of co-existence. These view the Bible as a fable which holds good and moral principles which make for a better world. When followed the Bible does make for a better and more wholesome living environment, however, it is no mere fable or story devised from the mind of men. It is in fact the word of God.

The final judgment is a subject which runs throughout the Bible and no matter how many dismiss this fact it is still an event that will come. Many will wish a thousand times upon a thousand times that they had seriously considered this day in their lives and in the lives of those they love. Our task will be to urge everyone to make proper decisions in life in view of the judgment day and a life beyond the grave.

THE FACTS INVOLVED

Many reject the truth and the serious nature of the final judgment because they do not know or will not accept some vital facts connected to this judgment. The final judgment will involve all of mankind. The Hebrew writer stated, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" (Hebrews 9:27). This verse clearly states that every man will die and that every man will face the final judgment. It is an appointment that will not be missed nor postponed. Paul said, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Romans 14:10). Thus, we can understand that the final judgment will be a universal judgment. Every man, woman and child who has received life will die and will be judged. (John 5:19-29)

But, not only will the final judgment be a universal judgment, it will also be an individual judgment. Sometimes we lose sight of personal responsibilities and consequences by observing a broad picture rather than realizing that each will stand individually before the Lord to be judged. Paul wrote "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12). And again, he wrote in 2 Corinthians 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.” Just how all of this will unfold for each of us we are not told, except to know that each of us will give an account for our own lives. This fact should cause people to appreciate and anticipate that moment of time in their lives. Paul expressed the proper attitude concerning the judgment for himself and for each of us in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Understanding that each person will be judged should cause all of us to “love his appearing”.

The final judgment passed upon every individual will be based upon the word of God. It will be a fair and impartial judgment executed upon each person. This judgment will come from the precepts and truths found in God’s word. Jesus stated in John 12:48, “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.” Also, the inspired writer, Paul, stated “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Romans 2:16). This fact should make more men concerned about knowing and living according to the word of God. The Psalmist stated, “That the word of God, hidden in the heart will keep men from sin” (Psalm 119:11). In this life men may discount the Bible as being a hoax or an uninspired book, but that same man will face the truth found in God’s word on his judgment day. The truth sets us free from sin in this life and will make judgment day a joyful occasion in our life. (John 8:32; 17:17)

Every man must also face the fact that his judgment will be complete and final. Nothing will escape God’s notice. He will know and judge us by the secret things done as well as those things which were done in the open. (Hebrews 4:11-13; Psalms 139:1-16) It is a serious and sobering thought to know that every deed and every thought is known by God and that without repentance every one of those deeds and thoughts will face us on judgment day. (Matthew 12:36, 37; Luke 13:3, 5) The thought of this judgment as being final should cause us to think more seriously about our lives and the judgment day. In our justice system today, the courts may declare a man guilty and render a judgment. However, this convicted man may appeal to the court for another trial and possibly might have his conviction overturned, reversed or set aside. Even in some cases he may be granted another trial, but that will not be the case when individuals stand before the Lord and receive their judgment based upon God’s law. (Revelation 20:12-15) This judgment will be absolutely final. Man’s fate is sealed with no possibility of reversal.

Just these few facts should cause all men everywhere to seek to live according to God’s law. God will be just and fair, yet at the same time His sentence will be final. Some will enjoy the blessings of heaven while others must face eternal torment.

THE RESULTS PROCLAIMED

Having stated the facts involved with the final judgment, we now will observe the two proclamations or results of the final judgment. Be assured that man’s eternal residence will be in only one of two places. The Lord will proclaim one of two things. It will be heaven or hell. It will either be destruction or eternal life. (Matthew 7:13, 14) The judgment scene will find men being divided as sheep and as goats. One having the joys of the Lord and the other the place prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:31-46)

In the song written by W. L. Thompson, he describes the day of judgment as a great day, a bright day or a sad day. There have been many great and memorable days in the history of mankind. There was the day of creation (Genesis 1 & 2), the universal flood (Genesis 6), the giving of the law at Sinai (Exodus), the establishment of the church (Acts 2), as well as many other important occurrences. All are great in their own rite and for their own purpose, but the day of judgment will be the most important day in each of our lives.

It will be a great and bright day for those who have obeyed the gospel and have been faithful with their lives. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 John 1:7-9) It will be a great day, because His triumphant return will mark the beginning of a joyful eternity for the faithful child of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 20:12). It will be a great day, because the righteous souls of all ages will be with him (1 Thessalonians 4:14), and our anticipation of being with the Lord will be realized. This will be a bright and wonderful day for those who love the Lord and have demonstrated their love in obedience. (Matthew 22:37; 1 John 5:3; John 14:15) The final judgment will be a day of rejoicing for the saints. There will be no more death, sorrow or pain (Revelation 21:4), all temptations for sin will be gone (Revelation 20:10; 21:27) and there will be rejoicing in the company of all the saved from all the ages (Matthew 8:11-12; Hebrews 11:39-40). Can you imagine being in the presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for eternity? The thought of that company should motivate all of us to seek that heavenly home. (1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 21:22)

The joy of that day will also be enjoyed by the host of angels. They did not comprehend God's purpose throughout the ages past, even though they desired to know what was to be. (1 Peter 1:12) But on the day of judgment they will see the fruition of God's plan to redeem sinners from the pits of hell. (Luke 15:10) When judgment comes the angels will accompany Him and will rejoice in the end result of God's promise (Genesis 3:15) and man's obedience. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7) There are no words that can be uttered from the mouths of men that can adequately describe the wonderful day of judgment for the faithful child of God.

But we must not overlook the other side of the scene at judgment. This day will be a sad day for all those who "know not God" and "that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) There have been many sad days recorded down through the stream of time. It was indeed a sad time when Adam and Eve first sinned (Genesis 3); when the world was destroyed by water (Genesis 6-7); when Herod slaughtered so many infants seeking to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:16) and when they crucified Jesus Christ (Matthew 27). However, the saddest day for many is yet to come. Earth time will be ended and the time to repent will be gone. An eternal time of punishment will begin for all those who have not believed and obeyed the gospel of Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) Remember, there will be no appeals, no escaping and the punishment will be without end. The day will be sad, because the lost will have forfeited heaven's glory. They will have rejected the saving blood of Jesus Christ.

Can you imagine the complete emptiness and utter despair of all those who had heard, yet would not obey the gospel? And can you imagine the complete feeling of failure of all who had obeyed and became unfaithful to the will of God? There are no words or parallels that can compare with having salvation within our grasp and then throwing it away for worldly pleasures. (1 John 2:15-17) How sad

it will be for those who are lost at judgment having led loved ones into that same eternal fate. There would be the same desperation as was felt in the remarks of the rich man in Luke 16 when he said, "...I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Whether we accept the fact or not, we can be responsible for our families coming to judgment unprepared. We know that every man is accountable for his own soul, however, parents are to train up their children in the Lord's way (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6), members of the church are to teach the gospel of Christ to lost souls (Mark 16:15, 16), as well as trying to restore those who are erring children of God (Galatians 6:1, 2; Matthew 18:15-17).

Our disposition on the day of judgment, whether it be a great and bright day or a sad day, will be determined by how we deal with God and His word.

WHEN WILL THE FINAL JUDGMENT OCCUR?

There have been many speculations concerning the second coming of Christ and the day of judgment. For this study we will not quote the many and varied human prophecies relative to the "sign and the times" of Christ's return. We will simply rely upon the Lord's statements concerning the "when" connected with our judgment day, which surely will satisfy all serious students of the Bible.

In answer to the question "...and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world," (Matthew 24:3) Jesus stated in verse 36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." "That day" has clear reference to the second coming of Christ which will usher in the judgment day for all of mankind. This day will come as a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6) and as the flood came upon the people in the time of Noah. (Matthew 24:37-39; Genesis chapters 6-7). The comparisons between the Lord's return and the universal flood are powerful in showing the second coming of Christ will find many unprepared. The flood came suddenly and was not preceded by signs to warn of its coming. In like manner Jesus will come with no signs or warnings.

The serious admonition to watch and be prepared for His return should move all sound minded men to live every day as if it would be that final day ushering in the second coming of Christ and the final day of judgment.

CONCLUSION

As we have observed in this brief study, judgment day is a day appointed by God. It will be a day when all of mankind from all ages will stand before the Lord to be judged for things done in this life. You and I will face God's judgment personally giving answer for what we have said, done, or thought. We have but one short life time to prepare for the judgment day. We can squander that time and expect to be lost or use that time wisely to build our lives upon the saving faith revealed in God's word. (Matthew 7:21-27) Remember, heaven is a prepared place for those who have prepared themselves for it. (John 14:1-7)