

ETERNAL JUDGMENT (PART 2)

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As we saw in Part One of this series, the doctrine of eternal judgment is one of the foundation doctrines of Christianity (Heb 6:1-2). Although many disbelieve or deny that there will ever be a Judgment Day (2 Pet 3:1-7), the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the assurance God has given to all men that the world will indeed be judged in righteousness (Acts 17:30-31). *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Cor 5:10). Only a few will be pardoned and receive eternal salvation (Luke 13:23-24). There is much teaching in the holy scriptures concerning the details of how we will be judged in the end.

The standard of judgment

Unlike men, God’s ways are always equal (Ezek 18:25). *“The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether”* (Psa 19:9). With God, there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jas 1:17). He does not change (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8). Thus, He has provided the same objective standard to judge all of His creation. Jesus Christ will judge the world *in righteousness* (Acts 17:31), and God’s righteousness has been revealed in the gospel of Christ, the New Testament (Rom 1:16-17). Indeed, Jesus said in John 12:48, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”* The books of the New Testament will be opened as we face Christ on his great white throne, and “those things which were written in the books” will judge us then (Rev 20:12). The same verse says that “another book” will also be opened then, the “Book of Life.” By those books, all men will be judged *“according to their works.”* The New Testament has given us *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* (2 Pet 1:3), contains *“all truth”* (John 16:13) and everything we need to become *“perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Tim 3:16-17). In this life, God is faithful not to allow us to be tempted by the Devil beyond what we can bear, and always provides a way of escape from the temptation (1 Cor 10:13). Thus, we have no excuse for not having our deeds in line with what the word of Christ commands. There will be no respect of persons on Judgment Day, but all will be judged according to whether or not we have obeyed the Lord (Rom 2:5-11). God will judge the “secrets of men” by Jesus Christ according to his gospel (Rom 2:16). Another key part of the standard by which we will be judged, concerning our behavior in relation to the teachings of Jesus Christ, is that we will be judged according to how we treat others. In Matthew 7:2, the Lord says, *“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”* For example, if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us (Matt 6:14-15; 18:21-35). James 2:13 also says, *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”* Who among us would prefer to get what we truly deserve in the judgment rather than to receive as much mercy as possible?

Loving our brethren

Matthew 25:34-45 teaches us that a major part of the basis of our eternal judgment

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will be whether or not we have served our brethren. One of the primary ways that we serve Christ is by serving the brethren. Jesus gave “a new commandment” which is to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34-35). Jesus loved his disciples by serving them. After washing their feet (John 13:1-12), Jesus said that since he is our Master (John 13:13), we should do as he did and “also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). Jesus said, “*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*” (John 13:15-17). Jesus repeated his command for us to love one another as he loves us (John 15:12), and said, “*Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). Since he laid down his life for us, “*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*” (1 John 3:16). We lay down our lives for the brethren, not by physical death, but as a *living* sacrifice (Rom 12:1). We sacrifice ourselves by serving. Every Christian is called to “esteem others better than themselves” (Php 2:3), and “look on the things of others,” not just our own things (Php 2:4). Following Christ’s example of ministering to others by becoming “servant of all” is how we become great in the kingdom of God (Mark 10:42-45). On the other hand, if we do not love one another in *deed and in truth*, we do not have God’s love dwelling in us (1 John 3:16-18), and we also then have a dead faith (Jas 2:14-17). That is no condition to be in when facing our Lord in the judgment.

The judgment of the wicked

The wicked will be judged after the righteous have been pardoned (Matt 25:41-46). Tragically, this will include most people (Matt 7:13-14). They will be condemned and sentenced to eternal destruction. This is the day that the world will be condemned (1 Cor 11:31-32). Every mouth will be stopped and “the world” will be guilty before God (Rom 3:19). These “spiritual goats” will be condemned for *not* serving Christ by serving God’s children” (Matt 25:41-46). Following the judgment, everyone will go to their respective eternal dwelling places, either to heaven or to hell (Matt 25:34,41,46; Rev 20:14-15). Matthew 25:46 says that “these,” speaking of the goats, “shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” On Judgment Day, our eternal sentence will be issued, and afterward, that sentence will be carried out. And that sentence cannot be appealed, it will not be reviewed or commuted. The sentence is final and it is *eternal*. Considering this should cause us to regularly and thoroughly examine ourselves (2 Cor 13:5). When Paul reasoned of the “judgment to come” with Felix, “Felix trembled” (Acts 24:25). We need to be looking for (anticipating) that day to come and prepare ourselves for it (2 Pet 3:10-14). This is our opportunity to prepare ourselves for eternity. And this is our only opportunity. There will be no “second chance” for anyone. Hebrews 9:27 says, “*And it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” This life is our one and only chance to get it right. As 2 Corinthians 6:2 tells us: “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!*”