

OUR APPROACHING EVALUATION

A STUDY OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

MARTIN PURYEAR

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*FOR WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD ...
THEN EACH ONE OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD.*

– ROMANS 14:10, 12

*LISTEN TO THE TICKING CLOCK.
YOU CAN HEAR THE APPROACH OF ETERNITY.*

*WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE FUTURE
WILL DETERMINE HOW WE LIVE IN THE PRESENT.*

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A MOST CERTAIN APPOINTMENT

Benjamin Franklin ¹ once wrote

“IN THIS WORLD NOTHING CAN BE SAID TO BE CERTAIN, EXCEPT DEATH AND TAXES.”

It is risky business to challenge the thoughts of a gifted individual. But when it comes to this particular saying, I must respectfully disagree with Mr. Franklin on both accounts.

In the first place, there are lots of people who can and should – but who do not – pay taxes. And they get away with it.

Concerning the other issue, the Bible informs us that an entire generation of Church-Age believers will not experience death. According to the Apostle Paul

BEHOLD, I TELL YOU A MYSTERY; WE WILL NOT ALL SLEEP, BUT WE WILL ALL BE CHANGED, IN A MOMENT, IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE, AT THE LAST TRUMPET ... FOR THIS PERISHABLE MUST PUT ON THE IMPERISHABLE, AND THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:51-53)

So, neither (paying) taxes nor death is necessarily certain ... “in *this* world.” But there is an approaching event that is most certain, one that will take place in the heavenly realm. Once resurrected, there is something every reborn follower of Christ *must* do.

WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)

The time is coming when *we must all* bow before the One sitting on heaven’s throne, lofty and exalted ... the train of His robe filling the temple ... and the foundations of its thresholds trembling as one angel calls out to another,

*“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD OF HOSTS.
THE WHOLE EARTH IS FULL OF HIS GLORY.” (ISAIAH 6:1-4)*

The day is approaching when *we must all* face the One Whose head and hair are white ... like white wool ... like snow ... Whose eyes are like a flame of fire ... Whose face is like the sun shining in its strength ... and Whose voice is like the sound of many waters. (Revelation 1:14-16)

Every true believer has a scheduled appointment with the Son of God. And dear friends, once we have been ushered into His Presence,

WE ARE GOING TO HAVE THE FRANKEST DISCUSSION OF OUR LIVES

I, THE LORD, SEARCH THE HEART; I TEST THE MIND, EVEN TO GIVE TO EACH MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS, ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF HIS DEEDS. (JEREMIAH 17:10)

To prepare ourselves for this divine examination,

WE NEED TO CULTIVATE AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

That is the *purpose* of this course, “Our Approaching Evaluation: a Study of the Judgment Seat of Christ.”

The *goals* of this study are for each of us

to be sobered by the certainty of this scheduled, face-to-Face appraisal by our all-knowing Master,

to become aware that we – who are saved by grace – will be judged according to the quality and motive of our works, and

to realize that this evaluation of our lives will result in varying degrees of rewards and losses.

So, let us not join the unbeliever as he chases after the fool’s gold this world dangles in front of him (and us). Let us not invest our God-entrusted resources in a world that is scheduled to burn like a match. Rather, let us live our lives with an eternal perspective. Let us give ourselves to the King of kings.

May each of us be fully convinced: the Judgment Seat of Christ is a most *certain* appointment. And it approaches like the wind.

¹ Benjamin Franklin (1706 – 1790) was one of the founding fathers of the United States. He was a leading author, printer, political theorist, politician, the first U.S. Postmaster General, scientist, inventor, civic activist, statesman and diplomat, serving as U.S. Minister to France and, later, U.S. Minister to Sweden.

WHO WILL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGE?

The Apostle Paul has a good bit to say about the Judgment Seat of Christ. He writes,

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)

Let's begin our study by identifying the recipients of this evaluation. Who is this "we" that will be examined by Christ at this judgment?

Are these believers only? Or does this "we" refer to all of humanity, both believers and unbelievers?

And will this be a judgment of individuals or of a group?

WILL BELIEVERS ACTUALLY STAND BEFORE GOD IN JUDGMENT?

When the Apostle Paul wrote,

"WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST"

was he talking about those whose sins have been washed away? Is that true ... that those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God actually face a divine judgment? To answer this question, let's consider Paul's greeting at the beginning of this letter:

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE WILL OF GOD, AND TIMOTHY OUR BROTHER, TO THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH IS AT CORINTH WITH ALL THE SAINTS WHO ARE THROUGHOUT ACHAIA (2ND CORINTHIANS 1:1)

These are the "we" of 2nd Corinthians 5:10: "Paul ... Timothy ... the Church of God which is at Corinth ... and all the saints who are throughout Achaia." So, according to this letter's introduction, yes, those who appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ are reborn Christ-followers.

That believers will be examined in this judgment is further supported by Paul's letter to the Romans:

WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD. (ROMANS 14:10)

The greeting of this letter reads

PAUL, A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS, CALLED AS AN APOSTLE, SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL OF GOD ... (AND) TO ALL WHO ARE BELOVED OF GOD IN ROME, CALLED AS SAINTS. (ROMANS 1:1, 7)

Here, the “we” of Romans 14:10 refers to “Paul ... (and) all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints.” Once again, those who stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ are believers.

But what about unbelievers? Will they also bow before Christ at this judgment?

UNBELIEVERS WILL NOT BE EXAMINED AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

According to 1st Corinthians chapter 3 and 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, this evaluation is reserved for believers only.

Unbelievers Cannot Build upon a “Foundation” that Has Not Been Laid

According to 1st Corinthians 3, those who are summoned to this examination are those whose “works” were built upon a certain “Foundation.”

FOR NO MAN CAN LAY A FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. NOW IF ANY MAN BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STRAW, EACH MAN'S WORK WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN'S WORK. IF ANY MAN'S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN'S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:11-15)

We are beginning to see that this judgment is an appraisal of the “materials” an individual used to build upon a certain Foundation.

The Foundation, we are told, is Jesus Christ.

The materials used (gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw) refer to “the quality of each man’s work.”

The one who will appear before Christ at this judgment has an established relationship with the Savior (through faith in His work on the Cross). Indeed, that relationship with Him is what qualifies him to be there. The conversation he will have with his Master, therefore, will not concern whether this Foundation exists or not (because it does). Rather, it will concern the quality of materials he used to build upon that Foundation.

AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, WAS THE QUALITY OF HIS CHARACTER AND SERVICE
HIGH (GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES) OR LOW (WOOD, HAY, STRAW)?

This question does not apply to unbelievers. The unsaved cannot build upon a “Foundation” that has not been laid.

Unbelievers Cannot Make Certain Claims that Only Believers Can Make

Furthermore, this judgment is reserved only for those who can make certain claims. In 2nd Corinthians 5 Paul describes the physical body a believer will be given in order to live in the realm of glory:

FOR WE KNOW THAT IF THE EARTHLY TENT WHICH IS OUR HOUSE IS TORN DOWN, WE HAVE A BUILDING FROM GOD, A HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS, ETERNAL IN THE HEAVENS. FOR INDEED IN THIS HOUSE WE GROAN, LONGING TO BE CLOTHED WITH OUR DWELLING FROM HEAVEN, INASMUCH AS WE, HAVING PUT IT ON, WILL NOT BE FOUND NAKED. FOR INDEED WHILE WE ARE IN THIS TENT, WE GROAN, BEING BURDENED, BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT TO BE UNCLOTHED BUT TO BE CLOTHED, SO THAT WHAT IS MORTAL WILL BE SWALLOWED UP BY LIFE. NOW HE WHO PREPARED US FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE IS GOD, WHO GAVE TO US THE SPIRIT AS A PLEDGE. THEREFORE, BEING ALWAYS OF GOOD COURAGE, AND KNOWING THAT WHILE WE ARE AT HOME IN THE BODY WE ARE ABSENT FROM THE LORD – FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT – WE ARE OF GOOD COURAGE, I SAY, AND PREFER RATHER TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY AND TO BE AT HOME WITH THE LORD. THEREFORE, WE ALSO HAVE AS OUR AMBITION, WHETHER AT HOME OR ABSENT, TO BE PLEASING TO HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:1-9)

He then concludes with the declaration:

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)

We should take note that the first word of verse 10 (“For”) places this verse in the context of verses 1-9. That is, the Judgment Seat of Christ is connected to those being described in verses 1-9. (The “we” of verse 10 refers to the same people as the “we” in verses 1-9.)

Notice that those who “appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ”

- are promised “a building from God ... not made with hands ... eternal in the heavens.” (vs. 1)
- will experience their mortality being “swallowed up by life.” (vs. 4)

- have been given “the Spirit as a pledge. (vs. 5)
- are those who “walk by faith, not by sight. (vs. 7)
- and will be “at home with the Lord” once they are “absent from the body.” (vs. 8)

These are not the claims of an unbeliever. Only believers can make these claims. Therefore, the Judgment Seat of Christ is not for all of humanity. It is an evaluation reserved only for believers.

WILL THIS BE A JUDGMENT OF INDIVIDUALS OR A GROUP?

According to Romans 14, the Judgment Seat of Christ will not be an evaluation of the Church as a whole. The Body of Christ is not going to be judged en masse.

FOR WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD. FOR IT IS WRITTEN, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” SO, THEN EACH ONE OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. (ROMANS 14:10-12)

The subject of this evaluation will not focus on the spiritual condition of the Church as a whole. The issue will not be whether the Church, throughout her history, was mature or immature, obedient or disobedient, effective or ineffective.

No, this judgment will be a one-on-One appraisal of individual Christians. Each of us will bow before our Master ... one at a time. And there “each one of us will give an account of himself to God.”

CONCLUSION

Only believers will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. No unbelievers will be there. Furthermore, this will be an appraisal of individual believers. The Church will not stand together before Christ Jesus at this evaluation.

If you are born again through faith in Christ Jesus, you can be *certain* of this one thing: the Judgment Seat of Christ is in your future. May all of us be challenged to live every day we are given in such a way that when we bow before our Master, we will hear His words of praise:

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT ... ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER. (MATTHEW 25:21)

WHO IS THE JUDGE?

According to the New Testament God the Father will not judge anyone directly. Instead, He has turned the judgment of all mankind over to His Son. Jesus Christ will serve as the Father's Agent in judgment.

GOD WILL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN THROUGH CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 2:16)

I SOLEMNLY CHARGE YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS, WHO IS TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD (2ND TIMOTHY 4:1)

The believer's life will not be evaluated by a panel of judges. Nor will there be a jury to deliberate the case. This judgment is reserved for the Lord Jesus Christ and for Him alone.

FOR NOT EVEN THE FATHER JUDGES ANYONE, BUT HE HAS GIVEN ALL JUDGMENT TO THE SON (JOHN 5:22)

WHY THE JUDGMENT OF JESUS CHRIST IS RELIABLE

Can the believer expect a fair and just assessment of his life? Let's carefully observe what the judgment seat is called:

*FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF **CHRIST**, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)*

*FOR WE WILL ALL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF **GOD** ... SO THEN EACH ONE OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. (ROMANS 14:10, 12)*

When comparing these two descriptions of the judgment seat, it is clear: to be judged by Jesus Christ is to be judged by God. And because He is God, He will have no need for anyone to take the witness stand to inform Him of the facts. As an ever-present, all-knowing Eyewitness of our lives, He will already know "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" about each person that bows before Him. His evaluation will be 100% accurate.

I, THE LORD, SEARCH THE HEART; I TEST THE MIND, EVEN TO GIVE TO EACH MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS, ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF HIS DEEDS. (JEREMIAH 17:10)

“God knows those innermost thoughts and motives that an individual might hide from all others. Therefore, God could justly render to each person what his deeds deserve.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 1, Old Testament, Jeremiah, Charles H. Dyer, page 1151)

On the other hand, the believer should *not* attempt to judge his own motives or quality of service. His self-assessment would be inaccurate.

BUT TO ME IT IS A VERY SMALL THING THAT I MAY BE EXAMINED BY YOU, OR BY ANY HUMAN COURT; IN FACT, I DO NOT EVEN EXAMINE MYSELF. FOR I AM CONSCIOUS OF NOTHING AGAINST MYSELF, YET I AM NOT BY THIS ACQUITTED; BUT THE ONE WHO EXAMINES ME IS THE LORD. THEREFORE, DO NOT GO ON PASSING JUDGMENT BEFORE THE TIME, BUT WAIT UNTIL THE LORD COMES WHO WILL BOTH BRING TO LIGHT THE THINGS HIDDEN IN THE DARKNESS AND DISCLOSE THE MOTIVES OF MEN'S HEARTS; AND THEN EACH MAN'S PRAISE WILL COME TO HIM FROM GOD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 4:3-5)

“From a human point of view (Paul) was not competent to judge even his own motives, much less the quality of his service ... Therefore, premature judgment, whether it led to the exaltation of some ministers (3:21) or to the humiliation of others (4:10), was wrong. Only at the *divine* bar would all the facts be known and, even there, grace will be displayed – each faithful minister will receive ... praise.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 2, New Testament, 1st Corinthians, David K. Lowery, page 512)

WHEN IS THIS JUDGMENT?

[SEE “APPENDIX D: GOD’S PROPHETIC PLAN” (PAGE 129),
(2) “CHURCH REMOVED” AND (8) “CHRIST RETURNS”]

We have identified those who will be examined at the Judgment Seat of God as being reborn followers of Christ. We have also identified the Judge before Whom they will stand as being the Son of God. The question now before us is the time of this evaluation. *When* will the Judgment Seat of Christ take place? To help us answer this question, we first need to become oriented to two future events in God’s prophetic program: the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

There are several passages in the New Testament that describe “the Return of Christ.” Unfortunately, many believers have mistakenly assumed that all these verses refer to the same event. But upon careful examination, there are several differences within these passages that lead one to conclude that two events, not one, are being presented.

The first event is known as *the Rapture* [“(2) Church Removed” on the chart, “God’s Prophetic Plan,” (page 129)]. This event focuses on *believers*, those who willingly submitted their lives to the authority of Christ Jesus. At the Rapture *the true and living Church* will be removed from a world that is about to fall under the wrath of God. Its purpose is one of *deliverance*.

The second event is known as *the Second Coming of Christ* [“(8) Christ Returns” on the chart, “God’s Prophetic Plan,” (page 129)]. This event focuses on *unbelievers*, those who defiantly rejected the authority of Christ Jesus. At the Second Coming *all rebels – both human and angelic –* will be removed from the earth in anticipation of the establishment of Christ’s righteous Kingdom. Its purpose is one of *judgment and subjection*.

Let’s consider the differences between these two events in more detail.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH AND THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The Location of Christ in Relation to the Earth

When the Rapture takes place, the Lord Jesus *does not come down to earth* for His Bride. Instead, the Church goes up to meet Him in the air. She physically rises from off the earth into the clouds.

FOR THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN WITH A SHOUT, WITH THE VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL AND WITH THE TRUMPET OF GOD, AND THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. THEN WE WHO ARE ALIVE AND REMAIN WILL BE CAUGHT UP TOGETHER WITH THEM IN THE CLOUDS TO MEET THE LORD IN THE AIR, AND SO WE SHALL ALWAYS BE WITH THE LORD.
(1ST THESSALONIANS 4:16-17)

AT THE RAPTURE CHRIST DOES **NOT** COME DOWN TO EARTH.

On the other hand, the Second Coming of Christ describes the Lord as descending all the way to the earth, "His feet (standing) on the Mount of Olives."

I WILL GATHER ALL THE NATIONS AGAINST JERUSALEM TO BATTLE ... THEN THE LORD WILL GO FORTH AND FIGHT AGAINST THOSE NATIONS, AS WHEN HE FIGHTS ON A DAY OF BATTLE. IN THAT DAY HIS FEET WILL STAND ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. (ZECHARIAH 14:2-4)

AT THE SECOND COMING CHRIST **DOES** COME DOWN TO EARTH.

The Location of the Church in Relation to Christ

When the Rapture takes place, the Church is portrayed as being on the earth *waiting for Him to come for them*.

IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY DWELLING PLACES; IF IT WERE NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU; FOR I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF, THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO. (JOHN 14:2-3)

FOR OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, FROM WHICH ALSO WE EAGERLY WAIT FOR A SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. (PHILIPPIANS 3:20)

AT THE RAPTURE THE CHURCH IS **NOT WITH CHRIST** WHEN HE APPEARS.
THEY GO UP TO MEET HIM IN THE CLOUDS.

But when the Second Coming takes place, the Church is portrayed as *already being with Christ*. In fact, we are told that, when He returns to earth, His saints ("holy ones") will come with Him.

THEN THE LORD WILL GO FORTH AND FIGHT AGAINST THOSE NATIONS, AS WHEN HE FIGHTS ON A DAY OF BATTLE. IN THAT DAY HIS FEET WILL STAND ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES ... THEN THE LORD, MY GOD, WILL COME, AND ALL THE HOLY ONES WITH HIM! (ZECHARIAH 14:3-5)

WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, IS REVEALED, THEN YOU ALSO WILL BE REVEALED WITH HIM IN GLORY. (COLOSSIANS 3:4)

LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD AND GIVE THE GLORY TO HIM, FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME AND HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY. IT WAS GIVEN TO HER TO CLOTHE HERSELF IN FINE LINEN, BRIGHT AND CLEAN; FOR THE FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS OF THE SAINTS ... AND I SAW HEAVEN OPENED, AND BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE, AND HE WHO SAT ON IT IS CALLED FAITHFUL AND TRUE ... AND THE ARMIES WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN, CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN, WHITE AND CLEAN, WERE FOLLOWING HIM ON WHITE HORSES. (REVELATION 19:7-8, 11, 14)

AT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH IS **ALREADY WITH CHRIST** WHEN HE APPEARS.
THEY COME DOWN TO EARTH WITH HIM.

The Purposes

The Rapture of the Church has a different purpose than that of the Second Coming of Christ.

The Rapture focuses on those who willingly submitted their lives to the authority of Christ Jesus, the true and living Church. As with Noah and his family (and, on a smaller scale, Lot and his family), the Son of God will deliver the righteous from the divine wrath of the Father that is soon to encompass the entire world (during a period of great tribulation).

YOU TURNED TO GOD FROM IDOLS TO SERVE A LIVING AND TRUE GOD, AND TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN, WHOM HE RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THAT IS JESUS, WHO RESCUES US FROM THE WRATH TO COME. (1ST THESSALONIANS 1:9-10)

BECAUSE YOU HAVE KEPT THE WORD OF MY PERSEVERANCE, I ALSO WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TESTING, THAT HOUR WHICH IS ABOUT TO COME UPON THE WHOLE WORLD, TO TEST THOSE WHO DWELL ON THE EARTH. (REVELATION 3:10)

THE PURPOSE OF THE RAPTURE IS ONE OF **DELIVERANCE**.

The purpose of the Second Coming is very different. It focuses on those who rebelled against the authority of Christ Jesus. As with the world in Noah's day (and, on a smaller scale, Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's day), the Son of God will return to earth to destroy the unrighteous (expelling them from His presence) and to subject both the nations and creation to the authority of the Father.

... THE LORD JESUS WILL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN WITH HIS MIGHTY ANGELS IN FLAMING FIRE, DEALING OUT RETRIBUTION TO THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD AND TO THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS. THESE WILL PAY THE PENALTY OF ETERNAL DESTRUCTION, AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER, WHEN HE COMES TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS ON THAT DAY, AND TO BE MARVELED AT AMONG ALL WHO HAVE BELIEVED — FOR OUR TESTIMONY TO YOU WAS BELIEVED. (2ND THESSALONIANS 1:7-10)

AND I SAW HEAVEN OPENED, AND BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE, AND HE WHO SAT ON IT IS CALLED FAITHFUL AND TRUE, AND IN RIGHTEOUSNESS HE JUDGES AND WAGES WAR ... FROM HIS MOUTH COMES A SHARP SWORD, SO THAT WITH IT HE MAY STRIKE DOWN THE NATIONS, AND HE WILL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON; AND HE TREADS THE WINE PRESS OF THE FIERCE WRATH OF GOD, THE ALMIGHTY. (REVELATION 19:11, 15)

AND THE LORD WILL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH; IN THAT DAY THE LORD WILL BE THE ONLY ONE, AND HIS NAME THE ONLY ONE. (ZECHARIAH 14:9)

BUT NOW CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD, THE FIRST FRUITS OF THOSE WHO ARE ASLEEP. FOR SINCE BY A MAN CAME DEATH, BY A MAN ALSO CAME THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. FOR AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, SO ALSO IN CHRIST ALL WILL BE MADE ALIVE. BUT EACH IN HIS OWN ORDER: CHRIST THE FIRST FRUITS, AFTER THAT THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST'S AT HIS COMING, THEN COMES THE END, WHEN HE HANDS OVER THE KINGDOM TO THE GOD AND FATHER, WHEN HE HAS ABOLISHED ALL RULE AND ALL AUTHORITY AND POWER. FOR HE MUST REIGN UNTIL HE HAS PUT ALL HIS ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET. THE LAST ENEMY THAT WILL BE ABOLISHED IS DEATH. FOR HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. BUT WHEN HE SAYS, "ALL THINGS ARE PUT IN SUBJECTION," IT IS EVIDENT THAT HE IS EXCEPTED WHO PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION TO HIM. WHEN ALL THINGS ARE SUBJECTED TO HIM, THEN THE SON HIMSELF ALSO WILL BE SUBJECTED TO THE ONE WHO SUBJECTED ALL THINGS TO HIM, SO THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:20-28)

THE PURPOSE OF THE SECOND COMING IS ONE OF **JUDGMENT AND SUBJECTION**.

Comparing the Rapture of the Church with the Second Coming of Christ, we have seen that the locations of Christ relative to the earth are different, the locations of the Church relative to Christ are different, and the purposes of these two events are different. It is, therefore, believed that the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ are two distinct events.

With this in mind, we are now ready to answer the question, "When will the Judgment Seat of Christ take place?"

***THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST IS
SOMETIME AFTER THE CHURCH IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH***

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), (2) "CHURCH REMOVED"]

In Luke 14 we find Jesus at a dinner party in one of the Pharisees' houses. While there, He used the occasion to impress upon these religious leaders their (apparent) need for humility. In the process He spoke these words to His host:

WHEN YOU GIVE A LUNCHEON OR A DINNER, DO NOT INVITE YOUR FRIENDS OR YOUR BROTHERS OR YOUR RELATIVES OR RICH NEIGHBORS, OTHERWISE THEY MAY ALSO INVITE YOU IN RETURN AND THAT WILL BE YOUR REPAYMENT. BUT WHEN YOU GIVE A RECEPTION, INVITE THE POOR, THE CRIPPLED, THE LAME, THE BLIND, AND YOU WILL BE BLESSED, SINCE THEY DO NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO REPAY YOU (LUKE 14:12-14)

And then He gave them an incentive for doing so.

FOR YOU WILL BE REPAID AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (LUKE 14:14)

From this passage we see that the distribution of rewards is to take place at the time the saints are bodily resurrected.

Since deceased Church-Age saints will be raised from the dead at the Rapture (1st Thessalonians 4:16-17) and since believers will be “repaid (rewarded) at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:13-14),

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST MUST TAKE PLACE
SOMETIME **AFTER** THE CHURCH IS RESURRECTED (AT THE RAPTURE)

“Though not specifically stated, this judgment will apparently take place immediately after the Rapture of the church, since the twenty-four elders, who likely represent believers, have their crowns in the scene in heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation.” (Basic Theology, Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press, page 597)

It is, therefore, not correct to say that when a believer dies, “he has gone to his reward.” The believer does not receive his reward at death. He will be repaid sometime after his bodily resurrection when the Lord returns for His Church.

“Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus are now in His personal presence, but they still look forward to the day of reckoning and recompense.” (Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry Clarence Thiessen, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, page 353)

***THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST IS
SOMETIME BEFORE THE CHURCH RETURNS TO EARTH WITH CHRIST***

[SEE “APPENDIX D: GOD’S PROPHETIC PLAN” (PAGE 129), (8) “CHRIST RETURNS”]

When the Lord returns in glory for the entire world to see, the Church will be coming with Him. And when we come, we are portrayed as having already been rewarded.

LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD AND GIVE THE GLORY TO HIM, FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB HAS COME AND HIS BRIDE HAS MADE HERSELF READY. IT WAS GIVEN TO HER TO CLOTHE HERSELF IN FINE LINEN, BRIGHT AND CLEAN; FOR THE FINE LINEN IS THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS OF THE SAINTS ... AND I SAW HEAVEN OPENED, AND BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE, AND HE WHO SAT ON IT IS CALLED FAITHFUL AND TRUE, AND IN RIGHTEOUSNESS HE JUDGES AND WAGES WAR ... AND THE ARMIES WHICH ARE IN HEAVEN, CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN, WHITE AND CLEAN, WERE FOLLOWING HIM ON WHITE HORSES. (REVELATION 19:7-8, 11, 14)

Notice from the above passage that the Church is described as being clothed “in fine linen, bright and clean.” These linen garments are described as being “*the righteous acts of the saints.*” This does not refer to “the righteousness of God” every believer receives upon conversion (Philippians 3:9). These are the good works “of” (performed by) the saints for which they have been rewarded. They are, as Charles Ryrie puts it, “the righteous deeds that have survived the examination of this judgment.” (*Basic Theology*, Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press, page 597)

THEREFORE, THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST MUST TAKE PLACE
SOMETIME **BEFORE** THE CHURCH RETURNS TO EARTH WITH CHRIST AT THE SECOND COMING

WHERE IS THIS JUDGMENT?

In all probability the Lord’s examination of each believer’s life will take place in the sphere of the heavenly realms to which the Church has just ascended.

CONCLUSION

Apparently, each saint’s life will be evaluated in the realms of heaven sometime between the Rapture of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

WHAT IS NOT THE ISSUE AT THIS JUDGMENT

FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)

Once the believer realizes that his life will be examined by the Lord Jesus, he may – very naturally – wonder

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT? WHY DO MY DEEDS NEED TO BE REVIEWED ... ESPECIALLY THE “BAD” ONES? I THOUGHT ALL MY SINS HAVE BEEN FULLY AND FOREVER WASHED AWAY!

The thought of a believer having to give an account of every single one of his sins is highly disturbing, to say the least. It is also incorrect. That view contradicts what God promised regarding the sins of His people:

AS FAR AS THE EAST IS FROM THE WEST, SO FAR HAS HE REMOVED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS FROM US. (PSALM 103:12)

HE WILL AGAIN HAVE COMPASSION ON US; HE WILL TREAD OUR INIQUITIES UNDER FOOT. YES, YOU WILL CAST ALL THEIR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA. (MICAH 7:19)

AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE. (HEBREWS 10:17)

So, before we consider what the subject of conversation *will* be at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we need to clearly understand what it will *not* be.

According to the Apostle John’s eyewitness account, Jesus concluded His work of atonement with this declaration: “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Greek word John used in recording this declaration of victory was “Tetelestai,” a word that carries the meaning, “Paid in full.” That is,

THE BELIEVER’S DEBT OF DEATH HAS BEEN FULLY PAID OFF THROUGH THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Because Christ was punished for the sins of the world, those who accept His payment of death on their behalf are delivered from the wrath of God.

THEREFORE, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION (NO PUNISHMENT) FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO HEARS MY WORD, AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME, HAS ETERNAL LIFE, AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT, BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE. (JOHN 5:24)

Indeed, the believer is guaranteed – by the One Who cannot lie – that he will be found “blameless” upon Christ’s Return.

... OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ... WILL ALSO CONFIRM YOU TO THE END, BLAMELESS IN THE DAY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. (1ST CORINTHIANS 1:7-8)

So, let us be fully convinced of this one thing: The sins of every believer have been washed away by the blood of his Savior. He has been fully cleansed and forever forgiven of his moral crimes against God.

AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, THE BELIEVER’S SINS WILL **NOT** BE THE ISSUE.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT. (ROMANS 4:7-8)

“It is to be observed carefully that the issue here is not to determine whether the one judged is a believer or not. The question of salvation is not being considered. The salvation given the believer in Christ has perfectly delivered him from all judgment. To bring the believer into judgment concerning the sin question, whether

his sins before his new birth,
his sins since his new birth,
or even his unconfessed sins since the new birth,

is to deny the (worth, value) of the death of Christ and nullify the promise of God that ‘their sins and iniquities will I remember no more’ (Heb. 10:17).” (*Things to Come*, Zondervan Publishing House, J. Dwight Pentecost, page 222, parenthesis mine)

“My sin – O, the bliss of this glorious thought –
my sin, not in part but the whole,
is nailed to the Cross and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”

“It Is Well with My Soul”
Horatio G. Spafford

WHAT ABOUT YOU? HAVE YOU SETTLED THIS ISSUE WITH GOD?

Are you depending upon the death of Jesus Christ to serve as the payment of death for your sins? If not, then I must warn you: you are in a deadly situation.

You have broken the moral laws of a holy God ... over and over and over.

Because your sins are an offense to the God of holiness, they are capital crimes. And capital crimes deserve capital punishment.

No matter how moral you consider yourself to be, you deserve to die. And there is not one thing you can do to fix that problem. Your death sentence will not go away if you apologize for your sins. It will not go away if you “straighten up and promise to do better.” Your debt of death cannot be paid off by becoming religious or by helping people. There is only one way you can settle your debt with the God you have offended. You must die.

But God does not want you to die. That is why God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of His great love for you, He sent Jesus Christ to die for you ... to die in your place ... as your Substitute ... so you would not have to. This is the whole point of the Crucifixion.

It is only through His death that you can be delivered from eternal death. No other religious leader has ever died for your sins.

Nor has any other religious leader been raised from the dead. But because God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, you, too, can have eternal life. (The only One Who *can* offer you life after death is One who Himself has been raised from the grave.)

My dear friend, you can either accept Christ’s Payment of death to serve as the punishment for your sins ... or you can pay for those sins yourself. But one of you will pay this penalty.

God offers you His full pardon. It is possible for you – right now – to be completely cleansed and forever forgiven of your sins ... through faith ... in the finished work ... of the resurrected Christ.

May the God of mercy help you understand that His Son is your *only hope* to be rescued from eternal death and raised unto everlasting life.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE AT THIS JUDGMENT?

THEREFORE, WE ALSO HAVE AS OUR AMBITION ... TO BE PLEASING TO HIM. FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS DEEDS IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. THEREFORE, KNOWING THE FEAR OF THE LORD, WE PERSUADE MEN (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:9-10)

We are told in 2nd Corinthians 5:10 that each believer will “be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done” ... including the “*bad*” ones. We have already seen that the believer’s sins will not be the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ. To what, then, do these bad deeds refer?

When Paul wrote that our deeds will be judged as “good or bad,” the Greek word he used for “bad” was *phaulos*. This word does not carry the idea of something ethically or morally evil. To express that thought, the apostle would have used either the word *kakos* or *poneras*. The word *phaulos* has the idea of something that is “good-for-nothing” or “worthless.”

So, the deeds of 2nd Corinthians 5 – “whether good or bad” – do not refer to one’s moral conduct. They refer to the *quality of one’s service as a believer*.

Was his service to Christ the best he could give ... or was it half-hearted?

Was his labor for the sake of Christ’s Church an asset ... or a detriment?

Did he strengthen the Church, weaken the Church, or make no mark on it at all?

Were his deeds worthy of Christ’s Name ... or did they fall short of the honor He is due?

When a believer bows before Jesus Christ, the issue to be discussed will not be his sins; it will be his

STEWARDSHIP

WAS HE FAITHFUL TO USE THE RESOURCES GOD ENTRUSTED TO HIS CARE,
TO STRENGTHEN CHRIST’S CHURCH, FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST’S NAME?

This scheduled evaluation explains why the Apostle Paul was so driven by a healthy “fear of the Lord” to please Christ ... and why he fervently persuaded others to please the Lord with their lives. The thought of himself – or even one of his spiritual siblings – standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ, having wasted his life, was horrific to Paul.

THE PROPERTIES MANAGED BY THE STEWARD

WHO THEN IS THE FAITHFUL AND SENSIBLE SLAVE WHOM HIS MASTER PUT IN CHARGE OF HIS HOUSEHOLD TO GIVE THEM THEIR FOOD AT THE PROPER TIME? BLESSED IS THAT SLAVE WHOM HIS MASTER FINDS SO DOING WHEN HE COMES. TRULY I SAY TO YOU THAT HE WILL PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF ALL HIS POSSESSIONS. (MATTHEW 24:45-47)

It is common for us to view the time in our day as being our time ... or the house in which we live as being our house ... or that we accomplished a task using our skills, in our strength. But the fact is, these resources are not really ours. The One who owns these properties is the Lord Jesus Christ. *We are the stewards of His properties.*

A STEWARD IS A MANAGER OR AN ADMINISTRATOR OF SOMEONE ELSE'S PROPERTY.

There are two key parables that shed some light on this idea of stewardship: Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27.

- In both parables a man owns property, including slaves.
- In both parables the master is about to go on a journey. But before he leaves, he places his property in the care of his slaves.
- In both, the master returns.
- And in both, each slave is summoned to give an account of his stewardship.

Likewise, every true believer is a bond-slave to his Master, Jesus Christ. During this time of His absence (that is, between His First Coming and Second Coming), Christ has entrusted each of them with a portion of His possessions. And one day, each "will give an account of himself to God" regarding the management of his Master's properties (Romans 14:12).

NOW AFTER A LONG TIME THE MASTER OF THOSE SLAVES CAME AND SETTLED ACCOUNTS WITH THEM. (MATTHEW 25:19)

WHEN HE RETURNED, AFTER RECEIVING THE KINGDOM, HE ORDERED THAT THESE SLAVES, TO WHOM HE HAD GIVEN THE MONEY, BE CALLED TO HIM SO THAT HE MIGHT KNOW WHAT BUSINESS THEY HAD DONE. (LUKE 19:15)

Time ... abilities ... material goods ... strength ... education ... opportunities ... experience ... exposure to His Word. It all belongs to Christ. And in varying degrees, these resources have been entrusted to our care. Are we responsibly using them to strengthen Christ's Church for the glory of Christ's Name ... or not? Are we faithful stewards ... or not? This will be the subject of discussion at the believer's evaluation.

This examination is designed to reveal – not to the Judge Who is all-knowing but to the steward himself – the depth of his faithfulness and devotion. That is, when the test is over, the answer will be clear:

I WAS (OR I WAS NOT) FAITHFUL TO FULFILL THE RESPONSIBILITY GOD ENTRUSTED INTO MY CARE.

THEREFORE, I AM (OR I AM NOT) SOMEONE TO WHOM THE MASTER CAN ENTRUST EVEN MORE RESPONSIBILITY ONCE HE RETURNS.

SAVED BY GRACE ... JUDGED BY WORKS

The Christian community has grown quite comfortable with the word “grace,” so much so that we have grown somewhat lax (or even resistant) to the word “works.” We readily quote Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9

FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9)

... but often ignore the very next verse

*FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS **FOR GOOD WORKS**, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND SO THAT WE WOULD WALK IN THEM. (EPHESIANS 2:10)*

Perhaps we are hesitant to emphasize the role of works in the Christian life because we do not want to be branded as “legalists.”

Most certainly, salvation is not earned by obeying a system of law but is, instead, a gift (freely given by grace) through faith. But salvation will not be the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This judgment is for those whose salvation is not in question. Indeed, those who stand before Christ at this judgment would not even be there if they were not already saved. Instead, the focus of this evaluation has to do with what a believer has **done**. The issue will be our works.

*NOW HE WHO PLANTS AND HE WHO WATERS ARE ONE; BUT EACH WILL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN **LABOR**. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:8)*

*EACH MAN’S **WORK** WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN’S **WORK**. IF ANY MAN’S **WORK** WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN’S **WORK** IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:13-15)*

*FOR WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, SO THAT EACH ONE MAY BE RECOMPENSED FOR HIS **DEEDS** IN THE BODY, ACCORDING TO **WHAT HE HAS DONE**, WHETHER GOOD OR BAD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:10)*

*BEHOLD, I AM COMING QUICKLY, AND MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO **WHAT HE HAS DONE**. (REVELATION 22:12)*

“Salvation is a free gift, but rewards, for those who are saved, are earned. The *quality of our service* is the criterion.” (Ryrie Study Bible, Charles C. Ryrie, page 1822, footnote on 1st Corinthians 3:14)

Beloved in Christ, you and I should be careful not to casually dismiss – in the name of grace – a lifestyle of conscientious obedience and service. Our liberty in Christ does not give us a license to be irresponsible or reckless toward His properties ... resources He has placed in our hands for the glory of His Name and for the good of His people.

AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, **OUR STEWARDSHIP** WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSION.

Therefore, let each of us take to heart this bedrock Truth:

FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED; AND TO WHOM THEY ENTRUSTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK ALL THE MORE. (LUKE 12:48)

THE LEANING BALE OF HAY
(Cultivating an Eternal Perspective)

When I was in the 7th grade, my family lived on 11 acres of land with a large creek as one of its boundaries. My father used this property to graze his small herds of Black Angus cattle and Shetland ponies. My mother used this property to grow her vegetable garden. And I used this property to have a whole lot of fun, usually down by the creek with my dog, sleeping bag and fishing gear. But another way I had fun there was with my bow and a quiver full of target arrows. To feed our livestock during the winter months, my father kept our barn loft stocked with bales of hay. I would roll a bale out of the loft and, propping it upright on one of its ends, use it as an archery target.

One day I propped a hay bale upright, walked about 20 yards away, turned around, fitted my arrow, aimed ... and then stopped. The bale was leaning slightly forward. Thinking that I could straighten it up by shooting the arrow into the top of the bale, I let it fly. But instead of straightening it, the arrow caused the bale to lean just a little more forward. "I didn't hit it hard enough," I thought. So, I shot again. But that only caused it to lean a little bit more forward. With exceptional smart, I kept shooting my arrows – one by one – into that bale of hay, trying to knock the top of it backwards. But with each one, all I did was cause it to lean more and more forward.

Even today in my mind's eye, I can still see what happened with arrow # 19. As it thudded into its target, the bale of hay fell forward into a cloud of dust, its full weight cracking and splintering and breaking every one of my arrows. All nineteen of them ... ruined!

Tell me, how is it that a somewhat sane 12-year-old could not realize that all those good arrows were going to be shattered while trying to prop up a lost cause! Was it not obvious that the bale would fall forward? Did I not have enough foresight to see that it was only a matter of time before this tottering target came crashing down? Why did I fail to see the inevitable?

You know, it is possible for us, as believers, to do that same thing ... to "shoot our arrows into a leaning bale of hay." We can be so distracted promoting our own earth-bound interests that we end up investing the bulk of our priceless time ... and strength ... and resources ... and opportunities ... and abilities ... in something that will one day pass away.

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD NOR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD ... THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY.
(1ST JOHN 2:15-17)

Do you believe that? Do you believe that

THE HEAVENS WILL PASS AWAY WITH A ROAR AND THE ELEMENTS WILL BE DESTROYED WITH INTENSE HEAT, AND THE EARTH AND ITS WORKS WILL BE BURNED UP. SINCE ALL THESE THINGS ARE

TO BE DESTROYED IN THIS WAY, WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE IN HOLY CONDUCT AND GODLINESS, LOOKING FOR AND HASTENING THE COMING OF THE DAY OF GOD, BECAUSE OF WHICH THE HEAVENS WILL BE DESTROYED BY BURNING, AND THE ELEMENTS WILL MELT WITH INTENSE HEAT! BUT ACCORDING TO HIS PROMISE WE ARE LOOKING FOR NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH, IN WHICH RIGHTEOUSNESS DWELLS. THEREFORE, BELOVED, SINCE YOU LOOK FOR THESE THINGS, BE DILIGENT TO BE FOUND BY HIM IN PEACE, SPOTLESS AND BLAMELESS. (2ND PETER 3:10-14)

We, the true and living Church, are not in the dark. We have been told what's coming. We do not know the when, but we do know the what. We know from God's Word that "the earth and its works" will one day be destroyed.

WE ALREADY KNOW THAT THIS "BALE OF HAY" IS GOING TO COME CRASHING DOWN.

We have also been told that our lives are going to be examined by an all-knowing Judge. God's Word tells us that the quality and the motive of our labors will one day be "revealed with fire."

NOW IF ANY MAN BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION (I.E., HIS SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST) WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STRAW, EACH MAN'S WORK WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN'S WORK. IF ANY MAN'S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD. IF ANY MAN'S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:12-15, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Do you believe that? Do you believe that one day you will give an account of your stewardship?

FOR IT IS WRITTEN, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." SO THEN, EACH ONE OF US WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD. (ROMANS 14:11-12)

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we have been given the "heads up" as to what is in front of us; and we should not ignore it. Knowing that our approaching evaluation is certain, let us not squander our God-entrusted resources. Rather than giving our hearts to the sparkling tinsel this tottering world dangles in front of us, let us cultivate a devotion to the riches of God. Let us live our lives with an eternal perspective. Otherwise, we will spend our entire life shooting our arrows into a leaning bale of hay.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED UP WITH CHRIST, KEEP SEEKING THE THINGS ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST IS, SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THE THINGS THAT ARE ON EARTH. FOR YOU HAVE DIED AND YOUR LIFE IS HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD. (COLOSSIANS 3:1-3)

THE CHARACTER OF OUR CHOICES

(E)ACH WILL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. FOR WE ARE GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS; YOU ARE ... GOD'S BUILDING. ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME, LIKE A WISE MASTER BUILDER I LAID A FOUNDATION, AND ANOTHER IS BUILDING ON IT. BUT EACH MAN MUST BE CAREFUL HOW HE BUILDS ON IT. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:8-10)

In 1st Corinthians 3:8-15 the Apostle Paul describes two different kinds of *believers* that will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ: those whose stewardship will be praised by the Master and those whose stewardship will fall short of His approval. To illustrate the difference between the two, Paul likens their life-choices to building materials used in the construction of a house. He begins with the house's Foundation.

THE FOUNDATION

FOR NO MAN CAN LAY A FOUNDATION OTHER THAN THE ONE WHICH IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:11)

There is only one true foundation upon which an individual can build his house (conduct the affairs of his life) and expect his life to withstand the scrutiny of an all-knowing God. That foundation is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

LET IT BE KNOWN TO ALL OF YOU ... JESUS CHRIST, THE NAZARENE, WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, (IS) RAISED FROM THE DEAD ... AND THERE IS SALVATION IN NO ONE ELSE; FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN AMONG MEN BY WHICH WE MUST BE SAVED. (ACTS 4:10, 12)

There is no other way for one to be prepared for eternity. No matter how moral and no matter how sincere, if one's hope of eternal life is not based upon faith in Jesus Christ, that life will "collapse" (that is, it will perish).

Because they are all reborn Christ-followers, those who stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ share this one Foundation. Yet, as already discussed, the "Foundation of salvation" will not be the issue at this judgment. It is the building materials that will be the subject of discussion at this Examination.

THE BUILDING MATERIALS

NOW IF ANY MAN BUILDS ON THE FOUNDATION WITH GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES, WOOD, HAY, STRAW, EACH MAN'S WORK WILL BECOME EVIDENT; FOR THE DAY WILL SHOW IT BECAUSE IT IS TO BE REVEALED WITH FIRE, AND THE FIRE ITSELF WILL TEST THE QUALITY OF EACH MAN'S WORK. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:12-13)

Once the Foundation of salvation has been laid (through faith in Christ Jesus), there are two categories of “building materials” with which the believer can use to build his house:

GOLD, SILVER, AND PRECIOUS STONES

OR

WOOD, HAY, AND STRAW

These materials represent the choices one makes as he conducts the affairs of his life. To determine which were used, each life will be carefully appraised by the One Whose

“EYES (ARE) LIKE A FLAME OF FIRE” (REVELATION 1:14)

“It cannot be determined by outward observation into which class any ‘work’ falls, so that work must be put into the crucible in order that its true character may be proved.” (Things to Come, Zondervan Publishing House, J. Dwight Pentecost, page 224)

Gold, Silver and Precious Stones

(a Christ-Centered Life)

The gold, silver, and precious stones are indestructible materials (fire-resistant). They represent the believer’s *faithful obedience and service to his Master*. If this is how a believer chose to conduct his life, he will be rewarded.

IF ANY MAN’S WORK WHICH HE HAS BUILT ON IT REMAINS, HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 3:14)

Concerning these works that merit reward, may we say this over and over throughout our lives: “To God be the glory!” They are *His* works – accomplished through us – for which we will be rewarded. It is all of grace!

Wood, Hay and Straw

(a Self-Centered Life)

The wood, hay, and straw are destructible materials (fire-consumable). They represent the believer’s *faithlessness toward his Master*. If this is how a believer chose to conduct himself, he will suffer the loss of reward but will, nevertheless, remain saved.

IF ANY MAN’S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:15)

CONCLUSION

Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ forms the only true foundation of a life that is rightly related to God. And upon that sure foundation the individual believer “builds” his life.

When his life is evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ, how he chose to use his God-given resources will determine whether he will receive rewards or suffer loss.

Those whose lives were characterized by quality service and faithful obedience (gold, silver, precious stones) will receive various rewards.

Those whose efforts were half-hearted and whose motives were self-promoting (wood, hay, straw) will be denied the rewards they might have had, but will not lose their salvation.

“Only those works which survive God’s testing fire have eternal value and are worthy of reward.” (The MacArthur Study Bible, John MacArthur, page 1995, footnote on Revelation 22:12)

BEHOLD, I AM COMING QUICKLY, AND MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS DONE. (REVELATION 22:12)

May we **all** be found faithful at His Appearing.

OUR STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S PROPERTIES

A STEWARD OF GOD'S GIFTS

(Service)

*IN THIS CASE, MOREOVER, IT IS REQUIRED OF STEWARDS THAT ONE BE FOUND TRUSTWORTHY.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 4:2)*

You are the owner of a large business. The nature of your business demands prompt delivery of its goods to local manufacturing companies. This business is so large that it has two warehouses, each having its own manager.

Over the course of time you notice that the manager of warehouse # 1 always ships each order on the day it comes in.

The manager of warehouse # 2, however, is indifferent toward the need for punctuality. More times than not, the goods are shipped two, three, sometimes four days after the orders are received.

One day, you receive an order for goods that, if delivered on time, will result in many more orders from this company. Otherwise, you will lose their business. To which warehouse manager would you entrust this shipment?

In one of His parables, Jesus tells us which manager *He* would choose.

Faithful Service

In the "Parable of the Talents," Jesus introduces us to "a man about to go on a journey." But before he leaves, he appoints his three slaves as stewards of his property. Each slave was expected to manage the *same kind of property* ("talents"); ² yet each was assigned a *different amount* (five, two and one). By wisely investing these talents, these slaves were expected to make a profit for their master during his absence.

FOR IT IS JUST LIKE A MAN ABOUT TO GO ON A JOURNEY, WHO CALLED HIS OWN SLAVES AND ENTRUSTED HIS POSSESSIONS TO THEM. TO ONE HE GAVE FIVE TALENTS, TO ANOTHER, TWO, AND TO ANOTHER, ONE, EACH ACCORDING TO HIS OWN ABILITY; AND HE WENT ON HIS JOURNEY.

IMMEDIATELY THE ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE FIVE TALENTS WENT AND TRADED WITH THEM AND GAINED FIVE MORE TALENTS. IN THE SAME MANNER THE ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE TWO TALENTS GAINED TWO MORE. BUT HE WHO RECEIVED THE ONE TALENT WENT AWAY AND DUG A HOLE IN THE GROUND AND HID HIS MASTER'S MONEY.

NOW AFTER A LONG TIME THE MASTER OF THOSE SLAVES CAME AND SETTLED ACCOUNTS WITH THEM. THE ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE FIVE TALENTS CAME UP AND BROUGHT FIVE MORE TALENTS, SAYING, "MASTER, YOU ENTRUSTED FIVE TALENTS TO ME. SEE, I HAVE GAINED FIVE MORE TALENTS." HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE. YOU WERE FAITHFUL WITH A FEW THINGS; I WILL PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF MANY THINGS. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER."

ALSO, THE ONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE TWO TALENTS CAME UP AND SAID, "MASTER, YOU ENTRUSTED TWO TALENTS TO ME. SEE, I HAVE GAINED TWO MORE TALENTS." HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE. YOU WERE FAITHFUL WITH A FEW THINGS; I WILL PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF MANY THINGS. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER."

AND THE ONE ALSO WHO HAD RECEIVED THE ONE TALENT CAME UP AND SAID, "MASTER, I KNEW YOU TO BE A HARD MAN, REAPING WHERE YOU DID NOT SOW AND GATHERING WHERE YOU SCATTERED NO SEED. AND I WAS AFRAID AND WENT AWAY AND HID YOUR TALENT IN THE GROUND. SEE, YOU HAVE WHAT IS YOURS." BUT HIS MASTER ANSWERED AND SAID ... "TAKE AWAY THE TALENT FROM HIM AND GIVE IT TO THE ONE WHO HAS THE TEN TALENTS ... (AND) THROW OUT THE WORTHLESS SLAVE INTO THE OUTER DARKNESS. IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH." (MATTHEW 25:14-26, 28, 30)

In this parable the first two stewards were faithful to the responsibility entrusted into their care. The third one, however, proved to be irresponsible. When the master returned, he rewarded his first two slaves; but he reprimanded – and then expelled from his presence – the third slave.

And did you notice that, even though the first two slaves handed in *different results*, they received the *exact same commendation*? The master said to both the one who gained five more talents and the one who gained two more talents:

WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE. YOU WERE FAITHFUL WITH A FEW THINGS; I WILL PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF MANY THINGS. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER. (MATTHEW 25:21, 23)

But to the one who produced no profit from his talent came only *condemnation*:

TAKE AWAY THE TALENT FROM HIM ... (AND) THROW OUT THE WORTHLESS SLAVE INTO THE OUTER DARKNESS. IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH. (MATTHEW 25:28, 30)

This parable focuses on the **wisdom and quality** of a steward's responsibility, not the bottom-line results. Though the final number of their talents differed, both the first and second slaves *doubled their investments*, proving they had the *same high level of dependability*. The third steward showed that he could not be trusted with even a little.

But just who are these "slaves"? What does this parable have to do with you and me standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ?

We know from Matthew 26:2 that this story was told two days before Christ was “handed over for crucifixion.” By this time the nation of Israel as a whole – and the Jewish religious leaders in particular – had rejected Jesus as their Messiah-King. Knowing that His departure was near, Jesus used the remaining time to prepare His followers for His absence. A part of that preparation is found in this parable.

In verse 19 Jesus informed His disciples that there would be “a long time” between His departure from them (the Ascension) and His Return (the Second Coming). This period represents the Church Age.

During this interval Christ’s followers would be entrusted with certain resources ... verses 14-15.

Each of His bond-slaves was expected to use his God-given resources to increase and strengthen His Church ... verses 16-18.

After the Lord Jesus returns for them (the Rapture of the Church), each slave would then be summoned to give an account of his stewardship (at the Judgment Seat of Christ) ... verse 19.

It’s an interesting story because it ends with two promises: one positive, one negative.

*FOR TO EVERYONE WHO HAS, MORE SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE; BUT FROM THE ONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE DOES HAVE SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY.
(MATTHEW 25:29)*

What exactly does that mean? “Everyone who has” *what*? And “more” of *what* “shall be given” him? *What* does the second one “not have”; and *what* exactly “shall be taken away” from him?

The context is what fills in all the blanks:

FOR TO EVERYONE WHO HAS A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO FAITHFULLY SERVE HIS MASTER, MORE KINGDOM-RESPONSIBILITIES SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE OF AUTHORITY AND HONOR;

BUT FROM THE ONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO FAITHFULLY SERVE HIS MASTER, EVEN WHAT RESPONSIBILITY HE DOES HAVE SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM.

Once their stewardship has been evaluated, those who were faithful to the Master will be given greater responsibilities in His Kingdom. Those who were not faithful to Him suffer great loss. The purpose of this parable is to teach that

FAITHFUL SERVICE WILL BE REWARDED

Devoted Service

In Luke 19 Jesus presents another parable in which a nobleman entrusts ten of his slaves with one “mina” apiece.³ Each was to “do business” with his mina until the nobleman returned from a distant country. Again, we should take note that each slave was entrusted with the *same kind of property* (mina). But, unlike the parable of the talents, these slaves received the *same amount of property* (one mina). That is, in this parable each slave was given the same level of responsibility.

A NOBLEMAN WENT TO A DISTANT COUNTRY TO RECEIVE A KINGDOM FOR HIMSELF, AND THEN RETURN. AND HE CALLED TEN OF HIS SLAVES, AND GAVE THEM TEN MINAS AND SAID TO THEM, “DO BUSINESS WITH THIS UNTIL I COME BACK” ...

WHEN HE RETURNED, AFTER RECEIVING THE KINGDOM, HE ORDERED THAT THESE SLAVES, TO WHOM HE HAD GIVEN THE MONEY, BE CALLED TO HIM SO THAT HE MIGHT KNOW WHAT BUSINESS THEY HAD DONE. THE FIRST APPEARED, SAYING, “MASTER, YOUR MINA HAS MADE TEN MINAS MORE.” AND HE SAID TO HIM, “WELL DONE, GOOD SLAVE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE THING, YOU ARE TO BE IN AUTHORITY OVER TEN CITIES.”

THE SECOND CAME, SAYING, “YOUR MINA, MASTER, HAS MADE FIVE MINAS.” AND HE SAID TO HIM ALSO, “AND YOU ARE TO BE OVER FIVE CITIES.”

ANOTHER CAME, SAYING, “MASTER, HERE IS YOUR MINA WHICH I KEPT PUT AWAY IN A HANDKERCHIEF; FOR I WAS AFRAID OF YOU, BECAUSE YOU ARE AN EXACTING MAN. YOU TAKE UP WHAT YOU DID NOT LAY DOWN AND REAP WHAT YOU DID NOT SOW.” HE SAID TO HIM, “BY YOUR OWN WORDS I WILL JUDGE YOU, YOU WORTHLESS SLAVE ... WHY DID YOU NOT PUT MY MONEY IN THE BANK, AND HAVING COME, I WOULD HAVE COLLECTED IT WITH INTEREST?” THEN HE SAID TO THE BYSTANDERS, “TAKE THE MINA AWAY FROM HIM AND GIVE IT TO THE ONE WHO HAS THE TEN MINAS.” (LUKE 19:12-13, 15-24)

Notice that the first two stewards received *different commendations*, based upon the different results of their investments. To the first slave who turned one mina into *ten*, the nobleman said,

*WELL DONE, GOOD SLAVE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE THING, YOU ARE TO BE IN AUTHORITY OVER **TEN** CITIES. (LUKE 19:16-17)*

To the second slave who turned one mina into *just five*, he said,

*AND YOU ARE TO BE OVER **FIVE** CITIES. (LUKE 19:18-19)*

Both slaves are rewarded. But the words “*Well done, good slave*” are missing from the Lord’s commendation of the second steward. Furthermore, he is given authority over fewer cities.

Even worse, the nobleman confronts the third slave with a humiliating rebuke, then removes any future opportunity for reward from him.

“YOU WORTHLESS SLAVE” ... THEN HE SAID TO THE BYSTANDERS, “TAKE THE MINA AWAY FROM HIM” (LUKE 19:22, 24)

This parable focuses on each steward’s **level of effort** (as revealed by the final *results* of his labor). Although entrusted with the same number of resources, only the first steward made the most of the nobleman’s property. The efforts of the second steward were not as zealous. And the third steward’s attitude proved to be completely indifferent.

The purpose of this parable is to teach that

DEVOTED (ZEALOUS) SERVICE WILL BE REWARDED

As noted above there is an interesting difference between “The Parable of the Talents” (Matthew 25) and “The Parable of the Minas” (Luke 19). In Matthew 25 each steward received *a different number of “talents.”*

FOR IT IS JUST LIKE A MAN ABOUT TO GO ON A JOURNEY, WHO CALLED HIS OWN SLAVES AND ENTRUSTED HIS POSSESSIONS TO THEM. TO ONE HE GAVE FIVE TALENTS, TO ANOTHER, TWO, AND TO ANOTHER, ONE, EACH ACCORDING TO HIS OWN ABILITY; AND HE WENT ON HIS JOURNEY. (MATTHEW 25:14-15)

In Luke 19, however, each steward received *the same number of “minas.”*

A NOBLEMAN WENT TO A DISTANT COUNTRY TO RECEIVE A KINGDOM FOR HIMSELF, AND THEN RETURN. AND HE CALLED TEN OF HIS SLAVES, AND GAVE THEM TEN MINAS AND SAID TO THEM, “DO BUSINESS WITH THIS UNTIL I COME BACK.” (LUKE 19:12-13)

Ryrie explains: “The minas represent the *equal opportunity of life* itself; the talents (represent) the *different gifts* God gives each individual.” (Ryrie Study Bible, footnote on Luke 19:13, page 1660, parenthesis added).

A “mina” represents *a stewardship common to all* of God’s servants. That all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, possess all of God’s promises and all spiritual blessings, that all have 24 hours in a day and that (most) have copies of God’s Word are examples of the “equal opportunities of life.”

A “talent” represents *the steward’s unique set of strengths*. That each believer has his own spiritual gift, his own level of health, his own level of income, etc. would be examples of “the different gifts God gives each individual.”

In the parables of “the Talents” and “the Minas,” being *faithful to the Master* and *zealous in service* are the issues. But these are not the only responsibilities God has given each believer. He has also been made a steward of God’s Truth, responsible to faithfully trust and obey his Lord.

A STEWARD OF GOD’S WORD
(Faith and Obedience)

We have just seen that the Judgment Seat of Christ will be an evaluation of the believer’s *faithfulness and devotion in service*. Had he been a responsible steward of God’s resources ... or not?

Furthermore, this assessment of the believer’s life will also focus on his *willingness to trust and obey his Master*. How had he responded to God’s Truth?

HAD HE BEEN A RESPONSIBLE STEWARD OF THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD ... OR NOT?

Faith and Obedience

In the “Parable of the Soils” (Luke 8:4-18), a farmer is shown planting a crop by casting his seed upon the ground. This seed falls upon four kinds of soil: hardened, rocky, thorn-infested, and good. Only one kind of soil could produce a crop. The other three could not.

- The hardened soil prevented the seed from taking root.
- The rocky soil was too shallow to hold moisture.
- The thorn-infested soil choked the crop from growing.
- But the good soil provided the fertility that seed needs to take root and flourish.

Jesus then explained the meaning of this parable:

- “the seed is the Word of God,”
- the “sower” refers to the one who rightly explains God’s Word to others,
- and the four “soils” represent four different kinds of hearts and, therefore, four different ways individuals respond to God’s Word.

For three different reasons, three lives bear no fruit (that is, none of the first three respond to God’s Word in true faith and obedience). Only the fourth, “an honest and good heart,” holds fast to the Truth and bears fruit with perseverance.

- *In this setting* Jesus is probably referring to Himself as “the Sower,”
- the “seed” represents the presentation of Himself as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah,
- and the four soils are the Jewish nation’s four different responses (mostly rejection) to His offer of the Kingdom.

Nevertheless, the “sower” can also be taken to refer to today’s preachers and teachers who accurately explain the Scriptures to their audiences.

After the parable is finished, Jesus then challenges the hearer / reader with a caution:

SO, TAKE CARE HOW YOU LISTEN; FOR WHOEVER HAS, TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN;

*AND WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE THINKS HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM.
(LUKE 8:18)*

What does this mean? Once again, it is the context that helps us understand this verse:

FOR WHOEVER HAS A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, TO HIM MORE UNDERSTANDING SHALL BE GIVEN;

AND WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE A LIVING FAITH THAT MOTIVATES HIM TO RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, EVEN WHAT UNDERSTANDING HE THINKS HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM.

To be entrusted with Truth is itself a stewardship:

If one responds to God’s Word with faith and obedience, he is blessed with an *increased capacity to understand and apply even more of God’s Word*. Why? Because he has proven himself to be a wise, faithful steward of the Truth he already possesses. The Lord can trust him with more.

But if one makes no effort to do anything with the Truth he knows, his capacity to understand God’s Word gradually *decreases*. He becomes “dull of hearing” (Hebrews 5:11). Why? Because he has proven to be a foolish, unfaithful steward of that Truth. He **cannot** be trusted with more.

This dulled sensitivity to Truth is the worst condition in which an individual can find himself. It is worse than cancer. It is worse than paralysis. It is worse than prison. It is worse than the death of a loved one. All of these involve the physical body and the emotions. And as grievous as these conditions are, they are, nevertheless, temporal in nature.

But the inability to understand the Scriptures affects the soul; and the soul is eternal. If a person cannot understand the Scriptures, then he cannot believe them. And if he cannot believe God's Word, he will not obey God's Word. It is, in fact, the most dangerous of situations.

If he is lost, he will remain lost. How can one be saved if he does not understand the Gospel?

If he is saved, his own spiritual growth will be stunted.

His life will be a detriment to the reputation of God.

His personal witness to a lost world will not present a clear picture of the Savior they need to know.

His local church will suffer from his immaturity.

And he will suffer eternal loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

That is why the Lord Jesus added this warning:

SO, TAKE CARE HOW YOU LISTEN. (LUKE 8:18)

Bible study is risky business. It demands a response. It will produce either a joyous reward or a grievous loss, depending on whether we are doers of God's Word or mere hearers. What we learn, we are responsible to do. So, the bottom-line question we should all be asking ourselves is this:

WHAT AM I DOING WITH THE TRUTH I ALREADY KNOW?

A STEWARD OF GOD'S LOVE

(Motive)

*ALL THE **WAYS** OF A MAN ARE CLEAN IN HIS OWN SIGHT; BUT THE LORD WEIGHS THE MOTIVES. (PROVERBS 16:2)*

The motive behind our work will also be a part of the evaluation of our stewardship.

WHY DID WE DO WHAT WE DID?

*THE ONE WHO EXAMINES ME IS THE LORD ... WHO WILL BOTH BRING TO LIGHT THE THINGS HIDDEN IN THE DARKNESS AND DISCLOSE THE **MOTIVES** OF MEN'S HEARTS; AND THEN EACH MAN'S PRAISE WILL COME TO HIM FROM GOD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 4:4-5)*

No matter what our ministry is, the only proper motive behind our service is our *love for God and for man*. Did we do what we did for the glory of God and for the good of others? Or was the motive behind our actions to promote our own interests?

Our Love for Others

IF I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS ... IF I HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND KNOW ALL MYSTERIES AND ALL KNOWLEDGE; AND IF I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO AS TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS ... AND IF I GIVE ALL MY POSSESSIONS TO FEED THE POOR, AND IF I SURRENDER MY BODY TO BE BURNED, BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE, IT PROFITS ME NOTHING. (1ST CORINTHIANS 13:3)

Our Love for God

Ultimately, the proper motive behind all we do is our *love for God* ... to do what is in *His* best interest. How does one prove that he loves God?

IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS. (JOHN 14:15)

HE WHO HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM IS THE ONE WHO LOVES ME. (JOHN 14:21)

IF ANYONE LOVES ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORD. (JOHN 14:23)

Our love for God is displayed through our obedience. Obedience is always in God's best interest.

- It proves we believe that His counsel can be trusted.
- It proves we want to honor His Name before man.
- It proves we want what is best for His Church.
- And it proves we want what is best for the lost for whom Christ died.

Did we do what we did so others would love and honor and respect and fear and admire our God and Savior?

“... the examination at the (Judgment Seat) of Christ is to determine that which was done for the glory of God and that which was done for the glory of the flesh.” (Things to Come, Zondervan Publishing House, J. Dwight Pentecost, page 224)

CONCLUSION

There is coming a day when each believer will be ushered into the presence of Christ Jesus. And there he will give an account of himself. Those who are wise will prepare themselves ... now ... for this evaluation:

- Am I using *God's gifts* to serve my Master?
 - Am I *faithful* to God's calling upon my life?
 - Am I *zealous* (single-hearted) in my devotion to that calling?
- Am I obeying *God's Word* to represent my Master?
- Am I doing what I do because I *love those for whom Christ Jesus died*?
- Am I doing what I do because I *love my God and Savior*?

All of this will be considered by the Master during His evaluation of our lives. If we give ourselves to these pursuits, we can look forward to seeing the smile on our Master's face as He declares these words:

"WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!"

May we all look to Him to empower us to be all that He has called us to be and do all that He has given us to do.

² We read that one of the slaves took the "talent" he had received from his master and hid this "money" in a hole in the ground (verse 18). The word "money" means "silver." In this parable the master is entrusting various amounts of silver to his slaves.

³ "A mina was a measure of money worth 100 drachmas, or denarii (about three months' wages)." (*Ryrie Study Bible*, Charles C. Ryrie, page 1660, footnote on Luke 19:13)

THE TEMPORARY REWARDS WE WILL JOYFULLY SURRENDER

THE GOLDEN WREATHS OF TRIUMPH

AROUND THE THRONE WERE TWENTY-FOUR THRONES; AND UPON THE THRONES I SAW TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS SITTING, CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS, AND GOLDEN CROWNS ON THEIR HEADS. (REVELATION 4:4)

Apparently, one kind of reward believers will receive at their evaluation will be in the form of “golden crowns.” There are two words in the Greek translated “crown”:

The word *diadema* is a crown worn by a *king*.

The word *stephanos* is a crown worn by a *conqueror*, for example, a general in a victory parade who has just returned home from winning a great battle.

The word used by the New Testament writers to describe the crown awarded to a saint is “stephanos.” His reward has to do with the honor and dignity given to one who is victorious ... one who has conquered something.

It is true that believers will “reign with Christ.” But the kingly crown will be worn by Christ and Christ alone. Believers, on the other hand, will wear the crowns reserved for those who have overcome the world. This is what every saint has conquered.

FOR WHATEVER IS BORN OF GOD OVERCOMES THE WORLD; AND THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD – OUR FAITH. WHO IS THE ONE WHO OVERCOMES THE WORLD, BUT HE WHO BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD? (1ST JOHN 5:4-5)

From this passage we should notice that every person “who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” has overcome the world. Let’s not miss that! The *status* of “Conqueror” is not reserved for some believers who have overcome the world while other believers have not. *All believers* are victorious because of the extraordinary accomplishment of Jesus Christ, the One with Whom they are identified. Therefore,

THESE GOLDEN CROWNS ARE A TESTIMONY TO
THE VICTORIES OF SALVATION WON FOR THEM UPON THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

The New Testament lists at least four crowns of triumph available to the saints:

the Crown of *Life* (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10)
the Crown of *Exultation* (1st Thessalonians 2:19-20)
the Crown of *Glory* (1st Peter 5:1-4)
the Crown of *Righteousness* (2nd Timothy 4:8)

We shall soon see that each of these emblems of victory is unique from the other three, each being found within the context of a different circumstance. As the early Christians confronted these various situations, they were encouraged by the apostles to conduct their lives in the same way Christ conducted His ... or they were praised because they had already done so.

So, we should not miss this either. These symbols of victory are not automatically given out. As discussed above, we are saved by grace, but we are rewarded by works. Crowns are earned, bestowed upon those who faithfully submitted their wills to the will of God.

Thus, it is his faith in Christ that gives *every believer* the *exalted position* of “Victorious Conqueror.” But it is his daily *practice* of depending upon almighty God for victory over his enemies that allows the indwelling Spirit of God to work in and through his life. By rightly responding in this way to the world’s persecutions, the flesh’s temptations, and Satan’s oppressions, the *obedient believer is rewarded* with wreaths of triumph.

*DO NOT FEAR WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SUFFER ... **BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH**, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE. (REVELATION 2:10)*

*THEREFORE, I EXHORT THE ELDERS AMONG YOU ... **SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD** AMONG YOU ... **PROVING TO BE EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK**. AND WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD APPEARS, YOU WILL RECEIVE THE UNFADING CROWN OF GLORY. (1ST PETER 5:1-4)*

According to the Scriptures, these crowns are “laid up” for the believers.

IN THE FUTURE THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY; AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING. (2ND TIMOTHY 4:8)

This means that the crown is “safely kept” for us. (Ryrie Study Bible, Charles C. Ryrie, page 1931, footnote on 2nd Timothy 4:8) We might say that our treasures are stored away in a heavenly safe deposit box, “where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” (Matthew 6:20) These wreaths are indestructible ... enduring ... imperishable.

EVERYONE WHO COMPETES IN THE GAMES EXERCISES SELF-CONTROL IN ALL THINGS. THEY THEN DO IT TO RECEIVE A PERISHABLE WREATH, BUT WE AN IMPERISHABLE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 9:25)

It is the view of this Bible student that these crowns are literal crowns. If that is true, these wreaths of triumph are constructed of a special substance, “materials” found only in the realms of heaven. They are described as Crowns “of” Life ... “of” Exultation ... “of” Glory ... “of” Righteousness. This word “of” is understood by New Testament grammarians to mean “consisting of.”

Thus, the Crown of Life is a crown that “consists of” eternal life. That is what it is made of ... eternal life.

And the Crown of Exultation is a crown that “consists of” exultation. It is a crown made of pure joy. And so forth.

Perhaps the only way our minds can accept this is to keep in mind that, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the saints will be in a different dimension ... a heavenly, spiritual dimension ... with its own realities we are yet unable to fully comprehend.

Furthermore, these crowns are only temporary possessions. As we shall consider later, they will be in the believer’s custody for only a short time, soon to be cast before the Throne of Christ during the most extraordinary worship service the Church has ever witnessed.

The saints (that is, all believers) have been assured that their labors, intended to strengthen the Church, have not gone unnoticed.

FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST SO AS TO FORGET YOUR WORK AND THE LOVE WHICH YOU HAVE SHOWN TOWARD HIS NAME, IN HAVING MINISTERED AND IN STILL MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS. (HEBREWS 6:10)

But what works? What must believers do to receive these golden wreaths of triumph? After passing the scrutiny of Christ’s examination, specific traits of character and acts of service will be rewarded, each with its own specific crown.

THE CROWN OF LIFE

*FOR FAITHFUL PERSEVERANCE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING
(TRIALS, PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM)*

BLESSED IS A MAN WHO PERSEVERES UNDER TRIAL; FOR ONCE HE HAS BEEN APPROVED, HE WILL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE WHICH THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO LOVE HIM. (JAMES 1:12)

DO NOT FEAR WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SUFFER. BEHOLD, THE DEVIL IS ABOUT TO CAST SOME OF YOU INTO PRISON, SO THAT YOU WILL BE TESTED, AND YOU WILL HAVE TRIBULATION FOR TEN DAYS. BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE. (REVELATION 2:10)

As mentioned above, “the Crown of Life” is to be understood as a “crown that consists of life.” This crown is made of *life* itself.

Particular attention should be given to the *context* in which this crown is mentioned. According to James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10, the Crown of Life will be awarded to those “who persevere under trial” and are “faithful until death.”

It does not take long for those who follow the Lord Jesus to learn that trials are a normal part of the Christian life.

*CONSIDER IT ALL JOY, MY BRETHREN, **WHEN** (NOT "IF") YOU ENCOUNTER VARIOUS TRIALS, KNOWING THAT THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH PRODUCES ENDURANCE. AND LET ENDURANCE HAVE ITS PERFECT RESULT, SO THAT YOU MAY BE PERFECT AND COMPLETE, LACKING IN NOTHING. (JAMES 1:2-4, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

Most certainly, these "various trials" include persecution, even unto martyrdom. Spiritual opposition from those who are under the blinding influence of an antichrist spirit is not an exception to the rule. It is the rule; and it is to be expected from a world that does not like their evil deeds being exposed by the words and deeds of the righteous.

IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD, THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN; BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD, BECAUSE OF THIS THE WORLD HATES YOU. (JOHN 15:19)

FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE, EXPERIENCING THE SAME CONFLICT WHICH YOU SAW IN ME, AND NOW HEAR TO BE IN ME. (PHILIPPIANS 1:29-30)

Furthermore, suffering for the sake of Christ is not only the *norm* for those upon whom "the Spirit of glory and of God rests"; it is also one of the *proofs* of their salvation.

THE SPIRIT HIMSELF TESTIFIES WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IF CHILDREN, HEIRS ALSO, HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST, IF INDEED WE SUFFER WITH HIM SO THAT WE MAY ALSO BE GLORIFIED WITH HIM. (ROMANS 8:16-17)

*(YOU) ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME. IN THIS YOU GREATLY REJOICE, EVEN THOUGH NOW FOR A LITTLE WHILE, IF NECESSARY, YOU HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED BY VARIOUS TRIALS, SO THAT **THE PROOF OF YOUR FAITH**, BEING MORE PRECIOUS THAN GOLD WHICH IS PERISHABLE, EVEN THOUGH TESTED BY FIRE, MAY BE FOUND TO RESULT IN PRAISE AND GLORY AND HONOR AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST. (1ST PETER 1:5-7)*

To be sure, no one is saved because he remained faithful to Christ while suffering. Rather, he remains faithful to Christ while suffering because he already is saved. Remaining steadfast in one's faith while under the pressure of a trial is *not the cause* of salvation; it is one of the *proofs* of salvation. Perseverance is an outward evidence of one's eternal life. Perhaps this helps us understand such passages as these:

IF WE ENDURE, WE WILL ALSO REIGN WITH HIM. IF WE DENY HIM, HE ALSO WILL DENY US. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:12)

THEREFORE, EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES ME BEFORE MEN, I WILL ALSO CONFESS HIM BEFORE MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. BUT WHOEVER DENIES ME BEFORE MEN, I WILL ALSO DENY HIM BEFORE MY FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. (MATTHEW 10:32-33)

But what does endurance while suffering have to do with a reward that is made of life?

Though tempted to give in to defeat and despair, those awarded this crown remained faithful in adversity, even to the point of death. It is to them that this golden wreath of life will be awarded. As with the other crowns, it is a testimony to one of salvation's victories secured for them at the Cross: *the ability of a Spirit-empowered believer to overcome – with composure – the attacks from Christ's enemies.*

(YOU ARE) IN NO WAY ALARMED BY YOUR OPPONENTS – WHICH IS A SIGN OF DESTRUCTION FOR THEM, BUT OF SALVATION FOR YOU, AND THAT TOO, FROM GOD. (PHILIPPIANS 1:28)

An interesting feature of this crown is its *differing degrees of joy* awarded the believer, depending on the intensity of the suffering he was given to endure and the degree to which he submitted his will to the control of the Holy Spirit.

*BELOVED, DO NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE FIERY ORDEAL AMONG YOU, WHICH COMES UPON YOU FOR YOUR TESTING, AS THOUGH SOME STRANGE THING WERE HAPPENING TO YOU; BUT **TO THE DEGREE THAT YOU SHARE THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, KEEP ON REJOICING, SO THAT ALSO AT THE REVELATION OF HIS GLORY YOU MAY REJOICE WITH EXULTATION.** IF YOU ARE REVILED FOR THE NAME OF CHRIST, YOU ARE BLESSED, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GLORY AND OF GOD RESTS ON YOU. (1ST PETER 4:12-14)*

Perhaps now these words of Christ will come alive to us all!

*BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN PERSECUTED FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND FALSELY SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF ME. **REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN IS GREAT;** FOR IN THE SAME WAY THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS WHO WERE BEFORE YOU. (MATTHEW 5:10-12)*

THE CROWN OF LIFE WILL BE AWARDED TO BELIEVERS
FOR THEIR FAITHFUL PERSEVERANCE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

THE CROWN OF EXULTATION

*FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE TO CHRIST
(ACCORDING TO ONE'S CALLING)*

FOR WHO IS OUR HOPE OR JOY OR CROWN OF EXULTATION? IS IT NOT EVEN YOU, IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS AT HIS COMING? FOR YOU ARE OUR GLORY AND JOY. (1ST THESSALONIANS 2:19-20)

The ministry to which Paul was called was that of an itinerant evangelist. He had been made a steward of the Gospel; and to that trust, he proved to be faithful. This apostle invested every ounce of his strength declaring the Gospel and planting churches, especially in regions where none existed (Romans 15:20).

FOR IF I PREACH THE GOSPEL, I HAVE NOTHING TO BOAST OF, FOR I AM UNDER COMPULSION; FOR WOE IS ME IF I DO NOT PREACH THE GOSPEL. FOR IF I DO THIS VOLUNTARILY, I HAVE A REWARD; BUT IF AGAINST MY WILL, I HAVE A STEWARDSHIP ENTRUSTED TO ME. (1ST CORINTHIANS 9:16-17)

We know from his letters that Paul's ministry bore lasting fruit in the town of Thessalonica. The infant church that he, Silas and Timothy established there continued to be steadfast, even in persecution. As he reflected upon this church's faithfulness, he rejoiced, knowing that he had not labored there in vain. As a result, the Crown of Exultation (Rejoicing) awaited him.

More than likely, those who are awarded this golden wreath of rejoicing are not limited to itinerant evangelists and church planters. Indeed, every Christ-follower has been *called to strengthen Christ's Church* in some way.

AND HE GAVE SOME AS APOSTLES, AND SOME AS PROPHETS, AND SOME AS EVANGELISTS, AND SOME AS PASTORS AND TEACHERS, FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE, TO THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. (EPHESIANS 4:11-12)

To fulfill that God-given stewardship, every believer has been *equipped with a certain gift(s)*.

AS EACH ONE HAS RECEIVED A SPECIAL GIFT, EMPLOY IT IN SERVING ONE ANOTHER AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD. (1ST PETER 4:10)

This is the will of God for every believer: to build up the Body of Christ. And He has supplied them with everything they will need to do so. Those who faithfully employ these resources to increase and strengthen the Church will receive this Crown of Exultation.

Scripture has given us some samples of ministry that, if faithfully performed, will result in a reward.

Hospitality to God's Servants

HE WHO RECEIVES YOU RECEIVES ME, AND HE WHO RECEIVES ME RECEIVES HIM WHO SENT ME. HE WHO RECEIVES A PROPHET IN THE NAME OF ("BECAUSE HE IS") A PROPHET SHALL RECEIVE A PROPHET'S REWARD; AND HE WHO RECEIVES A RIGHTEOUS MAN IN THE NAME OF ("BECAUSE HE IS") A RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL RECEIVE A RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REWARD. AND WHOEVER IN THE NAME OF A DISCIPLE GIVES TO ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES EVEN A CUP OF COLD WATER TO DRINK, TRULY I SAY TO YOU, HE SHALL NOT LOSE HIS REWARD. (MATTHEW 10:40-42, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Goodness to All People

LET US NOT LOSE HEART IN DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE WILL REAP IF WE DO NOT GROW WEARY. SO THEN, WHILE WE HAVE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE, AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE FAITH. (GALATIANS 6:9-10)

Providing for the Needs of the Poor

BUT WHEN YOU GIVE TO THE POOR, DO NOT LET YOUR LEFT HAND KNOW WHAT YOUR RIGHT HAND IS DOING, SO THAT YOUR GIVING WILL BE IN SECRET; AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU. (MATTHEW 6:3-4)

From these verses we should notice that a reward is promised to those who faithfully employ their God-entrusted gifts, passion, time, resources, opportunities and strength in their service to Christ. It is a calling to represent Him in character and service, both to those who are in the faith as well as to those outside the faith. This Crown of Exultation is believed to be that reward.

Perhaps when they are awarded this crown, its recipients will finally be shown *all the fruit of their labors* (something *no one sees in this life*). If so, the extraordinary substance from which it is constructed is remarkably fitting. This golden wreath of triumph is made of *pure joy*.

THE CROWN OF EXULTATION WILL BE AWARDED TO BELIEVERS
FOR THEIR FAITHFUL SERVICE TO CHRIST

THE CROWN OF GLORY

*FOR FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP OF CHRIST'S CHURCH
(PASTORAL MINISTRIES)*

The Crown of Glory is unique. Unlike the other crowns, it is reserved for a certain group of believers, those who are often dishonored by the world but who hold a special place in the heart of God.

THEREFORE, I EXHORT THE ELDERS AMONG YOU, AS YOUR FELLOW ELDER AND WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND A PARTAKER ALSO OF THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED, SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD AMONG YOU, EXERCISING OVERSIGHT NOT UNDER COMPULSION, BUT VOLUNTARILY, ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD; AND NOT FOR SORDID GAIN, BUT WITH EAGERNESS; NOR YET AS LORDING IT OVER THOSE ALLOTTED TO YOUR CHARGE, BUT PROVING TO BE EXAMPLES TO THE FLOCK. AND WHEN THE CHIEF SHEPHERD APPEARS, YOU WILL RECEIVE THE UNFADING CROWN OF GLORY. (1ST PETER 5:1-4)

The recipients of this crown are those who are entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the flock of God, faithfully serving His Church as pastors (also known as elders or shepherds). Those who submit their wills to the will of God are motivated and empowered by God

- to nurture God's flock with His compassion and discipline,
- to instruct them with the Word of God,
- to protect them from false doctrine and
- to guide them by modeling the character of Christ

It is by the ministry of a faithful pastor that a local body of believers is able to be victorious over Satan's subtle deceptions and lies and errors and confusion and impurity and insecurity and instability and weakness and tyranny and defeat and ruin and death ... and over the world's cold indifference toward the eternal souls of man.

As with the other crowns, the name of this crown reveals the "material" from which it is constructed. This is a crown made of *pure glory*. It is an "unfading" crown, forever shining with lightning radiance, as it recognizes the faithful labor of the Chief Shepherd's shepherds.

**THE CROWN OF GLORY WILL BE AWARDED TO PASTORS
FOR THEIR FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP OF CHRIST'S CHURCH**

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*FOR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S WORD
(FAITH AND OBEDIENCE)*

THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE HAS COME. I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT; I HAVE FINISHED THE COURSE; I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. IN THE FUTURE THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY; AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING. (2ND TIMOTHY 4:6-8)

Second Timothy is the Apostle Paul's last New Testament letter. Sitting in a Roman jail, he knew that he would not walk away from this imprisonment. He knew that it would not be long before he heard the footsteps of his executioner.

As he looked back over his life, Paul was able to offer a remarkable testimony.

"I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. I HAVE FINISHED THE COURSE. I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH."

Perhaps more than any other missionary, Paul was well-acquainted with the sacrifices a "fight for the faith" demanded. Now, awaiting his release from prison to Paradise, he could say with a clear conscience, "By the power of Christ's resurrection, I have run well the race to which I was called; and now I am about to cross my finish line."

Through it all, Paul never abandoned his belief in the integrity of the Scriptures. He had defended its authority, taught its doctrines, obeyed its commands and encouraged the Church to do the same. He had kept the faith. As a result, he knew that a certain crown awaited him, one that was made of pure righteousness.

This same Crown of Righteousness is available to all who share Paul's *high view of Scripture*. Indeed, it would not have been possible to *be* saved without believing in the integrity of the Gospel as proclaimed by the apostles.

THE ONE WHO LISTENS TO YOU (THE APOSTLES) LISTENS TO ME (JESUS), AND THE ONE WHO REJECTS YOU REJECTS ME; AND HE WHO REJECTS ME REJECTS THE ONE WHO SENT ME (GOD THE FATHER). (LUKE 10:16, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Furthermore, a desire *to be holy*, generated by the indwelling Spirit of Holiness, is present within all who are saved.

BY THIS WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM, IF WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. THE ONE WHO SAYS, "I HAVE COME TO KNOW HIM," AND DOES NOT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM; BUT WHOEVER KEEPS HIS WORD, IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED. (1ST JOHN 2:3-5)

Both a high view of Scripture and a desire for holiness give every believer the *potential* to triumph over the ravages of deception and sin. But what will he do with these victories of salvation secured for him by Christ on the Cross? Will he pursue, by faith, the righteous will of the Father? Or will he pursue, in unbelief, the values of this world and the appetites of his flesh? The Crown of Righteousness is at stake.

Those who prove themselves faithful stewards of God's Truth – those who hold fast to the Word of God through faith and obedience – have every reason to eagerly long for the Rapture of the Church.

But those who do not will respond to Him in a very different way at His Appearing.

NOW, LITTLE CHILDREN, ABIDE IN HIM, SO THAT WHEN HE APPEARS, WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE AND NOT SHRINK AWAY FROM HIM IN SHAME AT HIS COMING. (1ST JOHN 2:28)

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE AWARDED TO BELIEVERS
FOR THEIR FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S WORD

CASTING OUR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD

Much of the New Testament's last letter, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, describes what will take place in heaven and on earth immediately preceding the Return of Christ (chapters 4-19). In this letter "to the seven churches that are in Asia," the Apostle John describes an event that will occur sometime after the Judgment Seat of Christ. The scene involves twenty-four elders, sitting upon twenty-four thrones, all of which encircle the throne of God.

AROUND THE THRONE WERE TWENTY-FOUR THRONES; AND UPON THE THRONES I SAW TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS SITTING, CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS, AND GOLDEN CROWNS ON THEIR HEADS
(REVELATION 4:4)

Based upon this description, it is the belief of many Bible students that these twenty-four elders represent Church Age believers. They are described as being "clothed in white garments" (they have been made spotless and pure by the blood of Christ). They are sitting upon thrones encircling the Throne of God (they are reigning with Christ). And they are adorned with "golden crowns upon their heads" (they have been rewarded for their faithful service to Christ).

As mentioned above, it is the belief of this writer that these are literal crowns. Whether that is true or not, it is *certain* that these wreaths of victory will not remain as permanent possessions of the redeemed. The Bible informs us that there is coming a day when these crowns will be cast before the throne of God.

THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS WILL FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND WILL WORSHIP HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER AND EVER, AND WILL CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE. (REVELATION 4:10)

But why will they do this? Why will the saints – having been rewarded for their faithfulness – surrender their crowns to Christ?

"WHAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH ME"

*I WILL NOT PRESUME TO SPEAK OF ANYTHING EXCEPT WHAT **CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH ME**, RESULTING IN THE OBEDIENCE OF THE GENTILES BY WORD AND DEED. (ROMANS 15:18)*

An extraordinary worship service awaits those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. At the beginning of that service, they will arrive in heaven's throne room wearing their various wreaths of triumph ... but they will leave without them. The Scriptures tell us that, having assembled before the throne of God, this rewarded assembly of believers

WILL FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE, AND WILL WORSHIP HIM WHO LIVES FOREVER AND EVER, AND WILL CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE, SAYING, "WORTHY ARE YOU, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD, TO RECEIVE GLORY AND HONOR AND POWER." (REVELATION 4:10-11)

What a local church feebly attempts to do each time they assemble for corporate worship will be fully realized during this future worship service as twenty ⁽⁺⁾ centuries of Church Age saints come together to acknowledge the worth of their Redeemer. In surrendering the rewards they earned during their lifetimes of faithful service, they are “giving credit where credit is due.”

“YOU, LORD JESUS – AND YOU ALONE – DESERVE TO WEAR THESE CROWNS!”

Relinquishing their crowns is the only appropriate response of Christ’s stewards. During their lives they had faithfully represented their Master to the world in both character and service. And yet the ability to do so had not been generated by their own will and power but, instead, by the will and power of God almighty. Only God has the power to represent God. These stewards were simply willing to be used to accomplish His holy purposes. As a result, God has the right to receive all glory and honor and praise.

WHAT THEN IS APOLLOS? AND WHAT IS PAUL? SERVANTS THROUGH WHOM YOU BELIEVED, EVEN AS THE LORD GAVE OPPORTUNITY TO EACH ONE. I PLANTED, APOLLOS WATERED, BUT GOD WAS CAUSING THE GROWTH. SO THEN NEITHER THE ONE WHO PLANTS NOR THE ONE WHO WATERS IS ANYTHING, BUT GOD WHO CAUSES THE GROWTH. NOW HE WHO PLANTS AND HE WHO WATERS ARE ONE; BUT EACH WILL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 3:5-8)

Therefore, these who labored so diligently in Christ’s Name will willingly ... joyfully ... gladly ... cast their rewards before the throne of God because they rightfully belong to Him: to the One Who *called them* into His service ... Who *equipped them* with everything they needed to fulfill that calling ... and Who *accomplished through them* what He gave them to do! With this one act of worship, the saints are declaring the worth of the One Who so generously shared with them His ministry of reconciling God to man.

Why will the saints cast their crowns before the throne of God? It is because Christ alone has the right to wear these wreaths of triumph He so graciously will award His bond-slaves at their judgment.

WHEN WILL BELIEVERS CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE GOD’S THRONE?

This worship service will, of course, take place sometime after the Judgment Seat of Christ. Maybe it will take place immediately following the believers’ evaluation. Or perhaps the saints will wear their crowns while reigning with Christ throughout His millennial reign on earth, casting them at His feet at *the close* of that era.

Because the passage presenting this event is positioned toward the beginning of John’s vision (Revelation 4) rather than after his presentation of Christ’s reign on earth (Revelation 20), it is likely that this worship service will immediately follow the believers’ evaluation.

THE ETERNAL REWARDS WE WILL GRATEFULLY KEEP

We have seen that the *crowns* rewarded to each faithful steward will be a temporary possession, only to be cast before the throne of Christ shortly (perhaps) after receiving them. There are, however, other rewards to be given that will remain in the possession of the believer throughout “the ages to come.”

But before we consider these eternal rewards, we should become oriented to these “ages” throughout which the redeemed will enjoy their rewards: Christ’s 1,000-year (millennial) reign over *this present earth* and His eternal reign over the *new earth*.

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST ON THIS EARTH⁴

[PLEASE SEE “APPENDIX D: GOD’S PROPHETIC PLAN” (PAGE 129), III “THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM”]

THEN I SAW THRONES, AND THEY SAT ON THEM, AND JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN TO THEM. AND I SAW THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN BEHEADED BECAUSE OF THEIR TESTIMONY OF JESUS AND BECAUSE OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND THOSE WHO HAD NOT WORSHIPED THE BEAST OR HIS IMAGE, AND HAD NOT RECEIVED THE MARK ON THEIR FOREHEAD AND ON THEIR HAND; AND THEY CAME TO LIFE AND REIGNED WITH CHRIST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. (REVELATION 20:4)

When the Lord returns to earth at the Second Coming, He will establish a world-wide Empire, its capitol being Jerusalem, Israel. Commonly known as the Millennial Kingdom, the reign of Christ *on this earth* will last ten centuries.

Throughout His 1,000-year reign, Christ will rule with “a rod of iron,” subjecting all the nations on earth – and their rulers – to His authority. He will be the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (and President of presidents).

AND I SAW HEAVEN OPENED, AND BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE, AND HE WHO SAT ON IT IS CALLED FAITHFUL AND TRUE, AND IN RIGHTEOUSNESS HE JUDGES AND WAGES WAR. HIS EYES ARE A FLAME OF FIRE, AND ON HIS HEAD ARE MANY DIADEMS; AND HE HAS A NAME WRITTEN ON HIM WHICH NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT HIMSELF. HE IS CLOTHED WITH A ROBE DIPPED IN BLOOD, AND HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD ... FROM HIS MOUTH COMES A SHARP SWORD, SO THAT WITH IT HE MAY STRIKE DOWN THE NATIONS, AND HE WILL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON; AND HE TREADS THE WINE PRESS OF THE FIERCE WRATH OF GOD, THE ALMIGHTY. AND ON HIS ROBE AND ON HIS THIGH, HE HAS A NAME WRITTEN, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (REVELATION 19:11-16)

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST ON THE NEW EARTH

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), V. "THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH"]

At the end of these ten centuries of Christ's rule over the nations, He will then turn His Kingdom over to the Father.

THEN COMES THE END, WHEN HE HANDS OVER THE KINGDOM TO THE GOD AND FATHER, WHEN HE HAS ABOLISHED ALL RULE AND ALL AUTHORITY AND POWER. FOR HE MUST REIGN UNTIL HE HAS PUT ALL HIS ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET. THE LAST ENEMY THAT WILL BE ABOLISHED IS DEATH. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:24-26)

Because the present heaven and earth have been marred by sin, they will then be incinerated ...

BUT THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF, IN WHICH THE HEAVENS WILL PASS AWAY WITH A ROAR AND THE ELEMENTS WILL BE DESTROYED WITH INTENSE HEAT, AND THE EARTH AND ITS WORKS WILL BE BURNED UP. (2ND PETER 3:10)

... and in their place, a new heaven and earth will be created.

THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH; FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH PASSED AWAY, AND THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SEA. (REVELATION 21:1)

Thus, the redeemed enter the Kingdom of Christ on a new and perfect earth. And this will be their home throughout eternity.

We have briefly considered where the redeemed can be found in the future, both on this earth and the new earth. We are now ready to turn our attention to the rewards that will remain in their permanent possession throughout the eternal ages to come.

⁴ Although this kingdom has a spiritual element to it, its character should not be "spiritualized." This is a literal (physical) empire, established upon this earth, with its own government and lasting ten centuries. It is the beginning phase (the "threshold," so to speak) of Christ's eternal kingdom.

It Is Political in Nature

Jesus, the Messiah-King will rule over Israel, His seat of government based in Jerusalem (Micah 5:2) ... Israel will be at peace in their land (Isaiah 60:18; Jeremiah 30:8-10) ... Jesus, the Son of David, will rule from the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33) ... Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords, will rule over and judge all the nations (Micah 4:2-3; Zechariah 14:9) ... Jerusalem will be the world's capitol (Jeremiah 3:17; Joel 3:16-17; Zechariah 8:2-3) ... Israel will be the only super power, her beneficent influence spreading throughout the world (Micah 5:7) ... and universal peace will prevail over the earth, the nations' "swords" having been "beaten into plowshares." (Isaiah 2:4; Zechariah 9:10).

It Is Physical in Nature

Because of the presence of Jesus, the obedient Son of Man, the curse that presently engulfs the earth will be lifted. Wild animals will be tamed (Isaiah 11:6-9) ... deserts will blossom and crops will be abundant (Isaiah 27:6; Isaiah 35:1-2; Amos 9:13) ... and human age will be increased (Isaiah 65:20-23), returning to the life-spans present before the flood of Noah's day.

It Is Spiritual / Moral in Nature

Satan will be confined to the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3) ... the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt (Ezekiel 40:5 – 43:27) ... the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship (Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:20-23) ... there will be worldwide knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9; Jeremiah 31:34; Habakkuk 2:14) ... Israel will be filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:24-29) ... and there will be worldwide righteousness and justice (Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:4; Isaiah 42:1-4; Jeremiah 23:5).

THE ETERNAL REWARDS

Not every reward the saints receive at their evaluation will be returned to Christ. Some will remain in their possession throughout eternity.

Christ's Praise for Faithful Stewardship

WHEN HE (THE NOBLEMAN) RETURNED, AFTER RECEIVING THE KINGDOM, HE ORDERED THAT THESE SLAVES, TO WHOM HE HAD GIVEN THE MONEY, BE CALLED TO HIM SO THAT HE MIGHT KNOW WHAT BUSINESS THEY HAD DONE. THE FIRST APPEARED, SAYING, "MASTER, YOUR MINA HAS MADE TEN MINAS MORE." AND HE SAID TO HIM, "WELL DONE, GOOD SLAVE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE THING, YOU ARE TO BE IN AUTHORITY OVER TEN CITIES."

THE SECOND CAME, SAYING, "YOUR MINA, MASTER, HAS MADE FIVE MINAS." AND HE SAID TO HIM ALSO, "AND YOU ARE TO BE OVER FIVE CITIES." (LUKE 19:15-19, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

We should take note from the above parable that these two slaves were given the same number of resources (one "mina") but turned in two different results: the first, "ten minas" ... the second, only "five minas."

To the slave who turned in ten minas, his master commends him with His smiling approval:

"WELL DONE, GOOD SLAVE."

But did you notice? The master does not say this to the slave who turned in only five minas. Those words of praise are withheld from him.

Apparently, not every believer will hear this commendation at their evaluation. But for those who do, just to be able to hear those words will be worth every second of time and every penny of money and every effort of strength invested in faithful service to Christ.

And they are going to have a long, long time to savor the joy of those words from their Master.

A Position of Civil Authority

AND THEY SANG A NEW SONG, SAYING, "WORTHY ARE YOU TO TAKE THE BOOK AND TO BREAK ITS SEALS; FOR YOU WERE SLAIN, AND PURCHASED FOR GOD WITH YOUR BLOOD MEN FROM EVERY TRIBE AND TONGUE AND PEOPLE AND NATION. YOU HAVE MADE THEM TO BE A KINGDOM AND PRIESTS TO OUR GOD; AND THEY WILL REIGN UPON THE EARTH." (REVELATION 5:9-10)

The saints of God are promised the privilege to “reign” with Christ on *this* earth during His 1,000-year rule of the nations.

*... THEY WILL BE PRIESTS OF GOD AND OF CHRIST AND **WILL REIGN WITH HIM FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.** (REVELATION 20:6)*

The *position* of civil authority assigned to each believer is determined by his level of faithful stewardship: how he used his God-given resources ... to strengthen God’s people ... for the sake of God’s glory. Consider, once again, the Parable of the Minas: the same number of resources is given to each believer (one “mina”). The earned dividends of one, however, were greater than that of the other (“ten minas” versus “five minas”), resulting in two different levels of authority awarded in Christ’s Kingdom (“ten cities” versus “five cities”).

*THE FIRST APPEARED, SAYING, “MASTER, YOUR MINA HAS MADE TEN MINAS MORE.” AND HE SAID TO HIM, “WELL DONE, GOOD SLAVE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL IN A VERY LITTLE THING, YOU ARE TO BE IN AUTHORITY OVER **TEN CITIES.**” THE SECOND CAME, SAYING, “YOUR MINA, MASTER, HAS MADE FIVE MINAS.” AND HE SAID TO HIM ALSO, “AND YOU ARE TO BE OVER **FIVE CITIES.**” (LUKE 19:16-19)*

Apparently, all the saints will reign with Christ in some capacity, some being entrusted with authority over a larger realm than others.

But notice what happens when the rule of Christ over the nations of this earth comes to an end. We are told that His reign will continue throughout the eternal state on the new earth.

THEN I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH; FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH PASSED AWAY, AND THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SEA ... AND HE WHO SITS ON THE THRONE SAID ... I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END. (REVELATION 21:1, 5-6)

Likewise, the saints’ rewards of civil authority will continue throughout the ages to come on the new earth.

*THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY CURSE; AND THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB WILL BE IN IT (THE NEW JERUSALEM), AND HIS BOND-SERVANTS WILL SERVE HIM; THEY WILL SEE HIS FACE, AND HIS NAME WILL BE ON THEIR FOREHEADS. AND THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY NIGHT; AND THEY WILL NOT HAVE NEED OF THE LIGHT OF A LAMP NOR THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, BECAUSE THE LORD GOD WILL ILLUMINE THEM; AND **THEY WILL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER.** (REVELATION 22:3-5, PARENTHESIS ADDED)*

A Capacity to Radiate the Blazing Glory of God

*“WHEN WE’VE BEEN THERE TEN THOUSAND YEARS, BRIGHT SHINING AS THE SUN,
WE’VE NO LESS DAYS TO SING GOD’S PRAISE THAN WHEN WE FIRST BEGUN.”*

– “Amazing Grace”

The Bride of Christ, “holy and blameless,” is urged – in fact, She is expected – to conduct Herself in such a way that the reputation of the God She professes to love would be honored and respected. These “holy ones” are called to publicly – and privately – display the character of God in thought and attitude, word and deed.

*THEREFORE, I ... IMPLORE YOU TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE CALLING WITH WHICH YOU
HAVE BEEN CALLED (EPHESIANS 4:1)*

This is, of course, the overall purpose of their lives during their brief sojourn on this earth ... to glorify God through a Christ-like life.

*WHETHER, THEN, YOU EAT OR DRINK OR WHATEVER YOU DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 10:31)*

Those who do are likened to “lights” in a world surrounded by the darkness of sin.

*... PROVE YOURSELVES TO BE BLAMELESS AND INNOCENT, CHILDREN OF GOD ABOVE REPROACH IN
THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE GENERATION, AMONG WHOM YOU APPEAR AS LIGHTS IN
THE WORLD, HOLDING FAST THE WORD OF LIFE, SO THAT IN THE DAY OF CHRIST I WILL HAVE
REASON TO GLORY BECAUSE I DID NOT RUN IN VAIN NOR TOIL IN VAIN. (PHILIPPIANS 2:15-16)*

Believers who trust the Holy Spirit to radiate the character of Christ through their lives will be rewarded for doing so. In fact, *that* is one of the rewards they will receive:

AN INCREASED CAPACITY TO RADIATE THE BLAZING GLORY OF CHRIST JESUS

While serving the Son of God as citizens of His eternal Kingdom, the redeemed will be “clothed” with a brightness that rivals that of the sun and the stars.

*THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN IN THE KINGDOM OF THEIR FATHER.
(MATTHEW 13:43)*

*THOSE WHO HAVE INSIGHT WILL SHINE BRIGHTLY LIKE THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE EXPANSE OF
HEAVEN, AND THOSE WHO LEAD THE MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, LIKE THE STARS FOREVER AND
EVER. (DANIEL 12:3)*

Indeed, the very nature of this reward does not allow it to be “contained.” To the contrary, the redeemed will exult as they radiate the dazzling brilliance of God’s glory.

Notice, too, the *duration* of this reward. Those who glorify God in this life will project the glory of God throughout the millennial reign of Christ and throughout the eternal ages to come. It is a reward that will remain with them “forever and ever.”

THOSE WHO HAVE INSIGHT WILL SHINE BRIGHTLY LIKE THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE EXPANSE OF HEAVEN, AND THOSE WHO LEAD THE MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, LIKE THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER. (DANIEL 12:3)

What’s more, the Scriptures seem to imply *varying degrees of brightness*, based upon the varying degrees of faithful service.

THOSE WHO HAVE INSIGHT WILL SHINE BRIGHTLY LIKE THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE EXPANSE OF HEAVEN, AND THOSE WHO LEAD THE MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS, LIKE THE STARS FOREVER AND EVER. (DANIEL 12:3)

Yet, it is likely that no one will sense a lack of fulfillment. According to Pentecost (Things to Come, pages 225-226), “Capacities to radiate the glory (of God) will differ, but there will be no personal sense of lack in that *each believer will be filled to the limit of his capacity* to

PROCLAIM THE EXCELLENCIES OF HIM WHO HAS CALLED (HIM) OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT. (1ST PETER 2:9, PARENTHESES ADDED)

This, then, is a reward that remains in the possession of the faithful one. The more one displays the glory of Christ in this life, the greater his capacity to display the glittering glory of Christ throughout the eternal ages to come.

SUMMARY: OUR ETERNAL REWARDS

Certain rewards will be distributed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Apparently, all the various crowns will soon be cast – most joyfully – before the throne of God. But certain other rewards will remain in the permanent possession of the recipients during the 1,000-year reign of Christ and throughout the eternal ages to come.

- 1) First, based upon their faithful stewardship, some will *receive verbal commendations from Christ Jesus Himself*, filling their hearts with great joy and gratitude.

*“WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!
ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER!”*

- 2) Second, based upon their different levels of devoted service, *all* believers will be *assigned various positions of authority within the civil government of Christ's eternal kingdom.*
- 3) And third, based upon the different degrees of submission to the Spirit of God's control of their lives, *all* the saints will be given *various capacities to radiate the blazing glory of Christ Jesus.*

Most surely, the priceless and everlasting nature of these treasures causes any and all earthly investments to pale in comparison. But those investments made with an eternal perspective cause the words of our Master to come alive:

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY, AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL. BUT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS, AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN OR STEAL; FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO. (MATTHEW 6:19-21)

THE APPLE FARMER'S STEWARD

(Cultivating Faithfulness)

IT IS REQUIRED OF STEWARDS THAT ONE BE FOUND TRUSTWORTHY. (1ST CORINTHIANS 4:2)

There was once a man who owned an orchard. In this orchard were ten apple trees. One day in early spring, the man left town to go on a long trip. But before he left, he told one of his field hands to take care of his orchard in his absence.

Each day the field hand was careful to cultivate the owner's orchard. He kept the surrounding ground aerated and watered. And at the proper times, he fertilized the root system with just the right ratio of nutrients.

As the summer passed, however, the field hand became greatly troubled because he saw absolutely no fruit. Not one apple. Week after week, the worker faithfully cultivated the trees. But that fall, there were still no apples to be seen. "Surely, my boss will not be pleased with me," he thought.

Word came that the owner's absence was to be extended. "Whew!" said the worker. "Perhaps next fall, there will be a harvest of apples." And so, the next spring he got an early start. He aerated. He watered. He fertilized. He covered the trees to prevent damage from a late freeze. He prevented insects and disease from harming them. But that fall there were, once again, no apples.

Each year, the owner's absence was extended. And each year the field hand carefully cultivated the orchard. Yet, there were never any apples. Finally, after seven years, the owner returned. One by one, each worker was called into his office to give an account of their assigned tasks. Expecting to be fired, the field hand packed his suitcase and, with hat in hand, walked into his employer's office. But to his utter amazement, his boss praised him! And promoted him! And gave him a raise!

And that next fall, there were ten apple trees with branches weighed down with hundreds upon hundreds of bright, red, juicy apples.

There is coming a day when every reborn Christ-follower will bow before the Judgment Seat of God. And there his level of faithfulness will be evaluated.

Concerning that appointment, I have never met a believer who did not want to hear his Master say,

"WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT"

But if that is what we want to hear, there is something we need to come to grips with. For faithfulness to be dyed into the fabric of our souls, situations must exist that tempt us to give up ... to throw in the towel ... to quit being and doing what Christ has given us to be and do. This is the reality of stewardship. It is impossible to cultivate faithfulness without going through trials that demand perseverance.

To be aware of that fact goes a long way in understanding why troubles ... and weariness ... and circumstances that don't make any sense are so vital to the Christian life. It explains why God (seems to be) so slow and so silent and so aloof at times.

One thing that tends to discourage us is a certain false expectation. We have been promised that those who remain in intimate fellowship with God through faith and obedience – those who “abide” in Christ – will bear “much fruit.”

I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES; HE WHO ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING. (JOHN 15:5)

The false assumption we have is that we will *see* that fruit. But when Jesus said that fertile soil will yield a crop “some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty,” He did not assure the sower that he would see these results in full, at least on this side of the Resurrection. Maybe he will. But more than likely he will not. And if he does not, he will be in very good company. Many missionaries have ministered on the field for 20, 30, some even 40 years, yet do not live to see most of the fruit of their labors.

In fact, I don't think I have ever met an effective servant of Christ that has not asked himself at one time or another,

“Am I really doing any good?”

“Should I continue to languish in this ministry that's ‘going nowhere’ when every fiber of my being tells me to ‘throw in the towel’?”

His labor has been skillful. His motive has been Christ-centered. But as far as he can tell, he is having little impact in the lives of those he serves. And this continues, on and on and on until, finally, he just wants to give up.

It is at this point that the bond-slave must ask himself a question ... a “bucket-of-cold-water-in-the-face” kind of question:

HOW MUCH FRUIT MUST I **SEE** BEFORE I CAN BE FAITHFUL TO MY CALLING?

The answer, of course, is “None.” That's because

FAITHFULNESS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RESULTS

The fact is, some things can only be forged on an anvil. Perseverance is one of them. This trait does not come quickly; nor does it come easily. Faithful endurance is seldom tempered by the laborer seeing the full impact he is having in the lives of others. To the contrary, it is most often strengthened when few, if any, results are seen. Steadfastness is fortified when the laborer doggedly remains in a stagnated situation because he knows that is where his Master wants him to be ... and that's the *only* reason he stays.

During those times, let us be fully convinced of what is taking place in our lives: the Father is cultivating our faithfulness by stretching our endurance.

I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER. EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT ... BEARS FRUIT, HE PRUNES IT SO THAT IT MAY BEAR MORE FRUIT. (JOHN 15:1-2)

To whom, then, should we turn for the spiritual grit needed to endure this confusing and often discouraging – but necessary – pruning? To the One Who,

FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM, ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD. (HEBREWS 12:2B)

Therefore, let us not give up. Let us not throw in the towel. Let us not lose sight of “*THE JOY SET BEFORE US.*”

LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH. (HEBREWS 12:1-2A)

Those “flat” periods of anguish and confusion that exist in the lives of those who want to please their Master with their lives and service will be well worth every prayer that was poured out and every tear shed. And at the finish line, each of these faithful ones will hear his Master say,

“WELL DONE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE”

And he will savor that praise throughout eternity.

And eternity is a long, long time.

THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, KNOWING THAT YOUR TOIL IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 15:58)

LET US NOT LOSE HEART IN DOING GOOD, FOR IN DUE TIME WE WILL REAP IF WE DO NOT GROW WEARY. (GALATIANS 6:9)

THE LOSS OF A REWARD

To receive a reward from the King of glory will be an extraordinary privilege, to say the least. Just think about that! The slave can share in the glory of his Master because of what *the Master did* through a willing heart! How magnanimous is the grace of our God!

But there is another side to this evaluation that we must not ignore. And it is a very sobering Truth indeed. The fact is, it is possible to forfeit a reward we could have received. Scripture clearly warns us that these rewards can be lost.

WATCH YOURSELVES, THAT YOU DO NOT LOSE WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED, BUT THAT YOU MAY RECEIVE A FULL REWARD. (2ND JOHN 8)

I AM COMING QUICKLY; HOLD FAST WHAT YOU HAVE, SO THAT NO ONE WILL TAKE YOUR CROWN. (REVELATION 3:11)

“Though salvation cannot be lost, a reward (crown) can.” (Ryrie Study Bible, Charles C. Ryrie, page 2018, footnote on Revelation 3:11)

WOOD, HAY, AND STRAW

(A Poorly Invested Life)

We would do well to ponder our answer to this question:

WHAT IS MY ONE, ALL-CONSUMING PASSION?

The question is not, “What am I willing to do?” or even “What do I enjoy doing?” The question is, “What is the one thing I could not stop doing even if I tried?” Those two or three people who know you well, what do you think they would say if you were to ask them

“WHAT DO I OFTEN TALK ABOUT AT THE COFFEE SHOP OR IN THE BREAK ROOM OR AROUND THE PATIO?”

That is, what do I talk about *when I don't have to talk about anything in particular*? If we hear the same answer over and over, this will give us insight into one of the most significant aspects of our life ...

THE OBJECT OF OUR DEVOTION

It is this object of our devotion – this one, all-consuming passion – that has a great influence over the decisions we make, choices that we and the Son of God will discuss at our evaluation. When we bow before our Master, the issue before us will be this:

TO WHAT DID I GIVE MY LIFE?

Or, perhaps, more to the point

FOR WHOM DID I LIVE?

Did I live for self? (Was my life given to fulfilling my own self-interests?) Or did I live for Christ? (Was my life given to fulfilling the interests of my Savior?) The value a believer places on Christ can be determined by the attention given to Him throughout the course of everyday life. He is either the Centerpiece of one's existence or He is a mere Appendage.

Paul likened the life devoted to *God* to a house built with gold, silver, and precious stones. But the life devoted to *self* he likened to a house built with wood, hay, and straw.

Wood, hay, and straw are destructible materials (fire-consumable). They represent the misplaced priorities of a believer whose heart was given to this world's empty promises and whose works were performed for the sake of self. If this is how a believer chooses to conduct his life, he will not lose his salvation; but he will suffer the loss of reward.

IF ANY MAN'S WORK IS BURNED UP, HE WILL SUFFER LOSS; BUT HE HIMSELF WILL BE SAVED, YET SO AS THROUGH FIRE. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:15)

But what exactly does "wood, hay, and straw" look like?

A World-Enamored Life

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY, AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL. BUT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS, AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN OR STEAL; FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO ... NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS; FOR EITHER HE WILL HATE THE ONE AND LOVE THE OTHER, OR HE WILL BE DEVOTED TO ONE AND DESPISE THE OTHER. YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND WEALTH. (MATTHEW 6:19-21, 24)

Perhaps a pointed question is in order. What exactly "rings your bell"? What would cause you to *eagerly* roll out of bed ... *early* ... on your *day off* ... and hit the floor *running*? *What is the driving force behind your life?*

The believer whose heart is enamored by this world and all it has to offer will use his God-given resources to pursue those things that tend to push God out of his life. Foolishly, he will ignore their intended purpose: to strengthen the Body of Christ for the glory of God.

AND HE TOLD THEM A PARABLE, SAYING, "THE LAND OF A RICH MAN WAS VERY PRODUCTIVE. AND HE BEGAN REASONING TO HIMSELF, SAYING, 'WHAT SHALL I DO, SINCE I HAVE NO PLACE TO STORE MY CROPS?' THEN HE SAID, 'THIS IS WHAT I WILL DO: I WILL TEAR DOWN MY BARNs AND BUILD LARGER ONES, AND THERE I WILL STORE ALL MY GRAIN AND MY GOODS. AND I WILL SAY TO MY SOUL, "SOUL, YOU HAVE MANY GOODS LAID UP FOR MANY YEARS TO COME; TAKE YOUR EASE, EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY.'" BUT GOD SAID TO HIM, 'YOU FOOL, THIS VERY NIGHT YOUR SOUL IS REQUIRED OF YOU; AND NOW WHO WILL OWN WHAT YOU HAVE PREPARED!' SO IS THE MAN WHO STORES UP TREASURE FOR HIMSELF AND IS NOT RICH TOWARD GOD." (LUKE 12:16-21)

The red flag that should alert the believer that he is distracted by the world is *how he is using the resources God has entrusted into his care*: his material goods, yes, of course; but also, his time and abilities and strength and opportunities. If the bulk of these assets are focused on what this world has to offer, with only a token given in service to Christ, he is forfeiting a chest of diamonds to own a box of rocks. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves:

**TOWARD WHOSE INTERESTS ARE THE RESOURCES IN MY CARE DIRECTED ...
CHRIST'S OR MY OWN?**

A life constructed with wood, hay, and straw is guided by a world-enamored heart, distracted by the temporal riches of this world (its material goods, prestige and power) rather than preoccupied with the eternal riches of God.

A Self-Exalting Life

NOW TO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY GOD, BE HONOR AND GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN. (1ST TIMOTHY 1:17)

Whom do we strive to honor by our lives ... Christ Jesus or self? The believer who seeks the admiration of man seeks – in reality – the glory of self. Perhaps he is unaware of his lust for attention. Nevertheless, as he pursues the approval of man, he is forfeiting the approval of God.

FOR AM I NOW SEEKING THE FAVOR OF MEN OR OF GOD? OR AM I STRIVING TO PLEASE MEN? IF I WERE STILL TRYING TO PLEASE MEN, I WOULD NOT BE A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST. (GALATIANS 1:10)

It is Christ the King Whom we should seek to please and toward Whom we should direct the admiration of others. Jesus warns against the exaltation of self:

BEWARE OF PRACTICING YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE MEN TO BE NOTICED BY THEM; OTHERWISE YOU HAVE NO REWARD WITH YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.

SO, WHEN YOU GIVE TO THE POOR, DO NOT SOUND A TRUMPET BEFORE YOU, AS THE HYPOCRITES DO IN THE SYNAGOGUES AND IN THE STREETS, SO THAT THEY MAY BE HONORED BY MEN. TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD IN FULL. BUT WHEN YOU GIVE TO THE POOR, DO NOT LET YOUR LEFT HAND KNOW WHAT YOUR RIGHT HAND IS DOING, SO THAT YOUR GIVING WILL BE IN SECRET; AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU.

WHEN YOU PRAY, YOU ARE NOT TO BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES; FOR THEY LOVE TO STAND AND PRAY IN THE SYNAGOGUES AND ON THE STREET CORNERS SO THAT THEY MAY BE SEEN BY MEN. TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD IN FULL. BUT YOU, WHEN YOU PRAY, GO INTO YOUR INNER ROOM, CLOSE YOUR DOOR AND PRAY TO YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET, AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU.

WHENEVER YOU FAST, DO NOT PUT ON A GLOOMY FACE AS THE HYPOCRITES DO, FOR THEY NEGLECT THEIR APPEARANCE SO THAT THEY WILL BE NOTICED BY MEN WHEN THEY ARE FASTING. TRULY I SAY TO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD IN FULL. BUT YOU, WHEN YOU FAST, ANOINT YOUR HEAD AND WASH YOUR FACE SO THAT YOUR FASTING WILL NOT BE NOTICED BY MEN, BUT BY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN SECRET; AND YOUR FATHER WHO SEES WHAT IS DONE IN SECRET WILL REWARD YOU.
(MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18)

The red flag that should alert the believer that he is seeking to exalt self is his *tendency to talk about himself*. He may even *look for opportunities to criticize* those who receive the attention he covets. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves:

**WHICH ONE COMES UP MOST OFTEN IN MY CONVERSATIONS ...
CHRIST OR MYSELF?**

A life constructed with wood, hay, and straw is one that desires to glorify self rather than God.

A Self-Dependent Life

Upon whom are we dependent to live the Christian life victoriously ... Christ Jesus or ourselves?

When it comes to *understanding the Scriptures*, on whom do we rely to grasp its meaning: the divine Author or the mind of man? Certainly, there are some good commentaries out there; and we should make good use of them. But the fact is, only the Spirit of God can understand the Word of God.

FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO, THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 2:11)

DO WE PRAY BEFORE WE READ GOD'S WORD?

When it comes to our *ministry*, on whom do we rely to impact the lives of others: the power of Christ or the eloquence of man? The fact is, only God can change the hearts of men.

I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES; HE WHO ABIDES IN ME AND I IN HIM, HE BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING. (JOHN 15:5)

DO WE PRAY BEFORE WE MINISTER TO OTHERS?

And when it comes to our *character*, on whom do we rely to be a faithful follower of Christ? Most assuredly, God's people have been commanded to do the impossible. We need to be fully convinced:

ONLY GOD HAS THE POWER TO OBEY GOD

I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST; AND IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME; AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR ME. (GALATIANS 2:20)

DO WE PRAY FOR GOD'S MOTIVATION AND POWER TO REPRESENT CHRIST BEFORE MAN?

Beloved friends, the red flag that should alert the believer that he is seeking to please God in his own might – rather than in the strength of God – is *a weak prayer life*. No Christian is greater than his prayer life. When it comes to living the Christian life, we can't ... but God can. Only Christ can live the Christian life. That is why we must depend upon Him to give us everything we need to do so. Let us, therefore, examine ourselves:

HOW IS MY PRAYER LIFE?

A life constructed with wood, hay, and straw is a self-dependent life.

IT IS A LIFE THAT VIEWS HARD WORK AS A *REPLACEMENT* FOR PRAYER

Unless one conducts himself in the power of God according to the will of God, any apparent success he has will be superficial and temporary.

This, then, is a "wood, hay, and straw" kind of life:

The *focus* of this life is the sparkling tinsel the world dangles in front of it. It is a world-enamored life.

The *motivation* of this life is to gain the admiration of man. It is a self-exalting life.

The *power* of this life is man generated. It is a self-dependent life.

A life built with these materials is a life given to the cause of self ... for the glory of self ... by the power of self ... versus one given to the cause of Christ ... for the glory of Christ ... by the power of Christ. As for its usefulness to the King of kings, it is a poorly invested life, one that will suffer loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A HEALTHY FEAR

This is not something we hear a lot about: the possibility that a believer – after experiencing the awesome wonder of the Rapture of the Church – experience shame at His Appearing. Yet, the Apostle John cautions us of that very possibility:

NOW, LITTLE CHILDREN, ABIDE IN HIM, SO THAT WHEN HE APPEARS, WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE AND NOT SHRINK AWAY FROM HIM IN SHAME AT HIS COMING. (1ST JOHN 2:28) ⁵

To avoid suffering such a loss at his evaluation, each believer must conduct his life with eternity in view. The Apostle Paul likened the focus a believer is to have with an athlete preparing for the games.

DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THOSE WHO RUN IN A RACE ALL RUN, BUT ONLY ONE RECEIVES THE PRIZE? RUN IN SUCH A WAY THAT YOU MAY WIN. EVERYONE WHO COMPETES IN THE GAMES EXERCISES SELF-CONTROL IN ALL THINGS. THEY THEN DO IT TO RECEIVE A PERISHABLE WREATH, BUT WE AN IMPERISHABLE. THEREFORE I RUN IN SUCH A WAY, AS NOT WITHOUT AIM; I BOX IN SUCH A WAY, AS NOT BEATING THE AIR; BUT I DISCIPLINE MY BODY AND MAKE IT MY SLAVE, SO THAT, AFTER I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF WILL NOT BE DISQUALIFIED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 9:24-27)

Did you notice that even the Apostle Paul expressed concern over the possibility of his own loss? “The thought of having to present a life that has not been properly spent in the Lord’s service fills him with terror. It was this fear that drove him on in his service for the Lord ... The apostle fears that having preached to others to dedicate their lives to the Lord and serve Him, he himself may be a castaway or one who is disapproved or disqualified. It is a picture of an athlete who by breaking the rules is disqualified from winning the race. The figure makes plain that a Christian should bend all his efforts to living in such a way that he will not be ashamed when his life is reviewed at the judgment seat of Christ.” (The Church in Prophecy, Zondervan Publishing House, John F. Walvoord, pages 146, 149-150)

The Apostle Peter *encourages* this same fear regarding the works of the believer:

IF YOU ADDRESS AS FATHER THE ONE WHO IMPARTIALLY JUDGES ACCORDING TO EACH ONE’S WORK, CONDUCT YOURSELVES IN FEAR DURING THE TIME OF YOUR STAY ON EARTH. (1ST PETER 1:17)

“Their right to call God ‘Father’ leads to their obeying Him in reverent fear. So, they are to live according to His absolute standards, as strangers to the world’s shifting, situational ethics. ‘Reverent fear’ is evidenced by a tender conscience, a watchfulness against temptation, and avoiding things that would displease God.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, vol. 2, New Testament, 1st Peter, Roger M. Raymer, page 843)

WILL THE ONE WHO LIVED FOR SELF FACE AN ETERNITY OF SORROW?

What will it be like for a believer to face Christ at his judgment, aware that his life had been lived for self rather than for Christ?

Apparently, every believer (“each man”) will receive some degree of *praise*:

THEREFORE, DO NOT GO ON PASSING JUDGMENT BEFORE THE TIME, BUT WAIT UNTIL THE LORD COMES WHO WILL BOTH BRING TO LIGHT THE THINGS HIDDEN IN THE DARKNESS AND DISCLOSE THE MOTIVES OF MEN’S HEARTS; AND THEN EACH MAN’S PRAISE WILL COME TO HIM FROM GOD.
(1ST CORINTHIANS 4:5)

“All believers will receive praise at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1st Corinthians 4:5), but some will receive more rewards than others (1st Corinthians 3:11-15).” (Ryrie Study Bible, Charles C. Ryrie, page 2000, footnote on 2nd John 8)

NOW HE WHO PLANTS AND HE WHO WATERS ARE ONE; BUT EACH WILL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. (1ST CORINTHIANS 3:8)

Too, it is likely that every believer will suffer some degree of *loss* since no one has lived out his life in perfection.

“It is obvious that with imperfections which beset every Christian, no one will be able to claim perfection in that day. All will have a measure of failure.” (Jesus Christ Our Lord, Moody Press, John F. Walvoord, page 270)

Concerning this loss, Hoyt warns us not to dwell on it to the point of despair or to dismiss the loss with indifference: “To overdo the sorrow aspect of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To under do the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential.” (Samuel L. Hoyt, “The Negative Aspects of the Christian’s Judgment,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April – June 1980): 131.)

“After the review is made there will be no sorrow or tears because there are none in heaven.” (A Survey of Bible Doctrine, Charles C. Ryrie, page 179)

AND HE WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES ... THERE WILL NO LONGER BE ANY MOURNING, OR CRYING, OR PAIN; THE FIRST THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY. (REVELATION 21:4)

SUMMARY

Stewardship of one's God-given resources will be the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Did we faithfully use the resources God entrusted into our care; or did we squander them in our pursuit of a world that is passing away?

Were we motivated to strengthen His Church to the glory of His Name; or was our motivation to promote self?

Did we depend upon Him to provide us with the power to obey and serve Him; or did we depend upon our own strength?

It seems, however, that many in the Christian community are unaware of this event that follows the Rapture of the Church. We all long for the Return of Christ; yet many seem oblivious to the judgment that follows. To sacrifice one's "full reward" is a heavy price to pay simply to gain – for only a few years – the conveniences and pleasures of this life. Yet, this is exactly what is at stake.

Let none of us meet Christ at His Bar of Judgment, only to "shrink away from Him in shame." Let us all depend on God

to flood us with a longing to live for His glory and

to empower us to obey His Word and serve Him faithfully.

ONLY GOD CAN PREPARE US TO FACE GOD

He alone can prepare us to hear the words:

**"WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!
ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER!"**

⁵ We can learn from this verse what we are to do to avoid this shame. We are to

"ABIDE IN HIM"

That is, we are to "remain in life-giving fellowship with Him." How? By asking the Spirit of God to motivate and empower us to obey the will of God as found in the Word of God. By *trusting* the righteous One for this power, we are given everything we need to *obey* Him. And then we take responsible steps to do so. Rather than trying to live the Christian life in the power of the flesh, we trust the Holy Spirit to live His life through us.

A FINAL APPEAL

IT IS APPOINTED FOR MEN TO DIE ONCE AND AFTER THIS COMES JUDGMENT. (HEBREWS 9:27)

SO, TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS THAT WE MAY PRESENT TO YOU A HEART OF WISDOM. (PSALMS 90:12)

If you would like to know what a person believes about the future (not what he *says* he believes but what he really does believe), observe how he lives in the present.

If someone says he believes that Krispy Kreme Doughnut stock is going to quadruple in value by this time next week, then take note: Is he buying as many shares of Krispy Kreme Doughnut stock as he can afford ... or not?

Likewise, if someone says he believes that one day he will face God in judgment, then take note: Is he serious about the holiness of his character and the faithfulness of his service ... or not?

How we live in the present is influenced largely by what we believe about the future.

BELOVED, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE WILL BE. WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE APPEARS, WE WILL BE LIKE HIM, BECAUSE WE WILL SEE HIM JUST AS HE IS. AND EVERYONE WHO HAS THIS HOPE FIXED ON HIM PURIFIES HIMSELF, JUST AS HE IS PURE. (1ST JOHN 3:2-3)

As the brevity of life becomes more and more apparent with each passing year, he who is wise will live more fervently, not for a world scheduled to be destroyed but for an eternity that is fast approaching.

LORD, MAKE ME TO KNOW MY END AND WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF MY DAYS. LET ME KNOW HOW TRANSIENT I AM. BEHOLD, YOU HAVE MADE MY DAYS AS HANDBREADTHS, AND MY LIFETIME AS NOTHING IN YOUR SIGHT. SURELY EVERY MAN AT HIS BEST IS A MERE BREATH." (PSALM 39:4-5)

Today, you and I are one day closer to appearing before the Judgment Seat of Christ than we were yesterday. Whether we are removed from this earth by the Rapture or by death, we are that much closer to bowing before the Son of God. We are one day closer to giving an account of our stewardship.

IT IS ALREADY THE HOUR FOR YOU TO AWAKEN FROM SLEEP; FOR NOW, SALVATION IS NEARER TO US THAN WHEN WE BELIEVED ... BUT PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND MAKE NO PROVISION FOR THE FLESH IN REGARD TO ITS LUSTS." (ROMANS 13:11, 14)

To be prepared for our approaching evaluation, we must be able to present a life of faithful character and service when Christ asks to hear our account of what we did with *His property*:

“What did you do with the time ... and the resources ... and the abilities ...
and the strength ... and the opportunities I entrusted into your care
to prepare yourself and others for eternity
to the glory of My Name?”

Beloved friends, neither you nor I have the luxury – or the right – to foolishly squander our fleeting lives upon the temporal affairs of a dead world. Yes, it is true: the race we have been called to run will prevent us from being “in sync” with all the Jones’s out there. But the reality of our situation is this: We each have only one heart. We do not have two. We can have, therefore, only one devotion ... only one all-consuming passion. We cannot have two. It is impossible to pursue the glitter of fool’s gold that so enamors this spiritually dead world and be faithful to Christ at the same time.

Therefore, let us look down the track and set our gaze upon the finish line. Do you see “*THE JOY SET BEFORE (YOU)*”?

How immense that joy will be to find ourselves in the smiling Presence of our glorified Master!

How glorious it will be to receive from His hand an imperishable reward!

How satisfying it will be to hear that wonderful greeting,

*“WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!
ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER!”*

Just imagine what it will be like to cross our finish line! I have an idea that, at that moment, we will fall before Him, grab hold of His wound-scarred feet, and weep with gladness.

And so, with this eternal perspective, let us all

... LAY ASIDE EVERY ENCUMBRANCE AND THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US, AND LET US RUN WITH ENDURANCE THE RACE THAT IS SET BEFORE US, FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD. (HEBREWS 12:1-2)

APPENDIX A

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME OTHER JUDGMENTS

Many believe that, when this world is over, there will be one big judgment ... that all of humanity will be assembled together and, one by one, God will judge us. The Bible, however, speaks of several different judgments. Different groups of *individuals* will be judged at different *times* and in different *locations*. We have already considered, in some depth, the judgment of the true and living Church. Let's consider some other selected judgments.

1. The Father's Judgment Upon Jesus Christ	76 - 78
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4. God's Judgment of the <i>Gentile</i> Survivors of the Great Tribulation	85 - 88
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1. THE FATHER'S JUDGMENT UPON JESUS CHRIST

CHRIST REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW, HAVING BECOME A CURSE FOR US — FOR IT IS WRITTEN, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE." (GALATIANS 3:13)

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

FOR CHRIST ALSO DIED FOR SINS ONCE FOR ALL, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, SO THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD, HAVING BEEN PUT TO DEATH IN THE FLESH, BUT MADE ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT. (1ST PETER 3:18)

In the sight of a holy God, all sins are capital crimes. And capital crimes deserve capital punishment.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

Jesus Christ was condemned to death and executed by God His Father because He willingly took upon Himself the moral crimes of the world. The Son of God was punished by His Father, not for the sins He Himself committed but for your sins and mine. To be sure, the Cross of Christ clearly displays the justice of God and the mercy of God at the same time.

It displays God's justice because sin demands death.

It displays God's mercy because Jesus Christ served as the sinner's Substitute. He died in place of the criminal (the sinner). He died so you and I would not have to.

(GOD THE FATHER) MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)

Someone must die for your sins. And there are only two people that can: you ... or the Son of God. One of these two can pay your debt of death. Those who depend upon Christ's death to serve as their own punishment of death are delivered from having to die themselves. There is no other way we can escape this penalty for our moral crimes against God.

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

This divine judgment took place at the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

... AND HE HIMSELF BORE OUR SINS IN HIS BODY ON THE CROSS, SO THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS; FOR BY HIS WOUNDS YOU WERE HEALED. (1ST PETER 2:24)

THE RESULTS OF THIS JUDGMENT

1. The world is judged

NOW JUDGMENT IS UPON THIS WORLD; NOW THE RULER OF THIS WORLD WILL BE CAST OUT. (JOHN 12:31)

For the Cross of Christ to bring "judgment upon this world" means that the world that condemned Christ to death is itself under God's sentence of death. To reject the Son is to reject the Father Who sent the Son. And those who reject the Father remain under His sentence of condemnation.

2. Satan is defeated

The Cross of Christ broke the authority and power of Satan over those for whom Christ died.

THEREFORE, SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME, THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT RENDER POWERLESS HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL. (HEBREWS 2:14)

3. The believer is made righteous

Those of faith are not just given the righteousness of God. They *become* the righteousness of God.

HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)

4. The believer is declared righteous

Because the believer has been made righteous (see 3. above), God is able (that is, *legally* able) to *declare* him “Righteous.” That is, the believer is *justified*.

MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD THROUGH HIM. (ROMANS 5:9)

5. The believer is saved from eternal death

Because the one who is trusting in Christ for salvation has been declared righteous (see 4. above), he is delivered from God’s wrath. He is no longer under a death sentence. He will not be punished throughout eternity for his moral crimes (because Christ was punished for them in his place).

THEREFORE, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION (NO PUNISHMENT) FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

6. The believer is given eternal life

Not only has the believer been delivered from eternal death by the Cross of Christ (see 5. above), he has been given eternal life through the Resurrection of Christ.

TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO HEARS MY WORD, AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME, HAS ETERNAL LIFE, AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT, BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE. (JOHN 5:24)

OUR MOST MERCIFUL SAVIOR, THANK YOU FOR YOUR INFINITE KINDNESS, POURED OUT UPON US WHO DESERVE NOTHING BUT THE FULL MEASURE OF YOUR WRATH. IN YOUR MAGNANIMOUS GRACE, YOU POURED OUT YOUR ANGER UPON YOUR OWN BELOVED SON AND HAVE OPENED UP BEFORE US YOUR PARADISE OF GLORY. GLADLY WILL WE PRAISE YOU FOREVER AND EVER.

2. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVER

MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” (HEBREWS 12:5-6)

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

The judgment of God comes in two forms: to the *unbeliever* in the form of *punishment*, but to the *believer* in the form of *discipline*.

There is a difference between punishment and discipline. Although both involve the infliction of pain, the difference between the two has to do with purpose.

The purpose of punishment is not to correct or reform the behavior of the wrongdoer. (It may do so, but that is not its intent.) The purpose of punishment is *for the one who has been wronged to obtain a fair level of satisfaction for a loss*. It is to take **just** vengeance on a lawbreaker (“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”). It is *not* to be *too harsh* (“an eye for a tooth”), nor *too lenient* (“a tooth for an eye”). *Justice* is the motive behind punishment. Courts of law are established to punish criminals.

Discipline, on the other hand, is corrective in nature. The purpose of discipline is *to make the person a better person*. *Love* is the motive behind discipline. Parents are to discipline their children to prepare them to be responsible adults (better enabling them to avoid punishment from a court of law!).

God the Father disciplines His children; He does not punish them. This can be supported by Romans 8:1:

THEREFORE, THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS. (ROMANS 8:1)

The word “condemnation” carries the idea of punishment. “There is now *no punishment* for those who are in Christ Jesus.” That is because Christ has already been punished for us. Thanks to the marvelous grace of our God and Savior, He paid the penalty for our sins. And when He did, His death was the “propitiation” for our sins. That is, the Crucifixion **satisfied** the wrath of the One we wronged by our rebellion.

(JESUS CHRIST) HIMSELF IS THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS; AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THOSE OF THE WHOLE WORLD. (1ST JOHN 2:2)

God the Father is not unjust. As a God of justice, He does not require that the debt from our moral crimes be paid twice. He will not punish those who are depending on Christ's payment of death made on their behalf.

Yet, the Father does *correct* His children. This can be supported by Hebrews 12:6:

THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. (HEBREWS 12:6)

When we speak of the Father's judgment of the believer, we are talking about the loving correction of His erring child, not the just punishment of an unrepentant criminal.

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

Throughout his entire life on earth, the child of God will be disciplined by his loving heavenly Father. This can be seen from Hebrews 12:7 where the verb "deals" is in the present tense. That is, God's discipline of His children is taking place right now and will take place as often as needed.

IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ENDURE; GOD DEALS (CURRENTLY AND CONTINUALLY) WITH YOU AS WITH SONS; FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM HIS FATHER DOES NOT DISCIPLINE? (HEBREWS 12:7, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

The Father's discipline of His sons and daughters is an on-going part of their life in Christ.

THE PURPOSES OF THIS JUDGMENT

But what are the intended results of the Father's discipline of His children? There are several:

1. To Display His Perfections to All Creation

The primary concern of God is to protect the honor of His Name. He wants His reputation to be highly esteemed by both human and angelic beings.

One way to accomplish this is through the conduct of His children. God wants them to display His character to a world that desperately needs an accurate picture of the one, true God.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. (MATTHEW 5:16)

The Father uses discipline to “sculpture” the lives of His children into the image of His Son. To do so, He will work as gently as possible ... but as firmly as necessary. Our all-wise Father knows exactly what it will take for each of His children to become like Christ. This is the intended result of divine discipline: to enable the saints to radiate the perfections of God for the entire world to see.

We know from Scripture that this is not only an intended result; it is an assured result.

FOR I AM CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFECT IT UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS. (PHILIPPIANS 1:6)

Indeed, God the Father is so committed to making His chosen people like His Son that He uses “all things” to accomplish it: life’s wonderful blessings ... its crushing sorrows ... and everything in between. The believer is assured that, whatever the circumstance, the Father is conforming him to the image of His Son. And He will waste nothing in the process.

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON. (ROMANS 8:28-29)

The glory of the Father through the sanctification of the saints is one of the reasons for divine discipline.

2. To Prosper His Children’s Souls

Another reason for divine discipline is to make the lives of His children fruitful and wholesome. Discipline is for their good. The purer their lives are, the healthier their souls will be (as well as their whole person, generally-speaking).

FURTHERMORE, WE HAD EARTHLY FATHERS TO DISCIPLINE US, AND WE RESPECTED THEM; SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER BE SUBJECT TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE? FOR THEY DISCIPLINED US FOR A SHORT TIME AS SEEMED BEST TO THEM, BUT HE DISCIPLINES US FOR OUR GOOD, SO THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS. ALL DISCIPLINE FOR THE MOMENT SEEMS NOT TO BE JOYFUL, BUT SORROWFUL; YET TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT, AFTERWARDS IT YIELDS THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (HEBREWS 12:9-11)

3. To Confirm One’s Salvation

A third reason for divine discipline is to prove that one is no longer a child of wrath but is now a re-born child of the Father.

Those whose lawless deeds are left unchecked by divine correction are not true sons of God. Even though one may profess to be a Christ-follower, if his life is not being refined – through discipline – to the image of Christ, his claim is false.

IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ENDURE; GOD DEALS WITH YOU AS WITH SONS; FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM HIS FATHER DOES NOT DISCIPLINE? BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, OF WHICH ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND NOT SONS. (HEBREWS 12:7-8)

When this work of refinement is absent from a person's life, this indicates that he is still under the wrath of a just God, condemned – with the world – to eternal death.

BUT WHEN WE ARE JUDGED, WE ARE DISCIPLINED BY THE LORD SO THAT WE WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED ALONG WITH THE WORLD. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:32)

On the other hand, one who knows God as his Father will be treated like a son. He will be instructed by his Father's wise counsel. He will be guided by his Father's sovereign care. And he will be disciplined because of his Father's love.

These are the purposes of the Father's loving judgment of discipline upon His children:

- 1) to display His perfections to all created beings, human and angelic
- 2) to prosper His children's souls
- 3) to confirm His children's salvation

3. THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT OF HIMSELF

BUT IF WE JUDGED OURSELVES RIGHTLY, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:31)

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

The believer is to live a life of *self-evaluation, confession of sin, and repentance* from his sinful ways and habits.

IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. (1ST JOHN 1:8-9)

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

Far from being a one-time event at his conversion, the believer's judgment of himself is to be an *on-going practice*. It is to take place throughout his life on earth.

Although certainly not limited to this occasion, the New Testament prescribes a time for this self-evaluation. He is to do so before he partakes of the Lord's Supper.

FOR AS OFTEN AS YOU EAT THIS BREAD AND DRINK THE CUP, YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH UNTIL HE COMES. THEREFORE, WHOEVER EATS THE BREAD OR DRINKS THE CUP OF THE LORD IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER, SHALL BE GUILTY OF THE BODY AND THE BLOOD OF THE LORD. BUT A MAN MUST EXAMINE HIMSELF, AND IN SO DOING HE IS TO EAT OF THE BREAD AND DRINK OF THE CUP. FOR HE WHO EATS AND DRINKS, EATS AND DRINKS JUDGMENT TO HIMSELF IF HE DOES NOT JUDGE THE BODY RIGHTLY. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:26-29)

THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT

But why this call for such introspection?

The Apostle John gives us one of the reasons. By confessing our sins *we maintain an intimate fellowship with the Father*.

IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND YET WALK IN THE DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH; BUT IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE HIMSELF IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN. IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE ARE DECEIVING OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND RIGHTEOUS TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. (1ST JOHN 1:6-9)

The Apostle Paul gives us yet a second reason. By dealing with our own sins, *we deliver ourselves from the Father's chastisement.*

BUT IF WE JUDGED OURSELVES RIGHTLY, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:31)

For one to experience discipline from his parents can be painful. For one to be disciplined by his local church can be humiliating. And for a believer to honestly and deliberately face the truth of his own moral failures can be quite grievous. But the discipline coming from parents, from a local church, or from self-judgment does not hold a candle to the discipline our loving heavenly Father can inflict upon us.

*ALL DISCIPLINE FOR THE MOMENT SEEMS NOT TO BE JOYFUL, BUT **SORROWFUL**; YET TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT, AFTERWARDS IT YIELDS THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (HEBREWS 12:11)*

*FOR THIS REASON, MANY AMONG YOU ARE **WEAK AND SICK**, AND A NUMBER **SLEEP**. BUT IF WE JUDGED OURSELVES RIGHTLY, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED. (1ST CORINTHIANS 11:30-31)*

*I HAVE DECIDED TO DELIVER SUCH A ONE TO SATAN FOR **THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS FLESH**, SO THAT HIS SPIRIT MAY BE SAVED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD JESUS. (1ST CORINTHIANS 5:5)*

It is an act of mercy on God's part that He patiently gives us time and opportunities to keep our own sinful practices in check before He gets involved.

We do not want Him to have to get involved.

4. **GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), (10) "TRIBULATION SURVIVORS JUDGED"]

Matthew 25:31-46 presents yet another judgment. This one is future; and it will come upon a certain group of individuals who have faced a certain set of circumstances during a certain time.

BUT WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE ANGELS WITH HIM, THEN HE WILL SIT ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE. ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM; AND HE WILL SEPARATE THEM FROM ONE ANOTHER, AS THE SHEPHERD SEPARATES THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS; AND HE WILL PUT THE SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT, AND THE GOATS ON THE LEFT.

THEN THE KING WILL SAY TO THOSE ON HIS RIGHT, "COME, YOU WHO ARE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. FOR I WAS HUNGRY, AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT; I WAS THIRSTY, AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK; I WAS A STRANGER, AND YOU INVITED ME IN; NAKED, AND YOU CLOTHED ME; I WAS SICK, AND YOU VISITED ME; I WAS IN PRISON, AND YOU CAME TO ME" ...

THEN HE WILL ALSO SAY TO THOSE ON HIS LEFT, "DEPART FROM ME, ACCURSED ONES, INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS; FOR I WAS HUNGRY, AND YOU GAVE ME NOTHING TO EAT; I WAS THIRSTY, AND YOU GAVE ME NOTHING TO DRINK; I WAS A STRANGER, AND YOU DID NOT INVITE ME IN; NAKED, AND YOU DID NOT CLOTHE ME; SICK, AND IN PRISON, AND YOU DID NOT VISIT ME" ... THESE WILL GO AWAY INTO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO ETERNAL LIFE. (MATTHEW 25:31-36, 41-43, 46; SEE ALSO JOEL 3:1-3)

To understand the specifics of this Matthew 25 judgment, one must carefully observe the *details* found within this passage as well as the events immediately preceding it (that is, the *context* in which it is found).

THE CONTEXT OF THIS JUDGMENT (MATTHEW 24 AND 25)

According to Matthew **24:4-28**, another Jewish holocaust is over the horizon; and this one will begin within their own homeland, Israel. Verses 15-20 describe an event that will trigger this global persecution of the Jewish people. A certain man will walk into the rebuilt Jewish Temple and "(stand) in the holy place," a place he is forbidden to be. When Israel sees him do that, those in Judea are warned "to flee to the mountains." An attempted Jewish genocide, unparalleled in world history, will have just been set in motion.

FOR THEN THERE WILL BE A GREAT TRIBULATION, SUCH AS HAS NOT OCCURRED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD UNTIL NOW, NOR EVER WILL. (MATTHEW 24:21)

According to Matthew **24:29-31**, this future holocaust will be immediately followed by the Second Coming of Christ. In this passage Jesus describes the condition of the world at the time of His Return.

Then in Matthew **24:32-25:30**, Jesus exhorts His countrymen to “be on the alert,” preparing themselves for the fulfillment of these predicted events.

This brings us to the judgment of Matthew **25:31-46**. Again, *observing specific details* in this passage and *being mindful of the context* will help us understand what is taking place during this future event.

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

Right up front, we are informed as to *when* this judgment will take place. According to Matthew 25:31-32, this trial will immediately follow a failed attempt to exterminate the world’s Jewish population (during the Great Tribulation, 24:15-21) and the glorious re-appearance of Israel’s Messiah (the Second Coming, 24:29-30).

BUT WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE ANGELS WITH HIM, THEN HE WILL SIT ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE. ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM
(MATTHEW 25:31-32)

THE PEOPLE OF THIS JUDGMENT

Next, we are informed as to the ones who will be brought before Christ to be examined.

BUT WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMES IN HIS GLORY, AND ALL THE ANGELS WITH HIM, THEN HE WILL SIT ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE. ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM
(MATTHEW 25:31-32)

It is evident that these are not Jews. Rather, we read that “all the nations will be gathered before Him.” This phrase, “all the nations,” is one commonly used to describe Gentiles. Those on trial at this judgment are *Gentiles*.

Furthermore, these are not Gentiles who, having died are now raised from the dead. These are living Gentiles, *survivors of the Great Tribulation*. How do we know this?

As discussed below, the issue of this judgment has to do with admission into Christ’s soon-to-be established kingdom on earth: those who are qualified to do so and those who are not. Those who gain entrance into this *earthly* kingdom (both Gentiles and Jews) will repopulate the earth. We know this because, at the end of the 1,000 years, a large number of Gentiles (“the nations which are in the four corners of the earth”) will seek to overthrow the reign of Christ.

WHEN THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE COMPLETED, SATAN WILL BE RELEASED FROM HIS PRISON, AND WILL COME OUT TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS WHICH ARE IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH, GOG AND MAGOG, TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER FOR THE WAR; THE NUMBER OF THEM IS LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE. AND THEY CAME UP ON THE BROAD PLAIN OF THE EARTH AND SURROUNDED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS AND THE BELOVED CITY, AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DEVoured THEM. (REVELATION 20:7-9)

Since only *true* believers will enter this earthly kingdom at its beginning stage, these *unregenerate* rebels must be their descendants. In other words, those standing before Christ in Matthew 25 *must be able to have children*. They are, therefore, believed to be *Gentiles who survived the Great Tribulation*.

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

Once in His presence, these Gentiles will be divided into two groups: those who were in a right relationship with God through faith in Christ (sheep) and those who rejected Christ's Payment of death on their behalf (goats).

ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE GATHERED BEFORE HIM; AND HE WILL SEPARATE THEM FROM ONE ANOTHER, AS THE SHEPHERD SEPARATES THE SHEEP FROM THE GOATS; AND HE WILL PUT THE SHEEP ON HIS RIGHT, AND THE GOATS ON THE LEFT. (MATTHEW 25:32-33)

The issue of this judgment is to determine which ones will be allowed admission into Christ's kingdom on earth (the sheep) and which ones will be denied citizenship in this Kingdom (the goats). We should carefully take note of what Jesus uses as *evidence* for His judgment:

THE KING WILL ANSWER AND SAY TO THEM, "TRULY I SAY TO YOU, TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU DID IT TO ONE OF THESE BROTHERS OF MINE, EVEN THE LEAST OF THEM, YOU DID IT TO ME." (MATTHEW 25:40)

That is, these Gentiles will be sentenced *according to their attitude and treatment of the Jewish people* at a time when the world was trying to exterminate them.

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THE VICTIMS OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST
... OR DID YOU IGNORE THEIR PLIGHT? ⁶

And did you notice? How these Gentiles respond to the Jews' plight – with sympathy, with indifference or even with hostility – reveals their attitude toward the King of the Jews Himself. We should not overlook that. Even after 2,000⁽⁺⁾ years of rejecting their Messiah, Jesus continues to identify Himself with these descendants of Abraham. Why? Because *racial* Israel continues to be in an unconditional covenant-relationship with Him, the Yahweh of the Old Testament.

THE RESULTS OF THIS JUDGMENT

The eternal destiny of those Gentiles who survive the Great Tribulation will be determined by their response to the plight of the Jews during these 3½ years of intense persecution. The attitudes they have and the actions they take toward God’s chosen people during this time of demonic anti-Semitism will reveal whether their faith in Christ was indeed “living” or “dead.”

Those who risked their lives (the “sheep”) to care for the Jews (“these brothers of Mine”) will enter as citizens into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. Because their faith was “true and living,” they will hear the returned King say,

COME, YOU WHO ARE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. (MATTHEW 25:34)

However, those who passively ignored the Jews’ plight or turned them in to the authorities (the “goats”) will be expelled from the presence of the King. The faith they professed to have in the One they called “Lord” is revealed to be, in fact, “dead.” To these Christ will say,

*DEPART FROM ME, ACCURSED ONES, INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS. (MATTHEW 25:41)*⁷

⁶ This passage is not an appeal for the New Testament Church to be involved in humanitarian relief work. To show compassion toward those who are truly poor *is* a ministry of the Church, a calling that can be found elsewhere in the Scriptures (Galatians 2:9-10; James 1:27). But that is not the point of Matthew 25:31-46.

⁷ Should they have known any better?

DELIVER THOSE WHO ARE BEING TAKEN AWAY TO DEATH, AND THOSE WHO ARE STAGGERING TO SLAUGHTER, OH HOLD THEM BACK. IF YOU SAY, “SEE, WE DID NOT KNOW THIS,” DOES HE NOT CONSIDER IT WHO WEIGHS THE HEARTS? AND DOES HE NOT KNOW IT WHO KEEPS YOUR SOUL? AND WILL HE NOT RENDER TO MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WORK? (PROVERBS 24:11-12)

An example from recent history of this kind of help being offered by Gentiles to persecuted Jews would be the ten Boom family during the German Army’s occupation of Holland (1940 – 1945). Corrie ten Boom’s account of this work is told in her best-selling book, The Hiding Place (1971).

5. **GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), (II. C.) "THE 2ND HALF OF THE TRIBULATION"]

THE PEOPLE OF THIS JUDGMENT

Before God judges "all the nations," He will first judge *the* nation. According to the prophet Ezekiel, the nation to be examined is the one (1) whose fathers had been part of the Exodus from Egypt under Moses and (2) who own, through their covenant with Yahweh, the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

"I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE WILDERNESS OF THE PEOPLES, AND THERE I WILL ENTER INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOU FACE TO FACE. AS I ENTERED INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOUR FATHERS IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, SO I WILL ENTER INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOU," DECLARES THE LORD GOD ... "AND YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, WHEN I BRING YOU INTO THE LAND OF ISRAEL, INTO THE LAND WHICH I SWORE TO GIVE TO YOUR FOREFATHERS." (EZEKIEL 20:35-36, 42)

This approaching judgment, therefore, is reserved for *racial Israel*.

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

As mentioned above, there is yet another holocaust in Israel's future. This attempted genocide of Abraham's descendants will begin when a man (most commonly known as the antichrist) enters the rebuilt Jewish Temple, walks into the "holy of holies" and commits an abominable act of blasphemy. When this takes place, the Jewish people are told to flee their homeland to escape his brutal reign of terror, the likes of which has never been witnessed in their history (including under Hitler).

THEREFORE, WHEN YOU SEE THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION WHICH WAS SPOKEN OF THROUGH DANIEL THE PROPHET, STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE [LET THE READER UNDERSTAND], THEN THOSE WHO ARE IN JUDEA MUST FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS.

WHOEVER IS ON THE HOUSETOP MUST NOT GO DOWN TO GET THE THINGS OUT THAT ARE IN HIS HOUSE. WHOEVER IS IN THE FIELD MUST NOT TURN BACK TO GET HIS CLOAK. BUT WOE TO THOSE WHO ARE PREGNANT AND TO THOSE WHO ARE NURSING BABIES IN THOSE DAYS! BUT PRAY THAT YOUR FLIGHT WILL NOT BE IN THE WINTER, OR ON A SABBATH.

FOR THEN THERE WILL BE A GREAT TRIBULATION, SUCH AS HAS NOT OCCURRED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD UNTIL NOW, NOR EVER WILL. (MATTHEW 24:15-21)

Apparently, some of the antichrist's storm troopers (shall we say) will already be stationed within Israel's borders, positioned to begin an immediate "rounding up of the Jews" who are living in Judea. The Jews' flight from imprisonment and execution must be so swift that they will not have time to pack. Their need to escape quickly will result in death for those who cannot run fast (those who are pregnant and nursing babies). To get out of Judea is so urgent that, if they don't – if they are hindered by severe weather (in the winter) or by a transportation system (buses, trains, airlines) closed because of Sabbath-Day "rest" restrictions – then they will be trapped inside their own homeland.

According to Revelation 12:6, the *duration* of this judgment to come upon Israel will be

*FOR ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS
(42 MONTHS OR 3½ YEARS),*

... apparently during the *latter 3½ years* of the Great Tribulation.

We should pause here for a moment to take note of something. Ever since the death camps of Hitler, Israel has clung to her land, believing it to be the one place a holocaust like that of the mid-20th century could never repeat itself. "Never again" was the slogan of the Zionists who insisted upon a Jewish homeland for protection. Ironically, this future (attempted) genocide of the Jewish race will begin *in their homeland*. Those who are unable to get out when Mathew 24:15 takes place will be "like fish in a barrel"!

THEREFORE, WHEN YOU SEE THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION WHICH WAS SPOKEN OF THROUGH DANIEL THE PROPHET, STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE [LET THE READER UNDERSTAND], THEN THOSE WHO ARE IN JUDEA MUST FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS. (MATTHEW 24:15)

Why would the Lord do that? Why would He allow this reign of terror to begin in the very place Israel has turned to for refuge? Could it be because He does not want His chosen people to trust in a geographical location for protection from their enemies? He wants them to trust in *Him* for protection. He alone is to be their "Shield," their "Defender," their "strong Tower."

THE PROMISE OF DIVINE PROTECTION

Nevertheless, Israel's covenant-God Yahweh will see to it that His people – *as a nation* – are able to escape this demonic-inspired slaughter.

A GREAT SIGN APPEARED IN HEAVEN: A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN, AND THE MOON UNDER HER FEET, AND ON HER HEAD A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS (THE PATRIARCHS AND TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL, GENESIS 37:9-10); AND SHE WAS WITH CHILD; AND SHE CRIED OUT, BEING IN LABOR AND IN PAIN TO GIVE BIRTH.

AND SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A SON, A MALE CHILD (CHRIST JESUS), WHO IS TO RULE ALL THE NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON (THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF MESSIAH, PSALM 2); AND HER CHILD WAS CAUGHT UP TO GOD AND TO HIS THRONE. THEN THE WOMAN FLED INTO THE WILDERNESS WHERE SHE HAD A PLACE PREPARED BY GOD, SO THAT THERE SHE WOULD BE NOURISHED FOR ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS (LATTER 3½ YEARS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION, MATTHEW 24:15-21).

AND WHEN THE DRAGON (SATAN, REVELATION 12:9) SAW THAT HE WAS THROWN DOWN TO THE EARTH, HE PERSECUTED THE WOMAN (THE NATION ISRAEL) WHO GAVE BIRTH TO THE MALE CHILD. BUT THE TWO WINGS OF THE GREAT EAGLE WERE GIVEN TO THE WOMAN, SO THAT SHE COULD FLY INTO THE WILDERNESS TO HER PLACE, WHERE SHE WAS NOURISHED FOR A TIME AND TIMES AND HALF A TIME, FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE SERPENT. AND THE SERPENT Poured WATER LIKE A RIVER OUT OF HIS MOUTH AFTER THE WOMAN, SO THAT HE MIGHT CAUSE HER TO BE SWEEPED AWAY WITH THE FLOOD (ATTEMPTED GENOCIDE OF THE JEWS, MATTHEW 24:15-21). BUT THE EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN (ISRAEL IS PROTECTED BY BELIEVING GENTILES, MATTHEW 25:34-40), AND THE EARTH OPENED ITS MOUTH AND DRANK UP THE RIVER WHICH THE DRAGON Poured OUT OF HIS MOUTH. (REVELATION 12:1-2, 5-6, 13-16, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Who is “the earth” that protects Israel in their hour of judgment?

We have already considered the judgment of those *Gentiles* who will survive the Great Tribulation (pages 85-88). These will all be summoned to stand trial before the throne of the returned King. And there, every one of them will face the same question:

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF THE VICTIMS OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST
... OR DID YOU IGNORE THEIR PLIGHT?

Some of these *Gentiles* are the ones who come to the aid of God’s chosen people during this time of intense Jewish persecution. These are the “sheep” of Matthew 25:34-41. Motivated by their living faith in Christ, they will “nourish” these hunted-down descendants of Abraham with food and drink and clothes. They will provide them with hospitality and medical care. Even at the risk of their own lives, they will visit them while in prison.

These *Gentiles* of faith are “the earth” that “drink up the river” of Satan’s onslaught.

THE PLACE OF THIS JUDGMENT

According to Revelation 12:5-6, a certain “wilderness” will serve as Israel’s *refuge* during the antichrist’s reign of terror.

AND SHE GAVE BIRTH TO A SON, A MALE CHILD, WHO IS TO RULE ALL THE NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON; AND HER CHILD WAS CAUGHT UP TO GOD AND TO HIS THRONE. THEN THE WOMAN FLED INTO THE WILDERNESS WHERE SHE HAD A PLACE PREPARED BY GOD, SO THAT THERE SHE WOULD BE NOURISHED FOR ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY DAYS. (REVELATION 12:5-6)

But according to the book of Ezekiel, this “wilderness” will also serve as the place of Israel’s *judgment*.

“I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE WILDERNESS OF THE PEOPLES, AND THERE I WILL ENTER INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOU FACE TO FACE. AS I ENTERED INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOUR FATHERS IN THE WILDERNESS OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, SO I WILL ENTER INTO JUDGMENT WITH YOU,” DECLARES THE LORD GOD. (EZEKIEL 20:35-36)

So, where is this wilderness? Some take this to mean a literal wilderness, a common view being the wilderness fortress of Masada in southern Israel’s Judean desert (near the Dead Sea). But the wilderness mentioned in this passage may not be a *physical* wilderness. Notice that it is called “the wilderness of the peoples.”

The book of Ezekiel uses this term “the peoples” 26 times. And in *every case*, it refers to *Gentile nations*: “the countries among which (Israel has) been scattered” ... “of unintelligible speech or difficult language” ... “the lands where (Israel is) scattered” ... “the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians” ... “the nations” ... “many coastlands” ... “the kings of the earth” ... those “of the earth” ... “the lands of (Israel’s) enemies” ... et. al.

It seems best to understand this “wilderness of the peoples” as a reference to the Gentile nations (plural). (Notice that “peoples” is plural.) This is a *spiritual* wilderness, pagan lands separated from *The Land* promised by Yahweh to His chosen people. At the time of this judgment, the nation will no longer be in its own land. She will have “fled (away from the rage of the ‘man of lawlessness’) into the wilderness (the nations of the world) where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for 1,260 days.” (Revelation 12:6)

That the Jews will be judged by Yahweh while scattered all over the world can be supported by what we just learned from Matthew 25. *Gentile* believers who survive the Great Tribulation will be gathered from “all the nations” to be rewarded for their care of the Jewish people during this time of “Jacob’s Distress” (Matthew 25:34-40). This would necessarily mean that the Jews to whom they minister are living in these same nations.

So, this “wilderness of the peoples” will be to Israel both a place of nourishment ... and a place of judgment.

THE NATURE OF THIS JUDGMENT

Scripture has given us a glimpse of what Israel will face under the brutal reign of the antichrist.

- 1) **Global Anti-Semitism and Execution.** First, as we just learned this judgment is not limited to one, physical location but will, instead, be global in scope. It will be a *world-wide holocaust*, taking place in “the wilderness of the peoples.” (Hitler’s holocaust, limited to Europe and part of Russia, was only a small preview of things to come.)

FOR THEN THERE WILL BE A GREAT TRIBULATION, SUCH AS HAS NOT OCCURRED SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD UNTIL NOW, NOR EVER WILL. UNLESS THOSE DAYS HAD BEEN CUT SHORT, NO LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN SAVED; BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT THOSE DAYS WILL BE CUT SHORT. (MATTHEW 24:21-22)

- 2) **Deception from False Messiahs.** Another aspect of this judgment has to do with deception. Many Jews, not grounded in God’s Word, will be vulnerable to and will accept the lies of false teachers.

THEN IF ANYONE SAYS TO YOU, "BEHOLD, HERE IS THE CHRIST," OR "THERE HE IS," DO NOT BELIEVE HIM. FOR FALSE CHRISTS AND FALSE PROPHETS WILL ARISE AND WILL SHOW GREAT SIGNS AND WONDERS, SO AS TO MISLEAD, IF POSSIBLE, EVEN THE ELECT. (MATTHEW 24:23-24)

- 3) **Deprivation of Life’s Necessities.** We are also informed that the Jewish people will face *extreme deprivation of life’s necessities* during the last 3½ years of Great Tribulation: starvation, dehydration, homelessness and nakedness. They will lack basic medicines and health care. And they will languish in prisons.

THEN THE KING WILL SAY TO THOSE ON HIS RIGHT, "COME, YOU WHO ARE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. FOR I WAS HUNGRY, AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT; I WAS THIRSTY, AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK; I WAS A STRANGER, AND YOU INVITED ME IN; NAKED, AND YOU CLOTHED ME; I WAS SICK, AND YOU VISITED ME; I WAS IN PRISON, AND YOU CAME TO ME." (MATTHEW 25:34-36)

The Result of This Judgment

I WILL MAKE YOU PASS UNDER THE ROD, AND I WILL BRING YOU INTO THE BOND OF THE COVENANT. (EZEKIEL 20:37)

During the Great Tribulation, there are two kinds of Jews:

those who are rebels against the Lord’s authority.

those of faith who will eventually surface as followers of their Messiah Jesus.

Those who rebel against the authority of God by rejecting the Messiah and His Work on the Cross will be denied citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

AND I WILL PURGE FROM YOU THE REBELS AND THOSE WHO TRANSGRESS AGAINST ME; I WILL BRING THEM OUT OF THE LAND WHERE THEY SOJOURN, BUT THEY WILL NOT ENTER THE LAND OF ISRAEL. THUS, YOU WILL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD. (EZEKIEL 20:38)

Those who trust in Jesus as Messiah, accepting His Death as Payment for their sins, will be granted citizenship in the Millennial Kingdom. They will gain possession of the land “which I swore to give to your forefathers” and there they “will serve Me in the land.” (Ezekiel 20:40)

"AS FOR YOU, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL," THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD, 'GO, SERVE EVERYONE HIS IDOLS; BUT LATER YOU WILL SURELY LISTEN TO ME, AND MY HOLY NAME YOU WILL PROFANE NO LONGER WITH YOUR GIFTS AND WITH YOUR IDOLS.

FOR ON MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, ON THE HIGH MOUNTAIN OF ISRAEL,' DECLARES THE LORD GOD, 'THERE THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, ALL OF THEM, WILL SERVE ME IN THE LAND; THERE I WILL ACCEPT THEM AND THERE I WILL SEEK YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND THE CHOICEST OF YOUR GIFTS, WITH ALL YOUR HOLY THINGS.

AS A SOOTHING AROMA I WILL ACCEPT YOU WHEN I BRING YOU OUT FROM THE PEOPLES AND GATHER YOU FROM THE LANDS WHERE YOU ARE SCATTERED; AND I WILL PROVE MYSELF HOLY AMONG YOU IN THE SIGHT OF THE NATIONS.'" (EZEKIEL 20:39-41)

Many of those Gentiles to whom these Jews have fled for help have become believers in Christ Jesus. (Their “living faith” motivates them to be sympathetic to God’s covenant-people).

Arriving at their doorsteps scared to death, many Jews will hungrily listen to their message of hope in the Messiah. Perhaps they will even be shown from Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 how their current situation was prophesied 2,000 years earlier by Jesus. It will be a time – unlike our present day – when the blindness of the Jews is removed; and through the witness of these Gentile believers, many will come to a saving knowledge of their Messiah.

FOR I DO NOT WANT YOU, BRETHREN, TO BE UNINFORMED OF THIS MYSTERY – SO THAT YOU WILL NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN ESTIMATION – THAT A PARTIAL HARDENING HAS HAPPENED TO ISRAEL UNTIL THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES HAS COME IN; AND SO ALL ISRAEL WILL BE SAVED. JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." (ROMANS 11:25-27)

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)

FOR GOD DID NOT SPARE ANGELS WHEN THEY SINNED BUT CAST THEM INTO HELL AND COMMITTED THEM TO PITS OF DARKNESS, RESERVED FOR JUDGMENT (2ND PETER 2:4)

THE PROGRESSION OF THIS JUDGMENT

There is coming a day when God will judge Satan and his demon-followers once and for all. His judgment, however, has been taking place in stages, based upon our sovereign God's *continued use* of these spirit-rebels to fulfill His *holy* purposes. We shall begin this study with a brief look at *their history leading up to their rebellion against God*.

1. A History of the Angels: from Their Creation to Their Rebellion

- a) At some point *before* the material universe was created (Genesis 1), *the angels were created*. We know they were already in existence before the creation of this world because they were singing while the earth's "foundation" was being laid. But we do not know how old they are.

WHERE WERE YOU (JOB) WHEN I LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH? TELL ME, IF YOU HAVE UNDERSTANDING, WHO SET ITS MEASUREMENTS? SINCE YOU KNOW. OR WHO STRETCHED THE LINE ON IT? ON WHAT WERE ITS BASES SUNK? OR WHO LAID ITS CORNERSTONE, WHEN THE MORNING STARS SANG TOGETHER AND ALL THE SONS OF GOD SHOUTED FOR JOY? (JOB 38:4-7)

- b) At some time *after* the creation of the earth but (presumably) *before* his rebellion, a certain holy cherub, called "star of the morning, son of the dawn" (Isaiah 14:12) was entrusted with authority – from God – over the earth as "the god (the ruler) of this world." This angel would eventually come to be known as Satan.

- 1) It should be noted that the authority and power that goes with being "the god of this world" is not the false boast of an arrogant creature. It is, in fact, a *legitimate* claim.

- When the devil

SHOWED (JESUS CHRIST) ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD AND THEIR GLORY, AND HE SAID TO HIM, "ALL THESE THINGS I WILL GIVE YOU, IF YOU FALL DOWN AND WORSHIP ME" (MATTHEW 4:8-9),

the Son of God did not dispute his authority or his ability to do so. What Christ *did* reject was Satan's temptation to sidestep the Father's will (the

Cross) in order to obtain – prematurely – authority and power over the nations (the Crown). But to do so, Jesus would have to commit idolatry.

THEN JESUS SAID TO HIM, "GO, SATAN! FOR IT IS WRITTEN, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" (MATTHEW 4:10)

- Furthermore, the inspired writings of the apostles do not present these titles of Satan as empty boasts that can, and should, be ignored. To the contrary, this evil angel is recognized by them as *truly being* “the god (the ruler) of this world.”

NOW JUDGMENT IS UPON THIS WORLD; NOW THE RULER OF THIS WORLD WILL BE CAST OUT. (JOHN 12:31, ALSO 14:30, 16:11)

... THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING SO THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:4)

- 2) Second, this exalted status, “the god of this world,” was not *violently seized* by a *victorious* leader of an angelic rebellion. He did not *take it away* from God; it was *voluntarily “handed over”* to him by God.

AND HE LED HIM UP AND SHOWED HIM ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD IN A MOMENT OF TIME. AND THE DEVIL SAID TO HIM, "I WILL GIVE YOU ALL THIS DOMAIN AND ITS GLORY; FOR IT HAS BEEN HANDED OVER TO ME, AND I GIVE IT TO WHOMEVER I WISH. (LUKE 4:5-6)

- The omnipotent God was not forced to bestow this title upon Satan.
- 3) Third, although the time of this appointment is not recorded, it is believed to have been *before* the demonic rebellion in heaven’s realm.
 - It is unlikely that God would voluntarily assign this important stewardship, “the god (the ruler) of this world,” to a rebel.

Therefore, a holy cherub – known in eternity past as the “*star of the morning, son of the dawn*” – received the legitimate title, “the god (the ruler) of this world” ... by divine appointment (God acting voluntarily, not under compulsion) ... before his rebellious, arrogant attempt to also become the god of heaven as well.

- c) Sometime after receiving this exalted position, the “star of the morning” leads *an angelic rebellion against the authority of God*.

"SON OF MAN, TAKE UP A LAMENTATION OVER THE KING OF TYRE AND SAY TO HIM, 'THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD, "YOU HAD THE SEAL OF PERFECTION, FULL OF WISDOM AND PERFECT IN BEAUTY. YOU WERE IN EDEN, THE GARDEN OF GOD. EVERY PRECIOUS STONE WAS YOUR COVERING: THE RUBY, THE TOPAZ AND THE DIAMOND; THE BERYL, THE ONYX AND THE JASPER; THE LAPIS LAZULI, THE TURQUOISE AND THE EMERALD; AND THE GOLD. THE WORKMANSHIP OF YOUR SETTINGS AND SOCKETS WAS IN YOU. ON THE DAY THAT YOU WERE CREATED THEY WERE PREPARED. YOU WERE THE ANOINTED CHERUB WHO COVERS, AND I PLACED YOU THERE. YOU WERE ON THE HOLY MOUNTAIN OF GOD; YOU WALKED IN THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE. YOU WERE BLAMELESS IN YOUR WAYS FROM THE DAY YOU WERE CREATED UNTIL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS WAS FOUND IN YOU. BY THE ABUNDANCE OF YOUR TRADE YOU WERE INTERNALLY FILLED WITH VIOLENCE, AND YOU SINNED. THEREFORE, I HAVE CAST YOU AS PROFANE FROM THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD. AND I HAVE DESTROYED YOU, O COVERING CHERUB, FROM THE MIDST OF THE STONES OF FIRE. (EZEKIEL 28:12-16; SEE ALSO ISAIAH 14:12-15)

- It is believed that those angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God numbered one third of the angelic host.

THEN ANOTHER SIGN APPEARED IN HEAVEN: AND BEHOLD, A GREAT RED DRAGON HAVING SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS, AND ON HIS HEADS WERE SEVEN DIADEMS. AND HIS TAIL SWEEP AWAY A THIRD OF THE STARS OF HEAVEN AND THREW THEM TO THE EARTH. (REVELATION 12:3-4A)

- Apparently, after this angelic mutiny Hades and the Lake of Fire were created.

THEN HE WILL ALSO SAY TO THOSE ON HIS LEFT, "DEPART FROM ME, ACCURSED ONES, INTO THE ETERNAL FIRE WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS." (MATTHEW 25:41)

(From this verse we should notice the absence of the word "unbelievers." Apparently, the creation of "the eternal fire" took place *before* the rebellion of man.)

This brings us to the first of his judgments.

2. Satan Is Cast to Earth after His Attempted Overthrow of God's Authority

Following his failed coup d'état against the throne of God, Satan (as he is known to us) and his rebel forces were cast down to earth.

HOW YOU HAVE FALLEN FROM HEAVEN, O STAR OF THE MORNING, SON OF THE DAWN! YOU HAVE BEEN CUT DOWN TO THE EARTH, YOU WHO HAVE WEAKENED THE NATIONS! BUT YOU SAID IN YOUR HEART, "I WILL ASCEND TO HEAVEN; I WILL RAISE MY THRONE ABOVE THE STARS OF GOD, AND I WILL SIT ON THE MOUNT OF ASSEMBLY IN THE RECESSES OF THE NORTH. I WILL ASCEND ABOVE THE

HEIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS; I WILL MAKE MYSELF LIKE THE MOST HIGH." NEVERTHELESS, YOU WILL BE THRUST DOWN TO SHEOL, TO THE RECESSES OF THE PIT. (ISAIAH 14:12-15; SEE ALSO REVELATION 20:1-3, 10)

This expulsion from heaven's realm may have been what Jesus was referring to when He said to His followers,

"I WAS WATCHING SATAN FALL FROM HEAVEN LIKE LIGHTNING." (LUKE 10:18)

It was in this fallen state that we have our first glimpse of this evil angel. We are introduced to him as he seeks to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7). And to this day, Satan and his demonic hordes roam this earth.

BE OF SOBER SPIRIT, BE ON THE ALERT. YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION, SEEKING SOMEONE TO DEVOUR. (1ST PETER 5:8)

And as he looks for new victims to join him in his rebellion against God, this father of lies continues to deceive his human followers (unbelievers).

... THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING SO THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD. (2ND CORINTHIANS 4:4; SEE ALSO MATTHEW 4:8-9; JOHN 12:31; EPHESIANS 2:2; 6:12; 1ST JOHN 5:19)

We should take note that, though heaven is no longer his abode, this judgment does not restrict him from having access to the throne of God, even to this day.

NOW THERE WAS A DAY WHEN THE SONS OF GOD CAME TO PRESENT THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND SATAN ALSO CAME AMONG THEM. (JOB 1:6)

3. Satan's Power of Death and Authority over the Believer Are Broken at the Cross of Christ

A second judgment upon Satan was that his authority and power over *the believer* has been broken by Christ's Work on the Cross. (He still has access to the believer.)

(I AM SENDING YOU TO THE GENTILES) TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME. (ACTS 26:18)

THEREFORE, SINCE THE CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD, HE HIMSELF LIKEWISE ALSO PARTOOK OF THE SAME, THAT THROUGH DEATH HE MIGHT RENDER POWERLESS HIM WHO HAD THE POWER OF DEATH, THAT IS, THE DEVIL. (HEBREWS 2:14)

4. Satan Is Forever Expelled from Heaven's Realm

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129),
LIKELY AT THE SAME TIME AS (II. B.) "THE MID-POINT OF THE TRIBULATION"]

During the Great Tribulation, Satan will be *fully and forever expelled* from the heavenly realm. At that time, he and his horde of demons will be confined to the earth.

AND THERE WAS WAR IN HEAVEN, MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS WAGING WAR WITH THE DRAGON. THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS WAGED WAR, AND THEY WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER A PLACE FOUND FOR THEM IN HEAVEN. AND THE GREAT DRAGON WAS THROWN DOWN, THE SERPENT OF OLD WHO IS CALLED THE DEVIL AND SATAN, WHO DECEIVES THE WHOLE WORLD; HE WAS THROWN DOWN TO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE THROWN DOWN WITH HIM ... WOE TO THE EARTH AND THE SEA, BECAUSE THE DEVIL HAS COME DOWN TO YOU, HAVING GREAT WRATH, KNOWING THAT HE HAS ONLY A SHORT TIME. (REVELATION 12:7-12)

5. Satan Is Imprisoned in the Abyss at the End of the Great Tribulation

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), (9) "SATAN IMPRISONED"]

For the latter three and a half years of the Great Tribulation (i.e., up to the Second Coming of Christ), Satan and these fallen spirit-beings will deceive the nations and try to destroy Israel. But once Christ returns, he – and presumably all the demons as well – will be cast into the abyss for one thousand years.

THEN I SAW AN ANGEL COMING DOWN FROM HEAVEN, HOLDING THE KEY OF THE ABYSS AND A GREAT CHAIN IN HIS HAND. AND HE LAID HOLD OF THE DRAGON, THE SERPENT OF OLD, WHO IS THE DEVIL AND SATAN, AND BOUND HIM FOR A THOUSAND YEARS; AND HE THREW HIM INTO THE ABYSS, AND SHUT IT AND SEALED IT OVER HIM, SO THAT HE WOULD NOT DECEIVE THE NATIONS ANY LONGER, UNTIL THE THOUSAND YEARS WERE COMPLETED. (REVELATION 20:1-3)

This judgment helps explain why demons, confronted by the Son of God, responded to Him with words of terror. When Christ first walked on the earth, He expelled many of these spirit-beings from humans. But right before He did, they would often beg Him not to send them into torment.

SEEING JESUS, (THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN) CRIED OUT AND FELL BEFORE HIM, AND SAID IN A LOUD VOICE, "WHAT BUSINESS DO WE HAVE WITH EACH OTHER, JESUS, SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD? I BEG YOU, DO NOT TORMENT ME" ... (AND) THEY WERE IMPLOING HIM NOT TO COMMAND THEM TO GO AWAY INTO THE ABYSS. (LUKE 8:28, 31)

Apparently, demons do not have a full understanding of God's timetable. Nevertheless, they *do* have some understanding that this judgment is in their future.

6. Satan Is Forever Banished to the Lake of Fire After the Millennial Reign of Christ

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), SOON AFTER (11) "SATAN RELEASED"]

The final phase of God's judgment upon evil angels will take place at the end of Christ's 1,000-year reign on this earth. At that time, Satan will be released to orchestrate one last rebellion against God and His people before finally being cast into the Lake of Fire.

WHEN THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE COMPLETED, SATAN ... WILL COME OUT TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS ... TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER FOR THE WAR; THE NUMBER OF THEM IS LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEASHORE. AND THEY CAME UP ON THE BROAD PLAIN OF THE EARTH AND SURROUNDED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS AND THE BELOVED CITY, AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND DEVoured THEM. AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE. (REVELATION 20:7-10)

And there, he will remain throughout eternity.

AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ... AND WILL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 20:10)

SUMMARY

The judgment of Satan and his horde of demons takes place in five stages:

- A. Following his failed attempt to overthrow God's authority, Satan was expelled from heaven to earth, retaining his title, "the god (the ruler) of this world," having limited access to the Throne of God.
- B. At the Cross of Christ, the devil's authority and power over the believer were broken.
- C. Three and a half years *before* the Return of Christ, he and the evil angels will be thrown down to earth, fully and forever banished from having access to the heavenly realm.
- D. Immediately *after* Christ's return, they will be seized and thrown into the abyss where they will be imprisoned for 1,000 years. (During the 1,000-year reign of Christ, Satan and his demonic followers will be banished from the earth.)
- E. Then, at the very end of Christ's 1,000-year reign, Satan will be released for a short time to instigate one final rebellion, only to be seized and thrown into the Lake of Fire. There, he and his demonic followers will remain throughout eternity. They will *never* have access to the new (perfect) earth.

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED

[SEE "APPENDIX D: GOD'S PROPHETIC PLAN" (PAGE 129), (IV.) "THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT"]

Revelation 20:11-15 presents yet another future judgment to come. This trial is known as "The Great White Throne Judgment."

THEN I SAW A GREAT WHITE THRONE AND HIM WHO SAT UPON IT, FROM WHOSE PRESENCE EARTH AND HEAVEN FLED AWAY, AND NO PLACE WAS FOUND FOR THEM. AND I SAW THE DEAD, THE GREAT AND THE SMALL, STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE, AND BOOKS WERE OPENED; AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE; AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED FROM THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS. (REVELATION 20:12)

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

Revelation 20 describes a series of events that follow the Second Coming of Christ. By carefully observing certain "time words," it is possible to understand the sequence of these events, including when this great white throne trial will take place.

Starting at the end of chapter 19, Christ Jesus and His armies appear out of heaven's realm, clothed with glory and arrayed for battle (Revelation 19:11-16).

"THEN" ("next in time," "next in order" after Christ re-enters earth's realm at the Second Coming) a great battle will take place between **"THE BEAST (antichrist) AND THE KINGS OF THE EARTH"** and **"HIM WHO SAT ON THE HORSE (Christ) AND AGAINST HIS ARMY."** (Revelation 19:17-21)

"THEN" (after this great battle) Satan will be cast **"INTO THE ABYSS"** for **"THE THOUSAND YEARS."** (Revelation 20:1-3)

"THEN" (after Satan is thrown into the abyss) the saints will reign with Christ **"FOR A THOUSAND YEARS."** (Revelation 20:4-6)

"WHEN THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE COMPLETED," Satan will be released from his prison to orchestrate one last rebellion against Christ. It will be quickly thwarted. He will then be cast into the Lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:7-10)

"THEN" (after Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire) the Great White Throne Judgment will take place. (Revelation 20:11-15)

*WHEN THE THOUSAND YEARS ARE COMPLETED, SATAN ... WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ... **THEN** (I.E., NEXT IN TIME, NEXT IN ORDER) I SAW A GREAT*

WHITE THRONE AND HIM WHO SAT UPON IT, FROM WHOSE PRESENCE EARTH AND HEAVEN FLED AWAY, AND NO PLACE WAS FOUND FOR THEM. (REVELATION 20:7, 10-11; PARENTHESIS MINE)

“THEN” (after the Great White Throne Judgment) a new heaven and earth will be created *“FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH PASSED AWAY.”* (Revelation 21:1ff)

Therefore, according to the sequence of events as presented in Revelation 19-21, the Great White Throne Judgment will take place

after the 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom is over and
after the present earth and heaven are destroyed but
before the new heaven and earth are established

THE PEOPLE OF THIS JUDGMENT

All those who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment are unbelievers. This trial is not for believers. There are three reasons why this view is held:

1. At What Time They Will Be Judged

As we have learned in this series, the judgment of *the saved* takes place at some point *before* the millennial reign of Christ *begins*. As shown above, the Great White Throne Judgment takes place *after the millennial reign* of Christ. This is an indication that all those who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment are *unbelievers*.

2. From Where They Will Be Resurrected

There is another reason to believe that. When a person dies, his soul separates from his body and enters a spiritual “realm.” (There is no such thing as “soul sleep.”) His body, of course, remains on earth awaiting the resurrection.

AN HOUR IS COMING IN WHICH ALL WHO ARE IN THE TOMBS WILL HEAR HIS VOICE AND WILL COME FORTH; THOSE WHO DID THE GOOD DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF LIFE, THOSE WHO COMMITTED THE EVIL DEEDS TO A RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT. (JOHN 5:28-29)

If the deceased one is a believer, his soul immediately goes to be with the Lord. He is “absent from the body and ... at home with the Lord” (2nd Corinthians 5:8). This “home” is also called in the New Testament “Paradise” (Luke 23:43) and “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22).

If the deceased one is an unbeliever, his soul immediately enters a place called “Hades.”

NOW THERE WAS A RICH MAN, AND HE HABITUALLY DRESSED IN PURPLE AND FINE LINEN, JOYOUSLY LIVING IN SPLENDOR EVERY DAY. AND A POOR MAN NAMED LAZARUS WAS LAID AT HIS GATE, COVERED WITH SORES, AND LONGING TO BE FED WITH THE CRUMBS WHICH WERE FALLING FROM THE RICH MAN'S TABLE ... NOW THE POOR MAN DIED AND WAS CARRIED AWAY BY THE ANGELS TO ABRAHAM'S BOSOM; AND THE RICH MAN ALSO DIED AND WAS BURIED. IN HADES HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES, BEING IN TORMENT, AND SAW ABRAHAM FAR AWAY AND LAZARUS IN HIS BOSOM.
(LUKE 16:19-23)

Revelation 20:13 informs us from where the individuals of this trial have come. Those who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment have been resurrected from “the sea,” and from “death and Hades.”

AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT, AND DEATH AND HADES GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN THEM; AND THEY WERE JUDGED, EVERY ONE OF THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS. (REVELATION 20:13)

Notice that none are said to come from the presence of Christ, that is, from “Paradise” or “Abraham’s bosom.” This, too, infers that all those who stand before God at this evaluation are apparently the unsaved.

3. From Which Book They Will Be Judged

We should also observe from which book this group of people will be judged. The sentence they receive will be based upon what was written about them “in the books ... according to their deeds.” Unlike the believer whose eternal destiny is determined by the Work of Christ, *their eternal destiny is determined by their own works.*

AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED FROM THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS ... AND THEY WERE JUDGED, EVERY ONE OF THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS.
(REVELATION 20:12-13)

This, too, infers that all those who stand before God at this evaluation are apparently the unsaved.

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT, THE UNBELIEVERS’ SINS WILL BE THE ISSUE

According to Revelation 20:12-13, “the deeds” of each unbeliever are going to be under scrutiny.

AND I SAW THE DEAD, THE GREAT AND THE SMALL, STANDING BEFORE THE THRONE, AND BOOKS WERE OPENED; AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE; AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED FROM THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS ... AND THEY WERE JUDGED, EVERY ONE OF THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS. (REVELATION 20:12-13)

Those who stand before God in this judgment have one thing in common: they have all rejected the Cross of Christ. They have rejected God's offer of forgiveness. And they have rejected the offer of His righteousness. As a result, each of them now faces the same question: "Is my *own* righteousness good enough to cancel my sins and secure God's acceptance?"

To answer this question, we are told that "the books" (plural) will be opened first, followed by another book (singular), "the Book of Life."

It is the belief of this writer that the deeds written in these "books" are a record of the individual's *sins*. If this view is correct, those standing there watching God review their list of sins are in extreme danger for

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

If this view is *not* correct, if the books contain a list of their righteous deeds, they are still in great danger. Human righteousness falls short of God's righteousness. As far as the Holy One is concerned,

ALL OUR RIGHTEOUS DEEDS ARE LIKE A FILTHY GARMENT. (ISAIAH 64:6)

Either way, the deeds of those who stand before this great white throne will be found filthy by the God of purity. They will be found guilty of moral crimes that have not been washed away by the Blood of the sin-Bearer.

More than likely, this is "the day of judgment" of which Jesus warned:

(THE PHARISEES) SAID, "THIS MAN CASTS OUT DEMONS ONLY BY BEELZEBUL THE RULER OF THE DEMONS." AND KNOWING THEIR THOUGHTS JESUS SAID TO THEM ... "I TELL YOU THAT EVERY CARELESS WORD THAT PEOPLE SPEAK, THEY SHALL GIVE AN ACCOUNTING FOR IT IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. FOR BY YOUR WORDS YOU WILL BE JUSTIFIED, AND BY YOUR WORDS YOU WILL BE CONDEMNED." (MATTHEW 12:24-25, 36-37)

(JESUS) BEGAN SAYING TO HIS DISCIPLES FIRST OF ALL, "BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES, WHICH IS HYPOCRISY. BUT THERE IS NOTHING COVERED UP THAT WILL NOT BE REVEALED AND HIDDEN THAT WILL NOT BE KNOWN. ACCORDINGLY, WHATEVER YOU HAVE SAID IN THE DARK WILL BE HEARD IN THE LIGHT, AND WHAT YOU HAVE WHISPERED IN THE INNER ROOMS WILL BE PROCLAIMED UPON THE HOUSETOPS." (LUKE 12:1-3)

Every single sin of the unbeliever – each word and each action, committed in public and in private – will be exposed for all to hear. We should observe from the above Matthew and Luke passages that Jesus was referring to unbelieving Pharisees. In other words, this warning is not for believers

whose transgressions have been removed “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12) ...

whose sins have been cast “into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19) ...

whose lawless deeds God “will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

No, this sobering warning is for those who reject the grace of God. Their sins will not be forgotten. They are, instead, being recorded in “the books” and will be publicly revealed from the Judgment Bar of God. All of them.

FOR NOTHING IS HIDDEN THAT WILL NOT BECOME EVIDENT, NOR ANYTHING SECRET THAT WILL NOT BE KNOWN AND COME TO LIGHT. (LUKE 8:17)

Also notice that the sins of each person who stands in this judgment are so numerous that more than one book was needed to record them all.

AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED FROM THE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR DEEDS. (REVELATION 20:12)

As each person hears the public disclosure of his sins, he will be horrified to fully grasp the magnitude of his wickedness and the utter inadequacy of his works to save himself. When the condemned one is cast into his eternal prison, there will be no question in his mind that his many moral crimes have made him worthy of the eternal death he faces.

THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS JUDGMENT

No defense attorney. According to 1st John 1, when a *believer* sins he has an Advocate, a “heavenly Defense Attorney,” Who pleads his case before the Father.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, I AM WRITING THESE THINGS TO YOU SO THAT YOU MAY NOT SIN. AND IF ANYONE SINS, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER, JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS. (1ST JOHN 2:1)

There is, however, no indication from Scripture that the unbeliever will have anyone at his trial to provide a defense on his behalf. As he stands before God, he is going to be on his own.

Witnesses for the prosecution. Furthermore, certain individuals will be summoned to this heavenly courtroom to testify against those who are on trial. According to Christ, those who are given this task are believers; and they are not witnesses for the defense but for the prosecution. They are not necessarily actual witnesses of the unbeliever's crimes against God. Instead, they are apparently ones who responded favorably to the Truths that the ones on trial had rejected.

THE MEN OF NINEVEH WILL STAND UP WITH THIS GENERATION AT THE JUDGMENT, AND WILL CONDEMN IT BECAUSE THEY REPENTED AT THE PREACHING OF JONAH; AND BEHOLD, SOMETHING GREATER THAN JONAH IS HERE. THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH WILL RISE UP WITH THIS GENERATION AT THE JUDGMENT AND WILL CONDEMN IT, BECAUSE SHE CAME FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH TO HEAR THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON; AND BEHOLD, SOMETHING GREATER THAN SOLOMON IS HERE.
(MATTHEW 12:41-42)

Executioners. There will be, yet, one other group of participants at the judgment of the lost ... those who carry out the Judge's sentence of condemnation. Apparently, the task of casting unbelievers into the Lake of Fire is given to holy angels.

THE SON OF MAN WILL SEND FORTH HIS ANGELS, AND THEY WILL GATHER OUT OF HIS KINGDOM ALL STUMBLING BLOCKS, AND THOSE WHO COMMIT LAWLESSNESS, AND WILL THROW THEM INTO THE FURNACE OF FIRE; IN THAT PLACE THERE WILL BE WEeping AND GNASHING OF TEETH.
(MATTHEW 13:41-42)

THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT

Once "the books" have been consulted, "the Book of Life" will then be opened to determine if his name is recorded as one who trusted in Christ Jesus for salvation. The only hope he has is at this moment. But to his horror, his name will not be found. Consequently, he will be expelled from the presence of God, forever confined to the Lake of Fire.

AND IF ANYONE'S NAME WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE, HE WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE. (REVELATION 20:15)

No situation in all of Scripture is more terrifying and hopeless than this one, the trial of the unsaved at the Great White Throne Judgment.

THE INTENSITY OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

Just as there will be varying degrees of reward given at the Judgment Seat of Christ, there will also be varying degrees of punishment given at the Great White Throne Judgment.

The reason for the differing levels of rewards and punishment is the same. The question before believers and unbelievers alike will be this:

WHAT DID YOU DO WITH THE TRUTH YOU KNEW?

DID YOU OBEY IT?
OR DID YOU IGNORE OR REJECT IT?

At both judgments the level of obedience Christ expects from the one standing before Him is directly related to the amount of “light” (Truth) to which he was exposed. The more Truth he knew, the more obedience was expected. The less he knew, the lesser the expectation.

AND THE LORD SAID, "WHO THEN IS THE FAITHFUL AND SENSIBLE STEWARD, WHOM HIS MASTER WILL PUT IN CHARGE OF HIS SERVANTS, TO GIVE THEM THEIR RATIONS AT THE PROPER TIME? BLESSED IS THAT SLAVE WHOM HIS MASTER FINDS SO DOING WHEN HE COMES. TRULY I SAY TO YOU THAT HE WILL PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF ALL HIS POSSESSIONS.

AND THAT SLAVE WHO KNEW HIS MASTER'S WILL AND DID NOT GET READY OR ACT IN ACCORD WITH HIS WILL, WILL RECEIVE MANY LASHES, BUT THE ONE WHO DID NOT KNOW IT, AND COMMITTED DEEDS WORTHY OF A FLOGGING, WILL RECEIVE BUT FEW. (LUKE 12:42-44, 47-48)

There are those who sit in coffee shops every Sunday morning and make no pretense at claiming the Name of Christ. That is, they *reject the Gospel*. And unless they repent of their lawless deeds and believe upon Christ's death as Payment for their sins, they will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

There are others who sit in church pews every Sunday morning. Week after week, they hear Truth from the pulpit (hopefully); and yet, the faith in Christ they profess to have is proven to be “dead” by their *indifference to the Gospel*. Unless they repent of their lawless deeds and believe upon Christ's death as Payment for their sins, they, too, will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

According to Christ Jesus, Hell will be more tolerable for the former than the latter.

AND YOU, CAPERNAUM, WILL NOT BE EXALTED TO HEAVEN, WILL YOU? YOU WILL DESCEND TO HADES; FOR IF THE MIRACLES HAD OCCURRED IN SODOM WHICH OCCURRED IN YOU, IT WOULD HAVE REMAINED TO THIS DAY. NEVERTHELESS, I SAY TO YOU THAT IT WILL BE MORE TOLERABLE FOR THE LAND OF SODOM IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, THAN FOR YOU. (MATTHEW 11:23-24)

At the Great White Throne Judgment, the intensity of one's punishment is directly related to the amount of Truth he rejected.

FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED; AND TO WHOM THEY ENTRUSTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK ALL THE MORE. (LUKE 12:48)

It is dangerous to have a casual attitude toward God's Word. Disobedience because of one's *ignorance* of the Scriptures will result in great loss. But disobedience because of one's *indifference* toward the Scriptures will result in a much greater loss. Unless one is resolved to believe and obey the Truth to which he is exposed, knowledge of that Truth will contribute to the intensity of his condemnation.

THE DURATION OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

At the *beginning* of Messiah's 1,000-year reign, the antichrist and his false prophet will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire.

AND I SAW THE BEAST AND THE KINGS OF THE EARTH AND THEIR ARMIES ASSEMBLED TO MAKE WAR AGAINST HIM WHO SAT ON THE HORSE AND AGAINST HIS ARMY. AND THE BEAST WAS SEIZED, AND WITH HIM THE FALSE PROPHET WHO PERFORMED THE SIGNS IN HIS PRESENCE, BY WHICH HE DECEIVED THOSE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE MARK OF THE BEAST AND THOSE WHO WORSHIPED HIS IMAGE; THESE TWO WERE THROWN ALIVE INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE WHICH BURNS WITH BRIMSTONE. (REVELATION 19:19-20)

Scripture informs us that, one thousand years later, when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, these two men will still be there.

*AND THE DEVIL WHO DECEIVED THEM WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, WHERE THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET **ARE** ALSO; AND THEY WILL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 20:10)*

THEN ANOTHER ANGEL, A THIRD ONE, FOLLOWED THEM, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, "IF ANYONE WORSHIPS THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE AND RECEIVES A MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD OR ON HIS HAND, HE ALSO WILL DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD WHICH IS MIXED IN FULL STRENGTH IN THE CUP OF HIS ANGER; AND HE WILL BE TORMENTED WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ANGELS AND IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LAMB. AND THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT GOES UP FOREVER AND EVER; THEY HAVE NO REST DAY AND NIGHT, THOSE WHO WORSHIP THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE, AND WHOEVER RECEIVES THE MARK OF HIS NAME." (REVELATION 14:9-11)

Because of such passages, there is reason to believe that lost humanity will never stop existing, never lose consciousness, and never be released from this eternal prison. According to the Bible, those who die without Christ will remain in the Lake of Fire, "tormented day and night forever and ever."

That is why the Bible so clearly and repeatedly warns humanity of the reality of this judgment:

IT IS A TERRIFYING THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING GOD. (HEBREWS 10:31)

A TERRIFYING CONDEMNATION. A GLORIOUS PARDON

If there is any passage of Scripture that should move the Church to pray for the lost and to share the Gospel with them, it is Revelation 20:11-15. The Great White Throne Judgment is a courtroom trial that millions upon millions of people will face.

For those of you who do not know Christ Jesus as your Savior, there is something you need to know.

First, you are not a good person. In fact, you are a moral criminal in the sight of your Judge. You have broken His righteous laws over ... and over ... and over.

ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:23)

Because your sins are an offense to the God of holiness, they are capital crimes. And capital crimes deserve capital punishment.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

You deserve to die. And there is not one thing you can do to fix that problem. Your death sentence will not go away if you apologize for your sins. It will not go away if you "straighten up and promise to do better." Your debt of death cannot be paid off by becoming religious or by helping people. There is only one way you can settle your debt with the God you have offended. You must die.

But God does not want you to die. Because of His great love for you, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to die for you ... to die in your place ... as your Substitute ... so you would not have to. This is the whole point of the Crucifixion.

BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. (ROMANS 5:8)

Someone must die for your sins. It does not have to be you. You can be delivered from God's wrath by depending on the Death of Christ to serve as payment for your moral crimes. If you do this, your sins are transferred over to Christ ... and His righteousness is transferred over to you.

HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21)

It is by faith in Christ's work on the Cross that one is forgiven of his sins and becomes as righteous as God. (The only righteousness God accepts is His Own.)

(I DO NOT HAVE) A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN DERIVED FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF FAITH. (PHILIPPIANS 3:9, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Those who place their faith in the death of Christ will receive God's glorious pardon. Those who reject the Cross will receive God's terrifying condemnation.

The choice is yours.

APPENDIX B**THE JUDGMENT SEAT**

The first local churches who read the New Testament letters were familiar with judgment seats. These were “raised, throne-like platforms on which rulers or judges sat when making speeches ... or hearing and deciding cases” (Basic Theology, Moody Press, Charles C. Ryrie, page 597)

*ON AN APPOINTED DAY HEROD, HAVING PUT ON HIS ROYAL APPAREL, TOOK HIS SEAT ON THE ROSTRUM AND BEGAN **DELIVERING AN ADDRESS TO THEM.** (ACTS 12:21)*

*PILATE ... BROUGHT JESUS OUT, AND SAT DOWN ON THE JUDGMENT SEAT AT A PLACE CALLED THE PAVEMENT, BUT IN HEBREW, GABBATHA. NOW IT WAS THE DAY OF PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER; IT WAS ABOUT THE SIXTH HOUR. AND HE SAID TO THE JEWS, "BEHOLD, YOUR KING!" SO THEY CRIED OUT, "AWAY WITH HIM, AWAY WITH HIM, CRUCIFY HIM!" PILATE SAID TO THEM, "**SHALL I CRUCIFY YOUR KING?**" THE CHIEF PRIESTS ANSWERED, "WE HAVE NO KING BUT CAESAR." SO, HE THEN HANDED HIM OVER TO THEM TO BE CRUCIFIED. (JOHN 19:13-16)*

*BUT WHILE GALLIO WAS PROCONSUL OF ACHAIA, THE JEWS WITH ONE ACCORD ROSE UP AGAINST PAUL AND BROUGHT HIM BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT, SAYING, "THIS MAN PERSUADES MEN TO WORSHIP GOD CONTRARY TO THE LAW." BUT WHEN PAUL WAS ABOUT TO OPEN HIS MOUTH, GALLIO SAID TO THE JEWS, "IF IT WERE **A MATTER OF WRONG OR OF VICIOUS CRIME, O JEWS, IT WOULD BE REASONABLE FOR ME TO PUT UP WITH YOU; BUT IF THERE ARE QUESTIONS ABOUT WORDS AND NAMES AND YOUR OWN LAW, LOOK AFTER IT YOURSELVES; I AM UNWILLING TO BE A JUDGE OF THESE MATTERS.**" AND HE DROVE THEM AWAY FROM THE JUDGMENT SEAT. (ACTS 18:12-16)*

At the time the New Testament letters were being written, judgment seats were used for political and judicial matters.

APPENDIX C

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A MOST CERTAIN APPOINTMENT

What do you hope to get out of this series on the Judgment Seat of Christ? How do you want your life to be different once this course is over?

WHO WILL STAND BEFORE THE JUDGE?

WILL BELIEVERS ACTUALLY STAND BEFORE GOD IN JUDGMENT?

We learned from this section that believers will be evaluated at this Judgment.

Why do you think the *judgment of a believer* might sound foreign to many in the Church of the 21st Century?

UNBELIEVERS WILL NOT BE EXAMINED AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

What can we learn about the Judgment Seat of Christ from 1st Corinthians 3:11-15?

What can we learn about the ones being judged from 2nd Corinthians 5:1-9?

WILL THIS BE A JUDGMENT OF INDIVIDUALS OR A GROUP?

That the individual believer will one day “give an account of himself to God” should affect the way he conducts his life. Furthermore, it should also affect the way a local body of believers conducts Her life.

If every member of your church were made aware of their approaching evaluation, what effect do you think that would have on *the church's* character and ministry?

WHO IS THE JUDGE?

Let's try to imagine ourselves standing before Christ as He evaluates our stewardship.

Can you think of any passages of Scripture that tell us what He looks like?

What do you think your emotions will be at this time?

WHY THE JUDGMENT OF JESUS CHRIST IS RELIABLE

It was stated in your reading that the Lord Jesus Christ “will already know ‘the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth’ about each person that bows before Him.” That fact tends to produce fear in our hearts ... and well it should.

But for our Judge to be all-knowing is also very good news for the exact same reason ... that He knows “the whole truth and nothing but the truth” about us.

Why is that good news?

WHEN IS THIS JUDGMENT?

Most (if not all) believers long to be removed from this earth when Christ returns for His Bride. But what about this event that *follows* the Rapture of the Church?

Do you think it is possible for someone to *look forward to* the Judgment Seat of Christ? If so, why would they? If not, why not?

WHERE IS THIS JUDGMENT?

CONCLUSION

Let’s place ourselves in the Throne Room of Christ as He evaluates our stewardship.

Can you think of any passages of Scripture that tell us what this Throne Room looks like?

Can you think of any passages of Scripture that tell us what you will hear in the Throne Room of God?

WHAT IS NOT THE ISSUE AT THIS JUDGMENT

We said that neither our sins nor the assurance of our salvation would be the issues for the believer before the Judgment seat of Christ. To support this, we considered some of God’s promises that assure the believer that his sins have been fully and forever removed from him.

If our sins *were* the issue at the Judgment Seat of Christ, what would that do to these promises of God?

WHAT IS THE ISSUE AT THIS JUDGMENT?

There must be a reason God will use our “deeds in the body” to evaluate our lives.

What do the works of a believer reveal about his character?

THE PROPERTIES MANAGED BY THE STEWARD

Concerning our *character*, we are *all* expected to display the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

But *no one* is expected to perform *every ministry*.

How do you know what to say “Yes” to and what to say “No” to?

Why is it important that you know when to say “Yes” and when to say “No”?

SAVED BY GRACE ... JUDGED BY WORKS

It was stated in your reading, “Perhaps we (believers) are hesitant to emphasize the role of works in the Christian life because we do not want to be branded as ‘legalists.’” Most certainly, God does not want His people to be legalistic; but He does expect us to be obedient.

How can it be that two individuals actively seek to be pure – to separate their lives from sinful practices – and one of them is legalistic ... but the other one is not?

THE LEANING BALE OF HAY

(Cultivating an Eternal Perspective)

What is the point of this story?

How does one cultivate an eternal perspective? What can he do to give his heart, more and more, to Christ and His Kingdom?

THE CHARACTER OF OUR CHOICES

THE FOUNDATION

Before the Apostle Paul describes the different building materials a believer can use in his labor for Christ (1st Corinthians 3:12-15), he first describes the Foundation upon which he builds (1st Corinthians 3:10-11).

Why do you think he brought up salvation through faith in Christ, the Foundation, before he explained the importance of a believer's works?

THE BUILDING MATERIALS

CONCLUSION

It was stated, "The gold, silver, and precious stones ... represent the believer's faithful obedience and service to his Master ... These are (*God's*) works – accomplished through us – for which *we* will be rewarded." This can be seen in Paul's own testimony regarding the power behind his ministry.

FOR THIS PURPOSE, ALSO, I LABOR, STRIVING ACCORDING TO HIS POWER, WHICH MIGHTILY WORKS WITHIN ME. (COLOSSIANS 1:29)

Why is it that the only works viewed by God as "*gold, silver, and precious stones*" are those that *He did* through you? Why are *His* works the only works He will accept?

OUR STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S PROPERTIES

A STEWARD OF GOD'S GIFTS

(Service)

Faithful Service

In this section it was stated that Christ Jesus will reward his servants for being *faithful*. That is, they did what they were given to do (they obeyed and served Him) to the best of their Spirit-empowered ability.

How does one *become* faithful? What should he do for that trait to be cultivated in his life?

Devoted Service

In this section it was stated that Christ Jesus will reward his servants for being *devoted to Him*. That is, they had a single-hearted passion for Christ which showed in the zeal with which they represented and served Him (in their character and ministry).

How does one *become* devoted to Christ? What should he do for that trait to be cultivated in his life?

A STEWARD OF GOD'S WORD

(Faith and Obedience)

Faith and Obedience

Some people get more from their Bible reading than others. They just seem to flourish in their understanding of the Scriptures. There is more than one reason for that.

But according to this section we just read, what is one of the reasons?

A STEWARD OF GOD'S LOVE

(Motive)

Our Love for Others

In this section it was stated that Christ Jesus will reward those believers who served others out of *love for them*. They did what they did because it was in the others' best interest, not because it was in their own best interest.

This kind of love is not a man generated love but, rather, a Holy Spirit generated love. In order to love others, we must *draw upon* the love of God, made available to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

But how do you that?

Our Love for God

As with the preceding section, this love for God is not man generated but, rather, Holy Spirit generated. Because of his sinful nature, man cannot love God. Only God can love God.

It is easy for one to say, “I love God.” According to your reading, how do we know if that is true?

THE TEMPORARY REWARDS WE WILL JOYFULLY SURRENDER

THE GOLDEN WREATHS OF TRIUMPH

It was stated in your reading that “Believers ... will wear the crowns reserved for those who – through Christ – are victors over the world.”

How, then, does the believer experience victory over the world if tribulation *from* the world is still a part of his life?

We are told that these crowns are “laid up” for us. They are “safely kept” for us. And sometime “in the future” we will be awarded these crowns.

What does the believer need for this promise of a future reward to help him right now?

THE CROWN OF LIFE

We learned that this Crown of Life will be given to the “Spirit-empowered believer who overcomes) – with composure – the attacks from Christ’s enemies.” Matthew 5:44 tells us one step we can take to be able to respond in this way toward those who attack us:

I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU. (MATTHEW 5:43-44)

We are to pray for those who persecute us.

What *specifically* are we to pray for our enemies? What should we ask the Lord to do in their lives?

THE CROWN OF EXULTATION

Every Christ-follower has been *called to strengthen Christ’s Church* in some way.

How do you know to what specific ministry(ies) you have been called?

THE CROWN OF GLORY

If your pastor is faithful to his God-entrusted stewardship, you can be sure that he is being attacked from many sides.

In what ways can you help your pastor be faithful to his calling?

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

To believe in “the integrity of the Scriptures” is to believe that the original manuscripts, penned by human authors, were inspired by God (“God-breathed”), down to the very letters ... that God, in His sovereign care, has preserved its trustworthiness in the copies of those manuscripts ... and that its authority over our lives remains intact today.

How can you tell if someone believes in “the integrity of the Scriptures”?

CASTING OUR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD

The crowns the saints will be given to wear are crowns they do not deserve to wear. Christ Jesus, and He alone, deserves to wear these crowns of gold.

Why does Christ deserve all the credit for a fruitful ministry in which **you** have grown weary, faithfully laboring long hours and withstanding much criticism?

Can you think of a crown Jesus was given to wear that *He* did not deserve?

What did this crown represent?

THE ETERNAL REWARDS WE WILL GRATEFULLY KEEP

THE ETERNAL REWARDS

Christ’s Praise for Faithful Stewardship

Imagine yourself meeting Christ Jesus for the first time face-to-Face; and with a joyful smile, He says to you, “Well done, good and faithful slave.”

What thoughts and emotions do you think will flood your mind and heart once you hear these words of praise?

THE ETERNAL REWARDS

A Position of Civil Authority

Those who reign with Christ in these positions of civil authority will also serve as “priests.” That is, this form of government does not recognize a “separation of Church and state.” This is a theocracy.

What is a theocracy?

THE ETERNAL REWARDS

A Capacity to Radiate the Blazing Glory of God

The manner we live our lives now will determine the capacity we will be given to radiate the glory of God in His Kingdom.

What do you think every believer needs in order to “walk in a manner worthy of the God Who calls him into His Own Kingdom and glory”?

SUMMARY: OUR ETERNAL REWARDS

This section ended with a quote from Matthew 6:19-21.

DO NOT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES ON EARTH, WHERE MOTH AND RUST DESTROY, AND WHERE THIEVES BREAK IN AND STEAL. BUT STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN, WHERE NEITHER MOTH NOR RUST DESTROYS, AND WHERE THIEVES DO NOT BREAK IN OR STEAL; FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE ALSO. (MATTHEW 6:19-21)

Why does it have to be “either ... or”? Why not “both ... and”?

How do you know if you are storing up “treasures on earth”?

THE APPLE FARMER’S STEWARD

(Cultivating Faithfulness)

What is the point of this story?

THE LOSS OF A REWARD

WOOD, HAY, AND STRAW

(A Poorly Invested Life)

Why do you think that believers who live a “wood, hay and straw” life *allow* this kind of life to continue?

A WORLD-ENAMORED LIFE

Some of you have (or had or would like to have) children.

Concerning their spiritual lives, what do you think Christ wants them to *know* before they leave home as young adults?

Concerning their spiritual lives, what do you think Christ wants them to *be* before they leave home as young adults?

Concerning their spiritual lives, what do you think Christ wants them to *know how to do* before they leave home as young adults?

What will it take for *you* – as their parent – to *prepare them* to know and be and do what Christ wants them to know and be and do before they leave home as young adults? That is, what must *you* know and be and do for that to happen?

(Keep in mind: the role of discipling children is primarily in the hands of the parents, not the local church (Ephesians 6:4). The local church is to come alongside the parents to help them. But it is not the church’s responsibility to disciple children *for* the parents.)

A SELF-EXALTING LIFE

DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS. HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO, ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN. BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS. (PHILIPPIANS 2:4-8)

According to this passage what did Jesus do to humble Himself?

Why would obedience result in humility?

What then should we do to humble ourselves before God and man?

A SELF-DEPENDENT LIFE

How does one grow in dependence on God?

A HEALTHY FEAR

Both believers and unbelievers are to fear the Lord. Jesus warns the *unbeliever* to “fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matthew 10:28). But the Apostle Peter warns the *believer* to “conduct yourselves in fear (of the Father) during the time of your stay on earth (1st Peter 1:17).

What exactly are believers supposed to fear?

WILL THE ONE WHO LIVED FOR SELF FACE AN ETERNITY OF SORROW?

SUMMARY

What should a believer do who realizes – at the age of 60 – that he has not lived properly for Christ? Now what?

A FINAL APPEAL

Our fear is that much of the Christian community is unaware of this event that follows the Rapture of the Church.

What does the Church need to do to correct this problem?

APPENDIX A

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME OTHER JUDGMENTS

1. THE FATHER’S JUDGMENT UPON JESUS CHRIST THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

What has God commanded the Church to observe to keep Her ever mindful of His judgment upon the Son?

How will God remind the redeemed throughout eternity of His judgment upon the Son?

Why do you think the Father wants His people to always remember the judgment He carried out upon His Son?

1. THE FATHER'S JUDGMENT UPON JESUS CHRIST
THE RESULTS OF THIS JUDGMENT

What do you think *your life* would be like if Jesus Christ had not been sent by the Father to die in your place?

What do you think *the world* would be like if Jesus Christ had not died on the Cross?

2. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVER
THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

What is the difference between God's punishment and God's discipline?

Why do you think it is important that believers have a clear understanding of this difference?

2. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVER
THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

It was stated in your reading, "The Father's discipline of His sons and daughters is an on-going part of their life in Christ." On the surface, that sounds like bad news.

Why is this good news *for the believer*?

2. THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVER
THE PURPOSES OF THIS JUDGMENT

Do you believe that every change that needs to take place in your life will happen by *reading* the Bible? Why ... or why not?

Recall a period of suffering you have gone through as a believer. (Perhaps you are going through that time right now.)

What truth about God did you learn / are you learning through that time of suffering?

Was the lesson you learned about God worth the trial it took for you to learn that truth? Why ... or why not?

3. THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT OF HIMSELF

THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

It is time to observe the Lord's Supper. The pastor gives each believer time to prepare for this sacred time.

But what is involved? How does a believer judge himself? What must he do to accomplish that?

3. THE BELIEVER'S JUDGMENT OF HIMSELF

THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT

In your reading it was stated, "It is an act of mercy on God's part that He patiently gives us time and opportunities to keep our own sinful practices in check before He has to get involved." This statement implies that – either by the believer himself or by the Father – this judgment of discipline will take place.

Can you think of a passage of Scripture in which discipline in the life of every believer is promised?

4. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

THE TIME OF THIS JUDGMENT

It was stated that the *time* of this judgment will follow the return of Christ to earth after a period of extreme persecution of the Jewish people.

What reason was given for this view?

4. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

THE PEOPLE OF THIS JUDGMENT

It was stated that the *people* to be judged will be those Gentiles who survived the horrors of the Great Tribulation.

What reason was given for this view?

4. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION
THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

The Church is commanded to provide humanitarian relief to those in need. Matthew 25:31-40 is often used to support this action. Yet, in these verses the Church is not helping the poor. The fact is, the Church is not the group being summoned to gather before Christ at His Return. (She will return to earth with Him, Revelation 19:11, 14)! According to the context, this is an examination of a future generation of Gentile believers who are commended by Christ for their care of persecuted Jews during the Great Tribulation.

But is it wrong for the Church to use this passage to support their benevolence ministries? If so, why? If not, why not?

4. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION
THE RESULTS OF THIS JUDGMENT

It was pointed out in this section the *results* of this judgment on the Gentiles: Did their living faith cause them to come to the aid of the persecuted Jews during this period of intense persecution ... or did their lack of faith (or dead faith) cause them to respond to their plight with hostility or indifference? The former will be given citizenship in the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah. The latter will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Today, an anti-Semitic spirit continues to permeate the world.

What can the New Testament Church do today to minister to the Jews who continue to be objects of this demonic spirit of persecution?

5. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION
THE PROMISE OF DIVINE PROTECTION

God has promised to protect His people Israel from total genocide. But there is something else at stake besides the life of the Israeli nation. His reputation is at stake.

How are God's promises and His reputation connected?

5. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION
THE PLACE OF THIS JUDGMENT

We learned that the Jews will be forced to flee from their homeland when a man (the antichrist, indwelt by a demon, perhaps Satan himself) will attempt another Jewish genocide.

Why do you think that Satan – throughout Israeli history – has tried to destroy the Jewish people?

5. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

THE NATURE OF THIS JUDGMENT

THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT

The result of this judgment of the Jews is the same as that of the surviving Gentiles. Those of faith in Messiah will be granted citizenship in the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah. Those who reject their Messiah's Death on the Cross as payment for their sins will be banished from it.

Yet, the LORD does not say in Malachi 3, "I will be a swift witness against those who did not accept My sacrificial system as payment for their." It says, "I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me."

Are not all men saved by grace through faith and not by works? How is the practice of sin related to one's rejection of the Cross?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)

THE PROGRESSION OF THIS JUDGMENT

A HISTORY OF THE ANGELS: FROM THEIR CREATION TO THEIR REBELLION

Satan is portrayed as the lead instigator of rebellion. Defiance against God's authority is true not only among angels but also among humans.

In what ways is rebellion against God's ordained order and authorities prevalent today?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)

SATAN IS CAST TO EARTH AFTER HIS ATTEMPTED OVERTHROW OF GOD'S AUTHORITY

It was stated in your reading, "To this day, Satan and his demonic hordes roam this earth."

How should the Church respond to this Truth?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)
SATAN'S POWER AND AUTHORITY ARE BROKEN AT THE CROSS OF CHRIST

It was stated in your reading, "(Satan's) authority and power *over the believer* has been broken by Christ's Work on the Cross."

How should the Church respond to this Truth?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)
SATAN IS FOREVER EXPELLED FROM HEAVEN'S REALM

It was stated in your reading, "During the Great Tribulation, Satan will be fully and forever expelled from the heavenly realm. At that time, he and his horde of demons will be confined to the earth."

Why didn't God just confine them to the abyss? Why would He cast these spiritual forces of darkness to the earth *at this time*?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)
SATAN IS IMPRISONED IN THE ABYSS AT THE END OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

We are told that, once the 1,000-year reign of Messiah is over, Satan will be released from this prison. For ten centuries, all of humanity has lived under the best possible conditions, even being delivered from Satan's evil influence during that time. Yet, once Satan is released from the abyss, nations from all over the world are willing to, once again, yield to his deception. Assembling around Jerusalem, they will try to overthrow Messiah's authority over them.

What does that tell you about the nature of man?

6. GOD'S JUDGMENT OF THE EVIL ANGELS (DEMONS)
SATAN IS FOREVER BANISHED TO THE LAKE OF FIRE AFTER THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST
SUMMARY

Why would a believer's awareness of this truth be a source of satisfaction to him?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE PEOPLE OF THIS JUDGMENT

What do you think that will be like, for an unbeliever to stand before God in judgment, being reminded of each of his sins and knowing what is at stake if he is found guilty? What might he be thinking ... and feeling?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE ISSUE OF THIS JUDGMENT

It was stated that "Every single sin of the unbeliever – each word and each action, committed in public and in private – will be exposed for all to hear."

Why do you think the Lord Jesus Christ is going to expose *every single sin* of the unbeliever? What is His purpose for doing so?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS JUDGMENT

In this section we learned that, when the unbeliever stands before God in judgment, he will not have a defense attorney to represent him. He will be on his own. Individuals will likely be summoned to testify at his trial; but these are witnesses for the prosecution, not for the defense. They will be there to testify against him. We also discovered that the ones who carry out God's sentence of condemnation will be the holy angels.

Suppose you are an observer of this scene ... or even one of those summoned to testify against the lost at the Great White Throne Judgment. What do you think your response to this will be?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE RESULT OF THIS JUDGMENT

The Great White Throne Judgment is not God's judgment of the Church. Why, then, do you think this future judgment was revealed to the Church?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE INTENSITY OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

It was stated in your reading, "Unless one is resolved to believe and obey the Truth to which he is exposed, knowledge of that Truth will contribute to the intensity of his condemnation."

Is there ever a time to stop *praying* for the one who, time after time after time, has rejected the Gospel?

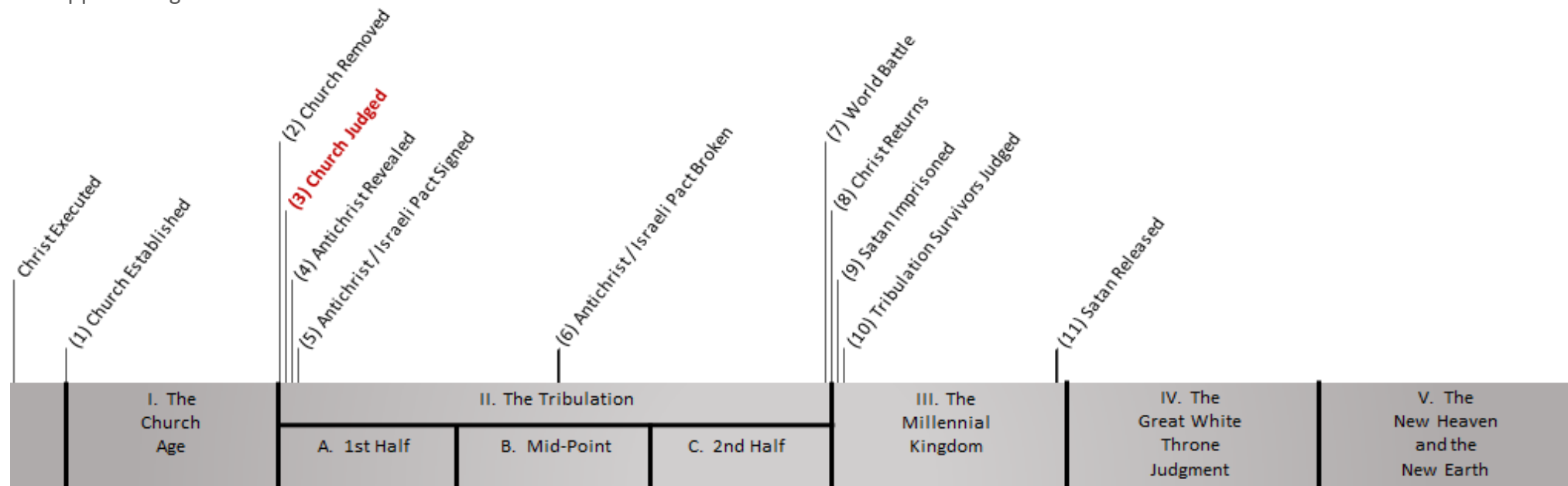
Is there ever a time to stop *presenting a Christ-like life* to the one who, time after time after time, has rejected the Gospel?

Is there ever a time to *declare someone a "lost cause"* because, time after time after time, he has rejected the Gospel?

Is there ever a time to stop *presenting the Gospel* to the one who, time after time after time, has rejected It? If no, why not? If yes, why?

7. GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED
THE DURATION OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

What does the eternal destiny of an unrepentant sinner teach you about the character of God?



Christ Is Executed (Crucifixion):

Isaiah 53:8; **Daniel 9:25-26**; Matthew 27:33-50; **Mark 9:31**

I. The Church Age

1. Church Is Established (Day of Pentecost):
Acts 2; 1st Corinthians 12:13
2. Church Is Removed (Rapture):
1st Corinthians 15:51-53; **1st Thessalonians 4:13-17**
3. **Church Is Judged (Judgment Seat of Christ):**
1st Corinthians 3:8, 13-15; 2nd Corinthians 5:9-10; Revelation 22:12

II. The Tribulation: Revelation 6-19

A. The 1st Half of the Tribulation: **Matthew 24:4-14**; Mark 13:5-13

4. Antichrist Is Revealed:
Daniel 7:25, 8:25; **2nd Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13:1-8**
5. Antichrist / Israeli Pact Is Signed:
Daniel 9:27

B. The Mid-Point of the Tribulation: Jeremiah 30:4-11; **Matthew 24:15-28**

6. Antichrist / Israeli Pact Is Broken ("Abomination of Desolation"):
Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; **2nd Thessalonians 2:4**

C. The 2nd Half of the Tribulation: Jeremiah 30:4-11; **Matthew 24:16-28**

7. World Battle (Armageddon):
Joel 3:9-15; **Revelation 16:12-16**
8. Christ Returns (Second Coming):
Zechariah 14:1-5; Matthew 24:29-39; Revelation 19:11-21
9. Satan Is Imprisoned:
Revelation 20:1-3
10. Tribulation Survivors Are Judged:
Matthew 25:31-46

III. The Millennial Kingdom: Psalm 2; Zechariah 14:16-18; **Revelation 20:4-6**

11. Satan Is Released:
Revelation 20:7-10

IV. The Great White Throne Judgment: **Revelation 20:11-15**

V. The New Heaven and the New Earth: 2nd Peter 3:8-13; **Revelation 21:1-22:5**