

XIII. Timeless Truth for Timely Topics in Biblical Perspective

What Does the Bible Say?

“The Judgment Seat—Who, What, Why?”

II Corinthians 5:1–10

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We'll start by looking at Daniel 7. This is the 13th study in this series. The first study in this series of Timeless Truth for Timely Topics was on what the Bible says about the end times. We looked at the seventy weeks of Daniel showing they were consecutive from the Babylonian exile up to the death and resurrection of Christ. There is not a separation between the 69th week and 70th week. The 70th week unfolds from the return of the exiles all the way to the work of Christ on the cross. Then we looked at the meaning of the millennium which is the matter of the one thousand years, a symbolic term describing the perfect work of the Gospel in the Kingdom of God, from the ascension into spreading the Gospel throughout all the world until the second coming of Christ. We call it the realized millennial view. The third thing we looked at was the actual second coming of Christ and if there are two second comings or a secret second coming and I made a case for you that the Bible teaches there is just one second coming of Christ. After that second coming we enter into the new heavens and the new earth.

We looked at if there was a secret rapture of the church and we found out that those left behind in Matthew 24 is speaking of believers. The unbeliever is taken away in judgment like in the days of Noah and the believer is left behind in the safety of Christ. There have been a number of things we've looked at over these last twelve studies and now we've come to the study of the judgment seat. We will be calling back some of the things we've previously studied doing a distillation of it and then we've gone to key texts to work our way through them.

The first question we'll look at in this study is when is the judgment seat of God? The second question is who is at the judgment seat of God? The third question is what is the judgment seat of God? The fourth question is why is there a judgment seat of God? Before we answer these questions we will look at some key texts and then from those texts we'll do a distillation to answer those four questions. We will first look at two passages from the book of Daniel.

Let's start by looking at Daniel 7 and this matter of the four beasts. Daniel 7:9–14 says [9] *“As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days (title of God) took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. [10] A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the **books** were opened.*

[11] *“I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. [12] As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.*

[13] *“I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. [14] And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations,*

and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (All other kingdoms will be destroyed.)

Now let's look at Daniel 12. Daniel 12:1–2 says [1] *“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (God's covenant people will be assaulted at this time which is at the end of the millennium, at the salvation of the elect and the close of the age and Satan is loosed for a short season. That means nations will come together to bring battle against God's people which the Bible describes as the Armageddon battle that seemingly will bring God's people to extinction.) [2] And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

So here is the fact that there will be a general resurrection. There will be two verdicts at that resurrection – those of condemnation and the contempt of God's justice and the second being those who are brought into everlasting life. Clearly the indication is what book are they written. Now there are many Old Testament passages that point us to the judgment but for now go to Malachi.

Judgment and the work of God is not something that is out there and is coming. The judgments of God have been all around. Whether it was the Assyrian captivity or the Babylonian captivity God's hand of judgment had come upon them. God's hand of judgment was in the Garden of Eden. God's judgment has always been there but those judgments have always been partial, temporary and for a specific issue. In this study we're not looking at the simple fact of God's judgment but *the* judgment, not a judgment, the eternal judgment. This is the judgment to settle the issues for all eternity. This is the final judgment. There are also various titles for the final judgment in the Bible and this doesn't mean there are multiple judgments but that there is one judgment with multiple dynamics to it. So there are multiple statements about this one final judgment that give us insight in terms of what is taking place. It forms a composition of the judgment and not a declaration of different judgments. Now let's look at what Malachi has to say about this judgment.

Malachi 4:1–3 says [1] *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. [2] But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. [3] And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the LORD of hosts.* So there is a day coming but there is going to be two consequences. One is an everlasting judgment of fire upon those who stand in opposition to Him and then those who by His hand has feared His Name will go into eternity leaping like a newborn calf, enjoying all this glory and majesty.

Malachi 4:5–6 says [5] *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. [6] And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”* So before this day He will send an Elijah and that is John the Baptist because Jesus interpreted this for us. The passage is referred to by Jesus

and John where John makes way for the way of the Lord. John was the forerunner of the One who would turn the hearts of the children to their fathers and the hearts of the fathers to their children. This One will do a work of redemption and reconciliation. While it will have an overflow into our families it will be the work of God that establishes His family and reconciles sinners saved by grace to God who then become their Father, because of His redeeming work. That means Elijah is making the way for the One who will do the turning and that is Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

Now let's look at John 5. The authority of Jesus Christ is given in verse 19 but let's start with verse 25. John 5:25–29 says [25] *“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. [26] For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. [27] And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. [28] Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice [29] and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”* Now let's go to Matthew 25. The Olivet Discourse is in Matthew 24 and continues into 25 and look at Jesus' concluding statement He makes from the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 25:31–46 says [31] *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. [32] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33] And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. [34] Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ [37] Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? [38] And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? [39] And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ [40] And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’*

[41] *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42] For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43] I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ [44] Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ [45] Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ [46] And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

What is the gathering apparatus? It is the nations but it's not a judgment of the nations for it is a judgment of individuals. In the judgment there are two sections. There are those who by grace have inherited eternal life from the King, having put their trust in Him. Then there are those who have never put their trust in Him who stand under His judgment. The lifestyle of the believer does not save them but it evidences their salvation that they have inherited. The lifestyle of those who have rejected Him also bears its

evidence. One criteria of this judgment is brought out here. What did you do with My people? Whatever you did to My people you did to Me.

I think of this as my engagement in the church as a member and as a pastor. What I do to Christ's church He takes personally. It is the body of Christ. That is why He said to Saul "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting Me?" Saul wasn't at Calvary so when did Saul persecute Jesus? It was when he would bring judgment against God's people through stoning, persecution and killing them. When God's people fed, clothed and helped His people then they did it to Him. One of the criteria of those judgments that is evidence of those with saving grace and those without saving grace will be what they did with the Lord's church, those who were in need and those who needed mercy. They will be people of mercy in general but they will particularly give attention to the household of faith. Their love for them will specifically be brought out.

Now I'd like to look at I Corinthians 15:50-58 which says [50] *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* [51] *Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed,* [52] *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* [53] *For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.* [54] *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."* [55] *"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"*

[56] *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.* [57] *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (So how do I live in that day in the twinkling of an eye? He gives it to us in the next verse.)

[58] *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

I want to look at another passage a little later in Revelation 20 but now I'll do a distillation of all that we have been looking at in these passages and how that bears on the judgment. The first thing is when will the judgment take place? I believe all of what I'm about to tell you will take place at least within what we would call a day but it could take place even quicker than that. I don't know how eternity can be measured by days and that's where we will have stepped into. Here are ten things that have to happen before the judgement.

The first thing is the close of this age and all that God has called us to be and do – our mission, our message, and our ministry as His people.

Secondly according to Matthew 24, Jesus will not come back for the judgment until the Gospel has been preached to all the nations.

Thirdly, Jesus will not come back until all of the elect have been saved. The second coming awaits the salvation of the all of the elect.

Fourthly, He will not come back until the loosening of Satan for a short season.

Fifthly, He will not come back until the fulfillment of the implications of this great, final, cataclysmic battle which include the nations of the world, the two beasts (the beast of political power supported by the apostate church, the second beast) which are led by the antichrist and the Lord will return with the final victory in this battle.

Sixthly, the Lord does not come until the last trump and the voice of the archangel.

Number seven, when He returns He will be set in place as Judge. The Father whom has all judgment will enthrone His Son, the Son of Man, to be the Judge of all humanity.

Number eight all the graves will have been opened. A general resurrection that is both saved and unsaved will all be resurrected.

Number nine the saints in that resurrection will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord. Also caught up will be their bodies. Remember there are the saints that are with the Lord who are coming back. Their bodies will be raised and be united with a transformed body fit for eternity and they will meet the Lord in the air. And those who are living at that time of His return will also be caught up and those bodies will be changed in a twinkling of an eye. I want to tell you what we're not going to do. We will not meet the Lord and keep going up for we will meet the Lord and become part of His escort as He comes down to finish the second coming. We will be part of the train of the King with the angels going with Him to the judgment and then we'll become a part of the new heavens and the new earth.

Number ten the earth and the heavens will be rolled up with fire and rolled out will be a new heavens and a new earth bearing none of the curse of sin. Those ten things are what happens and then comes the judgment. In the rolling out of the new heavens and new earth is also the revealing of Gehenna, the lake of fire, the place of hell for all who do not know Christ.

So who will be at the judgment? The Bible gives us three insights here. Number one is all the nations. It is not because there is a judgment of the nations. It is the people of the nations that will be judged. Nations have been and are being judged by the hand of God and that's why very few last more than 250 years. It is the gathering of the people in their ethnos. Why would that be appropriate? Jesus will come back when the Gospel has been preached to all the nations. We have been given a commission to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them. We don't baptize nations but people. The nations are where we go to and at the end of the age that is how He will gather people. Just as the Gospel goes to individuals in the nations and impacts their nations in the end times God brings the nations before Him but the judgment is upon individuals.

Secondly, all of humanity will be at the judgment to stand before Him.

Thirdly, those at the judgment will be those written in two books and divided into two categories – saved/unsaved, sheep/goats. Where they are in their categories is declared by what books they are written in and affirmed by what happened in their life. There will be two books, two categories and two verdicts at the judgment. They will be either condemned or justified. There will be two destinations. One is eternal condemnation in hell or everlasting life with the Father to His glory in the presence of the Son, in a new Jerusalem, a new earth, enjoying the new heavens with a new body untouched by sin, with bodies like His resurrected body. The unbeliever will have a resurrected body but it has been fit for eternal death. The believer's body is fit and framed for eternal life.

What if someone has a deathbed conversion? There will be evidence. There is one deathbed conversion in the Bible. I like the way one bishop says this. There is one deathbed conversion in the Bible so that one you never lose hope but only one so that

you're not presumptuous. Go read about that thief on the cross. He started out mocking Him and then He praised Him. He ridiculed Him and then became an evangelist. He cast insults at Jesus and then defends Jesus. One who had exalted himself in life then says "Lord, remember me when You go into paradise." Our Savior responds to him, "This day you will be with Me in paradise." It is not the life of the believer that saves them but the saved have the evidence of grace in their life. Let's see what this looks like by going to Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:11–15 says [11] *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. [13] And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. [14] Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* There are two judgments, guilty or innocent.

How did the sinners get innocent? They are in the book of life and the book of life was written by the blood of Jesus who went to the cross and erased their sin record as He paid for all of it. He gave them another record, His righteousness so they were cleansed by His blood and clothed with His righteousness therefore they are not simply forgiven and they didn't just get clemency but they are justified which is a legal term meaning innocent. How will we get innocent? Romans 8:33–34 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* My charges were taken away from me at the cross. Now I have His righteousness. So when the Father, through the Son looks at my righteousness from Christ I get the verdict of innocent.

Also what will be unfolded are the imperfect, uneven, seasonal spurts of me growing in grace that didn't send me to heaven but were the marks of God's saving grace to bring me to heaven. Those evidences will be written in the book of life. The evidences don't put you in the book of life for it is the sovereign grace and love of God that puts you there. While we were helpless He died for us. While we were enemies He saved us. While we were opposed to Him He redeemed us but when He redeems us He not only saves us from the penalty of sin, He also saves us from the power of sin and the evidence will be there on the Day of Judgment.

So what is the Day of Judgment for? We give and account of the deeds of life in word, thought and deed which will reveal the Divine verdict and eternal destiny. In other words, our lives will reveal what book we'll be written in. The key in Revelation 20 is don't get there written in the books but get there and be there with your name in the book of life. Anyone whose name is not written in the book of life will have the verdict of eternal condemnation. Everyone written in the book of life will enter in to eternity with Him, the beloved. It is God who saves you and you begin to see that day how gloriously He has saved you.

So what does the judgment accomplish and why would we have it? I want to

give to you three things. Number one is the exaltation and vindication of God's justice and grace for His glory. I Peter 2:12 says *[12] Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation (Day of Judgment)*. On that day His grace will be vindicated by what He has done in the lives of His people. His majesty will be exalted and His holiness will be vindicated as all who stood against Him in cosmic treason and rebellion against God. Remember every sin against God is deserving of capital punishment, not just temporal life but eternal life for the wages of sin is death. All those sins are displayed in word, thought and deed and they vindicate the justice of God.

Who stands with the greatest record of rebellion against God? It is Satan and on that Day, he with the fallen angels will be thrown into the lake of fire. I would suggest to you that written on his heels as you see it will be, 'to God be the glory great things He has done.' He will be glorified in the judgment of those who stood against Him, angelic and those made in His image. He will be glorified for His work of grace by His love, having set you free and our lives will bear testimony, not of perfection but that God's grace has freed us from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin, though in this life we will never eradicate all of the practices of sin. Even the indwelling of the principle of sin will be removed on that Day and we will dwell in His presence forever.

Secondly, the verdict declared of condemnation or justification and the affirmation of eternal destination. There is no purgatory, no second chance. There is no recycling, no preaching of the Gospel. Hebrews 9:27 says *[27] And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment*. The judgment is a final, eternal judgment. It is not simply what kind of reputation can we enjoy for the souls of men and women hang in the matters of eternity, the balance of God's judgment seat. All will appear there. All will be raised. There will only be two categories and the need is that they would be written in the book of life. Until Christ comes, He has put us out with the Gospel dragnet to bring men and women to Christ. That is our job. We can't save them but we can plant, water and watch God give the increase. Church growth is not what is at stake but what is at stake is where men and women are going to spend eternity. While God will be vindicated in the judgment of the lost He takes no delight in the death of the wicked. We need to show that part of our God in this world. The mission field isn't out there but it's right here. You are on the mission field right now. Believers are missionaries, warning men and women of the wrath to come.

Thirdly and finally, the rewards of the redeemed and the degree of punishment will be declared in that Day. The Judgment Seat will also be used to give the rewards to God's people. Their life does not earn heaven but their life manifests that God had saved them and as you live your life with stewardship you are putting together worship material for heaven. Because what are you going to do with these rewards? You are going to cast them back to Him in praise to His Name. The Bible also says there are degrees of punishment, just as there is everlasting, perfect joy for every believer and everlasting, perfect condemnation and torment for every unbeliever who has rejected the Lord. My heart breaks over this.

The Bible indicates degrees of torment. To whom much is given, much is required. It is one thing to fall into eternity with the witness of creation all around you but it's another thing to fall into eternity right around the corner with Gospel preaching

churches sitting in pews and rejecting the pleas of family and friends. With greater life comes greater responsibility. That is why our Savior said that those who did not do the will of the master received the lashes and those who knew the master's will and did not do it shall receive many lashes. So there are degrees of culpability that will be reflected in eternity. I will talk more about this in my upcoming series on heaven and hell.

Now you know about eternity and I'd like to close with this one text in I Thessalonians 5. I'm going to let Paul close this study for you. I Thessalonians 5:1–11 says *[1] Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. [6] So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. [7] For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. [11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. Amen.*

Power Point

THE JUDGMENT SEAT – WHEN?

1. The Close of the Age
2. The Gospel to the Nations
3. All of the Elect have been saved
4. The "Loosening of Satan for a season"
5. Armageddon/2 Beasts/Antichrist
6. The Last Trump & Voice of Archangel
7. The Return of Christ as Judge
8. All graves open/general resurrection
9. The Saints raptured to escort Christ
10. Heavens & Earth rolled up with fire

THE JUDGMENT SEAT – WHO?

1. All of the Nations
2. All of Humanity
3. Two Books – Two Categories – Two Verdicts – Two Destinations

THE JUDGMENT SEAT – WHAT?

Give an account of the deeds of life in word, thought and deed which will reveal the Divine verdict and eternal destiny.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT – WHY?

1. The Exaltation and Vindication of God's Justice and Grace for His Glory.
2. The verdict declared of Condemnation or Justification and the affirmation of eternal destination.
3. The rewards of the redeemed and the degree of punishment.