

## The Last Day and Final Judgment

A Last Day will most surely come, and on that day Christ will return visibly just as He promised (Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13). When Christ does return, all the dead will rise and all will appear before His throne for judgment (John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:32; Acts 24:15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). On that day all will be seen with bodies and souls reunited.

We may summarise the Last Day and the final judgment this way:

1. A day is certainly coming on which all human history will end, on which day Christ will return visibly and all the dead will rise with bodies and souls reunited to appear before Him for judgment (John 5:22-29; 1 Corinthians 15:52).
2. At that judgment those who have believed the gospel will have their good works that they did as a result of faith put on display for all to see; those who rejected the gospel will be publicly condemned and their failure to produce fruits of faith will be presented as evidence of their unbelief (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28,29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12).
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4. Then those thus judged will go to their reward, the believers to an eternal bliss in heaven and the unbelievers to an eternal torment with the devil and his angels in hell (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 9:26; John 3:16-36; 6:35-65; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
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It is important to note that in so many of these passages, which speak of the judgment on the Last Day, our works in this life receive prominent mention. For that's the nature of a courtroom: not one's invisible faith is at issue but the visible works are the evidence introduced at trial. To be sure, hypocrites and unbelievers produced works too that on the outside looked very good. But the Judge of the heart sees and knows if those works were the fruits and the results of faith in Him or if they had some other motive. Only those visible works that are the results of invisible faith are praised.

We see that with special clarity in the great parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25:31-46, our Gospel for today. Notice how Jesus addresses those rewarded with heaven. He calls them to enter "*the kingdom prepared for you from the time when the world was created,*" that is, before they were ever born or had done anything to merit heaven. Unlike a human court in which the evidence is introduced and then the verdict pronounced, the reverse happens on the Last Day: first comes the verdict, then the evidence that demonstrates the justice of the verdict - in the heart was faith, in the life was the proof of it.

Then notice the verdict over those condemned. They are sentenced to eternal punishment "*prepared for the Devil and his angels.*" It was never God's good and gracious will that they go there; it was intended only for the devil and his angels. But the condemned go there - not because they never did anything that appeared good in the eyes of the world but because "*you have not done [it] for Me.*" That

is, whatever visible works they may have had, they did not come about as a result of a relationship with Christ - as visible proofs of an invisible faith.

To underscore the point that it is not the works that save us but that they are introduced at the last judgment as visible proofs of an invisible faith, we note what Jesus says also in John 5:19-30. Read the entire section and you will see that eternal life is clearly the gift of God through faith that embraces the Saviour. Then note especially verse 29 when He speaks of the resurrection and judgment on the Last Day. He says, "*Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.*" This Jesus says after He has already made it clear that eternal life is a gift. However, in the judgment that gift received in faith is shown as having results in life, namely, the doing of good.

Notice too in all of these descriptions of the last judgment no mention is made of the sins of those entering heaven. Why not? They have all been forgiven! What point is there in mentioning them? They have been washed away in the blood of the Lamb, washing which the believers enjoyed day after day in this life and which they will enjoy fully and perfectly in heaven (Revelation 7:9-17). Thus, while the faithful mourn in repentance their whole life long over their sins and failures to perfectly reflect their faith, at the last judgment all such mourning will end. For there will be no more sins and no more temptations to sin in heaven but only perfect joy over the redemption won for them by Christ and received by them here in faith.

What a day that will be for each believer! Just think of it: All that was suffered silently and without any comfort save that of the gospel itself will be exposed to the light for praise from the Saviour. All that was done without the slightest hint of gratitude in this life will hear the praise of God before the whole world. All that was done simply because it was in accord with God's Word but that at the time seemed so pointless and in vain, all of it will receive from Him for whom it was done the highest acclamation. Oh to be sure, none of these things were ever done perfectly or even with a perfect motive, but at the last judgment that won't matter. The work will be held up as a perfect jewel, a diamond, and a sapphire, fit only for the praises of the Lamb who sits on the throne.