
CHAPTER 16

GOD'S JUDGEMENTS IN GENERAL

We know that the God of love is also righteous and just. So God will always judge sin. The Scriptures help us to see into this matter. The flood in Noah's day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the overthrow of the ungodly tribes of Palestine, the series of captivity of the Jews, and even the crucifixion of Jesus as a substitute for our sins are clues to our learning on the character of God in respect of judgment of sin. The death of Ananias and Sapphira indicate the true actions of a holy God, even in respect of the normal life of the Church, where lessons on conduct in ethical behavior with lying are learnt.

The coming Tribulation also popularly referred to as the time of Jacob's Trouble shows the wrath of God against rebellious Israel and the wickedness of the Gentile nations. This period, called the day of the Lord by the prophets, will not only affect the Jewish people but the whole world (Zeph. 1:14-18). In the book of Amos a simplistic and naive understanding of the day was that God would bless Israel, his people, while those who opposed him and his people he would judge and condemn (see Amos 5:18-20).

This is partly so, for the covenant keeping God will intervene on the behalf of Israel of Israel as in the Gog and Magog War predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Israel and that matter all who are in covenant with God should not forget that election brings responsibility (Amos 3:2), and that a right relationship with God is not based on birth but on obedience.

They suffer if God is not honored, as do all nations, but blessing is also available to all righteous people, whatever their ethnic heritage. There have been and will continue to be certain divine judging acts of God. For instance, Jude talks about how God has put some fallen angels in chains in Tartarus (Jude 6). Also observe how Satan will be bound and placed in the bottomless pit for one thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

We, however, are here even more concerned about judgments with direct eternal repercussions on humankind. We must also be clear in our minds that God will be the judge (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5; 14:10; Heb. 12:23; 1Pet. 1:17). However, just as the Godhead - the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit - works together through Jesus, the Son in Creation and Redemption (John 1:1, 14), even so has the Father committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:29; Rom. 2:16; 2Tim. 4:1). We know that Jesus qualifies as the righteous judge (Gen. 18:25; Is. 11:1-5; Matt. 16:27). He is the Son, who submitted Himself for judgment in death on the cross for the sin of the world (2Cor. 5:19-21), but was raised to life as the accredited Supreme Judge of all creation (Ps. 2:8-12; Acts 13:33; 17:31).

It would, therefore, be very irreverent for any one, including some well meaning Christians, to think and believe that the God of the Christians sometimes delays or ignores judgment. Such a stance on judgment is dangerously unscriptural and can make the unguarded Christian slip from Heaven's highway into Hell (Psalm 73:1-28). Remember, the coming Tribulation is for God to punish severely our adversaries and all who do not know Him having not believed our gospel (2Thess. 1:5-9).

FUTURE ETERNAL JUDGMENTS

The Bible clearly teaches that all believers in Christ (the Church saints) will have their works judged and rewarded soon after the Rapture. The Bible further speaks of direct judgments of the Gentile nations and of the Jews during the Tribulation as the wrath of God is poured on wicked humanity on the earth. These will culminate in the final judgment on Anti-Christ (the Beast) and the False Prophet (the second Beast) at the end of the battle of Armageddon. Concurrently the living Gentiles and Jews would have been judged to determine their entry into the Messianic kingdom. It is also believed that all Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints martyred will be resurrected and judged immediately after the battle of Armageddon. Subsequently, the Lord Jesus will exercise direct sovereign rule during the Millennium.

After all these there will be the last world war - Gog and Magog; and finally Satan, the wicked angels and demons, and all the wicked dead after the final resurrection will be judged. In short final future judgment will include all fallen angels and the whole of humanity.

From Rom. 1:20, 21, 32; 2:5- 16 we read, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them. ... But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness-- indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."*

The standard of these judgments will be the revealed will and purpose of God. It is important to remind us once more about God's purposes for Israel and the Church at this point. Three things stand out in scripture clearly as standards:

1. *God's will, revealed to every person inwardly* (Rom. 1: 19-22; 2:14-15): Even the heaven have no excuse because it is possible to see God through His creation, so that man would worship the Creator and not creatures.
2. *God's will, revealed specifically to Israel in the Law* (John 5:45; Rom. 2:12; 3:2): The one who has the Law will be judged by it. The requirement is total obedience to what is revealed.
3. *God's will, revealed through Jesus Christ* (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16): Jesus is the Word; whatever He taught becomes a standard. Secondly the preaching of the gospel makes it possible

for believers to share in His deeds. It removes our condemnation (John 5:24; Rom. 8:1, 2), makes us joint-heirs with Christ with the privilege to share in judgment of fallen angels and the world (1Cor. 6:1-3)

A bird's eye view of all future judgments is outlined below. For convenience, the judgment of Church saints, called the Bema is treated separated in detail in the next chapter.

A. JUDGMENT OF THE LIVING GENTILE NATIONS - ALSO CALLED THE SHEEP AND GOATS JUDGEMENT

1. **Time** - At the Second Coming of Jesus Christ
2. **Place** - Valley of Jehoshaphat.
3. **Judge** - Jesus Christ
4. **Subjects Judged** - Gentiles living when Jesus Christ comes.
5. **Basis** - Treatment of Israel and following the Beast in the rejection of God.
6. **Result** - Saved to enter the Millennial Kingdom or will be killed but later be cast into lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgment. From John 11:25, 26 we read; Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (NKJ). This will become a reality for living believers in the millennium.
7. **Scriptures** - Matthew 25:31-46; Joel 3:2; Rev. 19: 12ff.

B. JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL OR LIVING JEWS

1. **Time** - At the Second coming of Jesus Christ.
2. **Place** - On earth
3. **Judge** - Jesus Christ
4. **Subjects Judged** - Jews who will be living when Jesus Christ comes
5. **Basis** - Acceptance of Messiah
6. **Results** - Saved to enter the Millennial Kingdom or will be killed but later be cast into lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgment. It is necessary to again refer to the realization from John 11:25, 26; Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. ..."

7. **Scripture** (Ezekiel 20:37-38).

C. JUDGMENT OF ANTI-CHRIST AND FALSE PROPHET

1. **Time** - During the battle of Armageddon.
2. **Place** - On earth, Valley of Jehoshaphat
3. **Judge** - Jesus Christ
4. **Basis** - Allowing Satan to incarnate them
5. **Results** - First people to be thrown into Hell Fire
6. **Scripture** (Rev. 19:20, 21).

D. JUDGMENT DURING THE MILLENNIUM

1. **Time** - During the Millennium
2. **Place** - On earth
3. **Judge** - Jesus Christ through the glorified OT & NT saints
4. **Subjects Judged** - People born in the millennial kingdom up to the last battle of Gog and Magog
5. **Basis** - Acceptance of Messiah
6. **Results** - Saved to enter eternity or will die or be killed in the last world battle and later be cast into lake of fire, after the Great White Throne Judgment. It is again necessary to refer to the reality of Jesus' words in John 11:25, 26; Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
7. **Scripture** (Isaiah 11:1f).

E. JUDGMENTS OF SATAN AND HIS ANGELS

We need to be reminded that all rebellion in creation is subject to judgment, hence in considering future eternal judgments, we should make mention of the judgment of fallen angels.

1. **Time** - Probably after the Millennium
2. **Place** - Unspecified
3. **Judges** - Jesus Christ and believers
4. **Subjects Judged** - Satan, Fallen Angels and All Demons
5. **Basis** - Disobedience to God and for following Satan in his revolt against God
6. **Result** - Cast into the lake of Fire
7. **Scripture** (Matt. 25:41; 1 Cor. 6:3; 2Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).

F. FINAL JUDGMENTS OF ALL THE DEAD

The dead will all be judged according to scripture and again Jesus will be the Judge (John 5:24-29; Acts 10:42; 2Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:27). This will take place after the various resurrections of the dead; namely: the Rapture, the resurrection of the two Tribulation witnesses, the resurrections after the battle of Armageddon (of Old Testament and Tribulation saints) that will altogether compose the first resurrection (Rev. 20:1-5). In each case there will be judgments for rewards attached. For instance, the dead in Christ will be judged and rewarded at the Bema seat of Christ after the Rapture. The others will also be judged accordingly, all before the start of the millennium. Then after the millennium the wicked dead will be raised in what is referred to as the second resurrection, to be judged. This last judgment usually referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment, will only be for condemnation and punishment in eternal Hell (John 5:28, 29).

Permit me to raise a critical issue here, for which some skeptics must not be allowed to twist the minds of the unwary. Some one may ask, 'What is the position or plight of those who died not having had the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Church Age?' I believe that the Omniscient God knows those who are His and will reach out to them in good time. However, the question above needs to be looked at in the light of revealed truth:

1. That such would not enjoy the rapture of the Church; for the rapture will be for the believers living at the time and the dead in Christ only (1Thess. 4:13-18).
2. That some of these could be placed in the category of Old Testament saints (i. e. starting from creation until the day of Pentecost, after which the gospel became effective); if at all possible, in the light of Romans 1:18-2:16.

Incidentally the dead who fall in this category would either have lived under the knowledge of revealed laws of God to Israel (Jews and their proselytes) or without any such laws (the heathen); but in any case all being darkened in their minds, would have lived ungodly and unrighteous lives. You can judge for yourself from the full text given. So then, if the gospel of Christ is presently both the power of God to salvation (chp. 1 and vs. 16, 17) and the jury for judgment day (chp. 2 vs. 16), then who can humanly pass the text living outside of it, anyway?

Hence the gospel must be preached at all cost (Rom. 10:9-18; 1Cor. 9:16) knowing that 'all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal' (Rom. 3:23 TLB). Besides, the truth is that life is but for a single chance only and moreover that nothing more but judgment follows death (Heb. 9:27). But this leads us to consider a very hard doctrinal proposition: Why then did Jesus preach to the dead in His death? The Bible itself answers this question referred to in Peter's epistles.

1 Pet. 3:18-20

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water".

1 Pet. 4:3-6

"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit".

In plain terms Jesus was not going to lead them to repentance but to herald (Gk: kerruso) the divine truth (of His coming in the flesh) to the spirits in prison. According to the text, He did the preaching not in His flesh but in the Spirit. So, it could simply imply that He wanted them to see how depraved and sinful their earthly actions were that deserved such final flood judgment. These spirits were the souls of those who perished in the flood after the specific 120-year period of warning in Noah's day preceding the flood. Later Peter in his second epistle again showed that their end in eternal judgment was already determined by their actions as they refused the preaching of Noah.

"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and

did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries," (2 Pet. 2:4-5, 9-10).

The prophet Isaiah clearly teaches against the second chance theory for sinners who die in their sins. It is declared, "*For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.*" (Isa. 38:18).

JURY FOR JUDGMENTS OF THE DEAD

Each of these judgments will be based on a jury of books kept. We should understand that God is keeping books on all creation, including everything concerning all of mankind.

God exercises sovereignty over His Creation. God is also omniscient and knows everything from beginning to the end (Acts 15:18). Jesus Christ, our Lord to whom all judgment is committed (Acts 10:42), as God is thus omniscient. He has caused records for judgment to be kept in books on all works (thoughts and deeds) of all humanity. We sure can think of books of names and records of the entire human race. Malachi refers to one such book as a book of remembrance for righteous people (Mal. 3:16). The Psalmist notes that there is a book for recording even our tears (Ps. 56:8). The book can be voluminous for in such a book even the records of Jesus Himself are written (Heb. 10:5-7).

Sometimes, a seal is placed on a book to conceal the information until a later time (Dan. 12:4); but when they are opened divine action takes place (Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:6; 20:11-15). Now, the most significant of the books is the 'book of life'. This peculiar book rightly called the 'Lamb's book of life' contains the names of all believers in Jesus the Christ (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 20:11; 21:27). The records in this book, begun from the foundation of the earth (Rev. 13:8; 17:8); and it is only Jesus who can blot out a name from it (Ex. 32:33; 3:5).

In the book of Revelation we read, *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."* (Rev. 20:12-15). There will, therefore, be probably sets of books as Jury that will be used for these judgments in two categories of (i) one set of books ensuring eternity with or without God and (ii) other sets of books for rewarding good and bad works.

i) **Category I - The Lamb's Book of life** (Ex. 32:32, 33; Ps. 69:28; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 15; 21:27; 22:19): This will be probably a set of books in which the names of believers in God are recorded. Such do receive the credit of having been washed by the blood of Lamb (Jesus), slain before the foundation of the world. If one's name is found in that book, He will enjoy eternity with God. Surprisingly all such people if dead would have taken part in the first resurrection, to precede the Millennium. These will be a) all believers in Christ who enjoy the rapture (1Thess. 4:13-18), b) Old Testament saints and c) all Tribulation saints (Rev. 20:1-5). Those who do not have their names in this special, specific Book will be doomed to spend eternity in the Lake of fire. So this jury will determine one's position either in Heaven (in the case of saints of God) or in the Lake of fire (for all unbelieving people).

ii) **Category II** – This will be sets of books that will be used to judge every body, both saints and the wicked. The only difference is that this jury will not condemn saints. Condemnation is dependent solely on the Book of life, referred to in Category I. The books here will normally have bearing on rewards or the loss of it for works only, whether good or bad. Of course this jury will determine one's position either in Heaven (in the case of saints of God) or in the Lake of fire (for all unbelieving people).

The Scriptures give hints on at least five of such books. Namely:

- (a) The book of conscience (Rom. 2:15)
- (b) The book of words (Matt. 12:36,37; John 12:48)
- (c) The book of secret thoughts; acts or works (Eccl. 12:14; Rom. 2:16)
- (d) The book of public works (Matt. 16:27; 2Cor. 11:15)
- (e) The book of neglected opportunities (Ezek. 3:18; Gal. 6:7-9):

More will be said on these books in the next chapter.

G. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

- 1. **Time** - After the Millennium
- 2. **Place** - Before the Great White Throne
- 3. **Judge** - Jesus Christ
- 4. **Subjects Judged** - All Unsaved men and women who have died from the beginning of creation.
- 5. **Basis** - Unbelief in God and Rejection of the Savior Jesus Christ places them in this judgment, but they are shown on the basis of their own works that they deserve eternal punishment.
- 6. **Results** - They will be cast into the Lake of Fire
- 7. **Scripture** (Revelation 20:11-15).

All judgments will be fair and according to truth (Gen. 18:25; Acts 17:30,31; Rom. 2:2)

Christ Jesus qualifies beyond any doubt to judge in fairness and divine truth; and no one is without excuse for:

- a. There is the light of creation for every human being (Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:19, 20).
- b. There is also the light of conscience (Rom. 1:18). We should not allow conscience to suppress truth (Rom. 2:14, 15).
- c. None is free from responsibility (1Pet. 1:17). Everyone will face judgment; however, degrees of responsibility exist according to the scriptures (Luke 12:47, 48).
- d. The unsaved are lost eternally. As has been mentioned earlier, all unsaved people- heathen, church goers, well-behaved

unbelievers, great and small, and the like whose names are not found in the Lamb's Book of life will be thrown into Hell fire. There will be no room for excuses for "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) and the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 3:18). The Bible declares also that Jesus is the only way (John 14:6).

- e. The challenge then is to preach the gospel at all cost (Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16, 17; 10:13-16; 1Cor. 9:16).

THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS PRESENT EARTH AND HEAVEN

The heavens (the first and second heavens) shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are there in shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10, 11). This is to give way for God to create a New Heaven and New Earth wherein righteousness dwells (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

