

The Final Judgment

There is a final day of reckoning for the world, a day when all must appear before God for a final and public judgment. The verdict pronounced upon all privately (from the perspective of time) at the moment of death will be made known publicly to the entire world. Jude tells us that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him," (Jude 14, 15). Daniel referred to the final judgment when he wrote, "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt," (Dan. 12:2).

All people will be summoned before God for the final judgment. Jesus said, "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats," (Matt. 25:32). Paul said, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad," (2 Cor. 5:10). The good angels will be present at the final judgment. They will act as God's harvesters, bringing all people before Him for the final judgment (Mark 13:27). Even the fallen angels will be present for the final judgment (2 Peter 2:4). They know the day is coming, and they tremble (Matt. 8:29). Believers will concur with the Lord as he pronounces His verdict of judgment on the fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:3). We will judge angels.

The judge on the Last Day will be our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "He [the Father] has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man," (John 5:27). It is fitting that Jesus is the judge. He is the one who has come into this world to redeem us. He is the only way to salvation. His standard for judgment will be the gospel. Jesus said, "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life," (John 5:24). "There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day," (John 12:48). "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned," (Mark 16:15-16). Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son," (John 3:18).

Good works do not save us. Jesus Christ alone saves. The good works believers do are fruits of their faith. They are evidence that we are believers. As Jesus said, "All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another," (John 13:35). Thus Jesus indicates that on judgment day He will point to the works of believers as an evidence that they had faith (Matt. 25:35-36).

What a joy it is to look forward to Christ's second coming and the final judgment. Yes, we cringe a bit when we think of this, for we know our sin and unworthiness. Truly we deserve to be condemned by our holy God. Yet He is also a God of love and grace, and He has sent Jesus to atone for our sins. Jesus kept God's will for us. He suffered the punishment for our sins. God declared us to be not guilty because Christ was condemned for us. Through faith, we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. Thus, as we

stand before God's all searching eyes, we will be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and cleansed by His blood. God has removed our sins from us forever. We will be filled with joy as our Saviour says to us, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world," (Matt. 25:34).

Unbelievers will be condemned because they rejected Jesus as their Saviour. Paul says that those who have not heard the gospel will be judged according to the law written in their hearts (Rom. 2:12-16). All people know by nature that there is a God (Rom. 1:19-20). They cannot excuse themselves and say they didn't know He existed. Because of the conscience, people know they are accountable to God. Those who heard the gospel and rejected it will also fall under the condemnation of the law. Unbelievers in essence tell God, "I don't want what Jesus did for me. I don't need what Jesus did for me. I want what I have coming to me." As a result, they will hear Jesus say, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels," (Mt 25:41).