

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSE



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LESSON 14 • The Judgement Seat

WEEKLY READINGS
READING FOR STUDY PAPER

Genesis 45-47, Philippians 3-4
Matthew 25

On the night that Judas betrayed Him, the Lord Jesus gave him one last warning: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark, chapter 14, verse 21). By betraying his master, Judas had deliberately turned against the Lord Jesus, and chosen the way of wickedness. There have been men in every generation who have wilfully turned away from the Lord and chosen the way of wickedness. They have to bear the responsibility of living darkness rather than light. They deserve a severe judgement. That is why Jesus said of Judas, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

There must be a judgement

If we think about this, we shall see the need for a judgement after the resurrection. God is loving; but He is also just and upright. He could not give eternal life to men and women who had despised His love, and who - knowing that Jesus had died for them - made no effort to serve and obey Him.

So Paul tells us, in Romans, chapter 14, verse 10, "We shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ."

and again in II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10:

"We must all appear before the judgement 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."

A righteous judge

When Jesus comes again, He will raise the dead, and gather together those of His followers who are living at that time. There will be a time of judgement. After the judgement, those who have been accepted will be given eternal life, and Jesus will say to them, as we read in Matthew, chapter 25, verse 34, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Jesus Himself will be the judge. In John, chapter 5, verses 28-30, where Jesus is speaking of the resurrection, we read, "...the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, "And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgement is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me."

He will judge with the wisdom that God has given Him. We read in Isaiah, chapter 11, verse 3-4.

"He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears. "But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."

Men can only judge by what they see and hear; but the Lord Jesus will know the hearts of men, and He will make no mistakes in His judgement.

Who will be at the Judgement seat?

Those who have accepted God's gracious offer of life, and who have been baptised into Christ, will be gathered to the judgement seat of Christ. But they will not be the only ones. There will be faithful men of Old Testament times as well. And, of course, there will be some who have not been faithful. We read in Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 26-27, "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, "But a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

Those who have never known about the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ, will not be raised to judgement. You may remember the verses in Psalm 49, verse 19-20, which say of such a man, "He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

(If you read Isaiah, chapter 26, verses 13-14, you will see that the same thing is taught there, too.)

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What will happen to those who are rejected?

We have seen that those who come before the Judgement Seat of Christ will be divided into two classes. Christ will accept some, and reject others. He will give eternal life to those He accepts. But what will happen to those who are rejected? What will their punishment be?

We do not know all the details of their punishment. But some things are quite certain. First, they will be made to see how foolish they have been; they will realise what they have lost; and this will cause them agony of mind. Jesus said of such people: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God - and you yourselves thrust out!" (Luke, chapter 13, verse 28).

Finally, they will be completely destroyed. Jesus likened the judgement to a harvest, where the good corn is separated from useless weeds. The corn is carefully preserved. But the weeds are destroyed in the farmer's bonfire. (Matthew, chapter 13, verse 36-43).

Paul taught the same thing very plainly:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (II Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 7-9).

Love or fear

There are some passages which seem to warn us not to be too confident about our position at the judgement; whereas other scriptures seem to encourage us to be brimful of confidence. There is no contradiction. We must have no confidence - in ourselves; we must have unbounded confidence - in the saving power of God.

Though we may begin by being afraid of God, we shall gradually learn to love Him and trust Him completely. And so John says: "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement" (I John, chapter 4, verse 17). "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (I John, chapter 4, verse 18).

Summary

1. There will be a judgement day.
2. It will be after the resurrection.
3. All who have known the truth of God will be brought to judgement.
4. Those who are accepted at the Judgement Seat of Christ will then be given eternal life.
5. Those who are rejected at the Judgement Seat will suffer agonies of mind, and then will be destroyed.