

## ETERNAL JUDGMENT

In studying the letters of Paul, we find a teacher who understood his role to be one of providing deeper insight into the Holy Scriptures. Due to this quest, from time to time, we also find him lamenting the failure of some of God's people to assimilate the truth they had been given. He found it frustrating that some continued to stumble over even basic doctrines.

*HEB 5:11-12 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths [NKJ: "first principles"] of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (NIV)*

*5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*

*5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (NIV)*

*HEB 6:1-2 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*

Like Paul, I continue to be amazed that as long as most of God's people have been connected to Jesus Christ, there are still some who do not clearly grasp some of these basic truths. Due to a number of questions that have recently been asked, we need to review one of these basic doctrines: eternal judgment!

What is eternal judgment? How is it determined? When is it fulfilled? The vast majority of those that the world considers "Christians" believe that the entire world is now being judged and after death, the outcome of that judgment—the sentencing phase—is carried out: to either be consigned to eternal bliss or eternal torture. We, who God has selected to understand the truth, know the "Christian" world's concept is wrong. However, there are times when, despite our understanding, we find ourselves somewhat rusty regarding all of the aspects of this basic doctrine. Therefore, today will serve as a refresher course to clean out the rust.

The first thing we must do is define two terms important to understanding this doctrine:

1. "Judging" pertains to observing and evaluating the facts and evidence provided in order to arrive at a final decision.
2. "Judgment" is the final decision, or verdict, which is acted on at the time of sentencing.

In the case of eternal judgment, Who is the judge who does the judging?

*JOH 5:22 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son*

*2TI 4:1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:*

*2CO 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

*ROM 14:10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

Jesus is responsible for all judgment concerning salvation. Paul designates Jesus as being the "*Righteous Judge*" in 2TI 4:8. A righteous judge can only render a righteous judgment. And for Him to make a righteous judgment four requirements must be met:

**1. LAW: There must be a basis for judgment—a standard for evaluation.**

The standard by which one is judged for eternal life is the Law upon which are based all of the teachings contained within the Word of God.

*JOH 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

*JAM 2:12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.*

**2. SUBJECTS: Those who understand they are being judged by a standard.**

Before a judgment can be righteous, the subjects must have a good understanding of the standard used to judge them.

*PSA 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments...*

**3. CONDUCT OVER TIME: Subjects need time to prove they will submit to the standard.**

Not only must the subjects have a good understanding of the basis of their judgment, they must also be given sufficient time to evaluate the benefits of abiding by it.

**4. SENTENCING & EXECUTION OF VERDICT: The decision of the judge after observing the conduct of the subjects.**

In order to see how these four requirements for judgment fit together, let's briefly rehearse what is probably the most famous judgment of all: the one that occurred immediately after the creation of man.

*GEN 2:8-9 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

God created an environment suitable for judging man. He loaded the garden with everything man would need to satisfy his senses and hunger and to sustain his life. But, He also placed an object in the garden which could bring harm and death.

*2:15-17 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

God clearly spelled out the standard by which the subject being judged—Adam—was to live: disobedience to that standard would bring on a penalty.

*3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

Despite understanding the need to submit to the standard God had decreed, the subject failed to conduct himself properly—he disobeyed.

3:16-19 *To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."*

Once it was clear that the subject's conduct required punishment, God sentenced the subject to suffering and death.

3:24 *So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

God began the execution of the subjects' sentence by casting them out of the garden and severing them from any hope of life.

In this example of a physical judgment all four requirements were met. However, concerning the doctrine of eternal judgment, of the four requirements, only the Law is constant. The last three are variables due to the biblical revelation of multiple days of salvation. As we have known since before we were baptized, the festivals of God reveal the steps necessary for the accomplishment of His plan of reconciliation for mankind—reconciliation necessitated due to the first Adam disobeying God and surrendering the dominion of the earth to the devil.

The first step revealed by the festivals (specifically the Passover) is that the focal point of all reconciliation is the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Without His death, no man could ever achieve justification.

The second step, revealed by the Days of Unleavened Bread, is every man's need for the grace of God—the extension of God's mercy after coming under the blood of Christ, so that sin is not imputed during the course of a man's life during his day of judgment.

The third step, revealed by Pentecost, is that God has established a Day of Salvation (the day of judgment) for a very small number of individuals that He is selecting to compose the Bride for His Son.

The fourth step, revealed by the Feast of Trumpets, is that the present age of darkness, caused by Satan's power, will end when the second Adam takes back the dominion given to man in Eden.

The fifth step, revealed by the Day of Atonement, is the removal of the source of all deceit, division, destruction and death—which severed man from God, necessitating reconciliation.

The sixth step, revealed by the Feast of Tabernacles, is a second Day of Salvation (the day of judgment) for all mankind that survives the events of the Day of the Lord.

The seventh step, revealed by the Last Great Day, is a third Day of Salvation (commonly called the White Throne Judgment) for all who are raised up in the Second Resurrection.

Now that we have rehearsed the overview of God's festivals which reveal three separate days of salvation, let's look more closely at each of those periods of judgment.

## THE FIRST DAY OF SALVATION

The scriptures clearly show that at Christ's return there will be a resurrection to spirit.

REV 11:18 *The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead [correct Greek: "ethnos", meaning "nations"], that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."*

1TH 4:13-17 *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1CO 15:50-53 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

REV 20:4, 6 *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

These passages all reveal that those who are resurrected from the dead or changed from flesh to spirit at the Seventh Trumpet have already undergone their Day of Judgment and, based on their conduct toward the standard of God's Law, His decision or verdict for them is eternal life.

As we know, the members of the spiritual organism called the Church and body of Christ are those who are now experiencing their day of salvation, or time of judgment.

1PE 4:17 *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God...*

It is to the Church today that Paul is writing regarding this day of salvation in:

2CO 6:1-2 *We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the [NRS: "a"] day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Paul is quoting from ISA 49:8, which correctly reads "a day of salvation", emphasizing that there is more than one time of judgment on humanity. But, as Paul brings out here—this is the day of salvation for the Church. Therefore, we must stay focused on our relationship with God. He is not imputing any sin to us as He judges our daily conduct. We must live our lives striving not to sin, thankful we have been made alive after being dead in trespasses and sins (EPH 2:1).

As stated in REV 20, the elect of God who receive the judgment of eternal life at the coming of Christ will fulfill an important, prophesied role of ruling with Christ during:

## THE SECOND DAY OF SALVATION

The scriptures announce a Day of Judgment for salvation following the return of Christ.

ROM 11:25-27 *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."*

ZEC 14:4, 9 *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—"the LORD is one," and His name one.*

14:16-17 *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.*

14:18-19 *However, if the community of Egypt does not make this pilgrimage, it shall not be visited by the same affliction with which the LORD will strike the other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Booths. Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and of all other nations that do not come up to observe the Feast of Booths. (TAN)*

This shows that at the outset of the millennial reign of Christ, due to God working with Israel first, some of those from other nations will rebel out of jealousy and will need to be reminded that a Day of Judgment on all nations will be in effect, and that they will be treated fairly by the righteous judge of all nations.

ISA 11:1-4 *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...*

ISA 2:2-4 *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Once the nations see the blessings enjoyed by Israel, due to their conduct of obedience to the standard of God's law, those nations will want to learn that standard and live by it themselves.

This Day of Judgment for salvation will last for 1000 years. During this time, the minds of all people will be opened so that they can understand the truth of God and the standard of conduct they will be required

to live by. After this 1000-years-day is completed, the devil will be released to go throughout the world to deceive the nations into attacking the land of Israel. Once this attack and the subsequent events mentioned in EZE 39 are fulfilled, God will bring to pass:

### THE THIRD DAY OF SALVATION

The third and final Day of Judgment for salvation comes only after the second day has been completed.

REV 20:5 *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished...*

Only the dead in Christ are resurrected at the Seventh Trumpet because they are the only ones who have already undergone judgment for salvation.

Jesus refers to both resurrections in:

JOH 5:24-29 *Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever hears what I am saying and trusts the One who sent Me has eternal life—that is, he will not come up for judgment but has already crossed over from death to life! Yes, indeed! I tell you that there is coming a time—in fact, it's already here—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will come to life. For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given the Son life to have in Himself. Also He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Don't be surprised at this; because the time is coming when all who are in the grave will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment. (JNT)*

God shows that, unlike the First Resurrection, those raised from the dead in the Second Resurrection are raised up in physical bodies because they have not yet undergone a Day of Judgment—they cannot be given immortality prior to being judged.

EZE 37:1-14 *The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'" So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' "Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it, says the LORD."*

Like the First and Second Days of Judgment for salvation, upon repentance and baptism, the spirit of God is given to individuals in the flesh. That spirit provides them spiritual discernment and the power necessary for creating a new mind with a spiritual focus.

Jesus gave further insight into the third and final day of salvation in:

*MAT 11:20-24 Then He began to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you."*

*MAT 12:41-42 The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.*

These two passages show that all the dead will be raised for judgment at the same time—no matter when they lived in the past.

Jesus stated in JOH 12:48 that His word would be used as the standard for judging in the last day of salvation. This means those in the Second Resurrection will be judged by the same standard as those in both the First and Second Days of Salvation: the Law upon which the Holy Scriptures are founded.

*REV 20:11-12 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 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.*

All of those resurrected to be judged for salvation in the White Throne Judgment period will be required to account for whatever sins they sinned prior to their deaths.

*1PE 4:4 Indeed your former companions may think it very strange that you no longer join with them in their riotous excesses, and accordingly say all sorts of abusive things about you. (PHL)*

*4:5 But they will have to give an account to Him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. (JNT)*

Jesus is the one who stands ready to judge. He judges the living—referring to those who have been made alive from their trespasses and sins (EPH 2:1). And He will yet judge the dead—referring to two other groups:

1. those who have not yet been made alive from their trespasses and sins, which also includes all who have died without having completed a day of salvation, and
2. the dead "in Christ" who have completed their Day of Judgment but have not yet received the verdict of their judgment.

The ones who say abusive things will have to give account to Jesus whenever their Day of Judgment is upon them, as Jesus stated in:

*MAT 12:36 "But I say to you that for every idle [Greek: "injurious"] word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."*

In his letter to the Christians in Rome, the apostle Paul referenced the prophecy in ISA 45 as proof that everyone must eventually acknowledge God as the Creator of the standard by which they should live their lives.

*ROM 14:11-12 For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.*

Every individual member of the human family will be required to undergo a Day of Judgment; the majority will probably do so during the White Throne Judgment.

From the scriptures we have reviewed, we have seen that, regardless of the time when one is judged, the basis of judgment will be the same:

1. All will have their minds opened to know God.
2. All are given understanding of God's law.
3. All are made aware of the reason for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
4. All who repent and are baptized will receive God's spirit and come under grace, so that no sin is imputed to them during the time of their judgment.
5. All are given enough physical lifetime for a righteous judgment to be made.

Just as the basis of judgment will be the same in each Day of Judgment, so will be the individual responsibilities of those being judged.

*1JO 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*

Walking in the light refers to living by the word of God (as David stated in PSA 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"). Living by the word of God refers to obeying God's instructions.

*1:7 ...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The atoning sacrifice of Christ requires our commitment to living without transgressing His Law.

*1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Even though we are committed to obeying God's Law, no one is able to keep it perfectly. Those who are being judged understand the importance of staying sensitive to sin—by the conviction of God's spirit in them, they know when they have fallen short.

*1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The daily confession (MAT 6:11-12) of failing to avoid sin is part of the responsibility each individual has in giving account to God.

All who know they are now in their Day of Judgment are experiencing the same thoughts and feelings that those in future days of judgment will think and feel.

*1JO 3:1-3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Looking forward to attaining the hope of eternal life should be all the incentive needed for living by every word of God, recognizing any failure in doing so and then confessing our sins so that we retain the purity afforded by God's grace.

Brethren, I hope that after this review of the basic doctrine of eternal judgment that we more deeply appreciate the fact that God has selected us to be before His judgment seat today because He wants to us to be part of the Bride for His Son. If we truly are appreciative, we will take to heart the exhortation of the apostle Paul:

*HEB 2:1-3 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...*