



Judgment and Judging

Matthew 7:1

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

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Forward

Every one should fear God and keep his commandments.

Those who think life is unfair should remember that God will review every person's life to determine how he or she has responded to him, and he will bring every deed into judgment.

Each one should allow their life to reflect God's standards.

Solomon shows us that we should enjoy life, but this does not exempt us from obeying God's commandments.

We should search for purpose and meaning in life, but they cannot be found in human endeavors. We should acknowledge the evil, foolishness, and injustice in life, yet maintain a positive attitude and strong faith in God.

All people will have to stand before God and be judged for what they did in this life. We will not be able to use life's inconsistencies as an excuse for failing to live properly.

To live properly, we need to:

- (1) Recognize that human effort apart from God is futile;
- (2) Put God first—now;
- (3) Receive everything good as a gift from God;
- (4) Realize that God will judge both evil and good;
- 5) Know that God will judge the quality of every person's life. How strange that people spend their lives striving for the very enjoyment that God gives freely, as a gift.

Chapter 1

Judge not according to appearance

John 7:24

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

John 7:26

7:26 This chapter shows the many reactions people had toward Jesus. They called him a good man (John 7:12), a deceiver (John 7:12), a demon-possessed man (John 7:20), the Christ (John 7:26), and the Prophet (John 7:40). We must make up our own minds about who Jesus is, knowing that whatever we decide will have eternal consequences.

God will bring every act to judgment.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

In his conclusion, Solomon presents his antidotes for the two main ailments presented in this book.

Those who lack purpose and direction in life should fear God and keep his commandments.

Those who think life is unfair should remember that God will review every person's life to determine how he or she has responded to him, and he will bring every deed into judgment.

Have you committed your life to God, both present and future? Does your life measure up to his standards?

The book of Ecclesiastes cannot be interpreted correctly without reading these final verses. No matter what the mysteries and apparent contradictions of life are, we must work toward the single purpose of knowing God.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon shows us that we should enjoy life, but this does not exempt us from obeying God's commandments.

We should search for purpose and meaning in life, but they cannot be found in human endeavors. We should acknowledge the evil, foolishness, and injustice in life, yet maintain a positive attitude and strong faith in God.

Judge not and you will be judged.

Matthew 7:1

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often the habits we dislike in ourselves.

Our untamed bad habits and behavior patterns are the very ones that we most want to change in others. Do you find it easy to magnify others' faults while excusing your own? If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

Jesus' statement, "Do not judge," is against the kind of hypocritical, judgmental attitude that tears others down in order to build oneself up. It is not a blanket statement against all critical thinking, but a call to be *discerning* rather than negative.

Jesus said to expose false teachers (Matthew 7:15-23), and Paul taught that we should exercise church discipline (1 Cor. 5:1-2) and trust God to be the final Judge (1 Cor. 4:3-5).

Judgment begins at the household of God.

1 Peter 4:17

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

We should live expectantly because Christ is coming. Getting ready to meet Christ involves continually growing in love for God and for others. (see Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40).

It is important to pray regularly, and it is also important to reach out to needy people. Your possessions, status, and power will mean nothing in God's kingdom, but you will spend eternity with other people. Invest your time and talents where they will make an eternal difference.

Judgments of Abominations

Deuteronomy 17:2

"If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant,

When taking over a nation, the Israelites were supposed to destroy every pagan altar and idol in the land. God knew it would be easy for them to change their beliefs if they started using those altars, so nothing was to remain that might tempt them to worship idols.

We too should ruthlessly find and remove any centers of false worship in our lives. These may be activities, attitudes, possessions, relationships, places, or habits—anything that tempts us to turn our hearts from God and do wrong. We should never flatter ourselves by thinking we're too strong to be tempted. Israel learned that lesson.

Bowl Judgments

Revelation 16:10

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

We know that the people realize that these judgments come from God because they curse him for sending them. But they still refuse to recognize God's authority and repent of their sins. Christians should not be surprised at the hostility and hardness of heart of unbelievers.

Even when the power of God is fully and completely revealed, many will still refuse to repent. If you find yourself ignoring God more and more, turn back to him now before your heart becomes too hard to repent (see the note on +Rev. 9:20-21 for more on hard hearts).

Seal Judgments

Mark 13:24

"But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT,

Is it possible for Christians to be deceived?

Yes. So convincing will be the arguments and proofs from deceivers in the end times that it will be difficult *not* to fall away from Christ.

If we are prepared, Jesus says, we can remain faithful. But if we are not prepared, we will turn away.

To penetrate the disguises of false teachers we can ask:

- (1) Have their predictions come true, or do they have to revise them to fit what's already happened?
- (2) Does any teaching utilize a small section of the Bible to the neglect of the whole?

- (3) Does the teaching contradict what the Bible says about God?
- (4) Are the practices meant to glorify the teacher or Christ?
- (5) Do the teachings promote hostility toward other Christians?

Trumpet Judgments

Revelation 8:7

The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

The trumpet blasts have three purposes:

- (1) To warn that judgment is certain,
- (2) To call the forces of good and evil to battle, and
- (3) To announce the return of the King, the Messiah. These warnings urge us to make sure our faith is firmly fixed on Christ.

Since only one-third of the earth is destroyed by these trumpet judgments, this is only a partial judgment from God. His full wrath is yet to be unleashed.

All will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

While eternal life is a free gift given on the basis of God's grace (Ephes. 2:8-9), each of us will still be judged by Christ.

This judgment will reward us for how we have lived. God's gracious gift of salvation does not free us from the requirement for faithful obedience. All Christians must give account for how they have lived (see Matthew 16:27; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

You judge according to the flesh.

John 8:15

"You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.

The Pharisees thought Jesus was either a lunatic or a liar. Jesus provided them with a third alternative: he was telling the truth. Because most of the Pharisees refused to consider the third alternative, they never recognized him as Messiah and Lord. If you are seeking to know who Jesus is, do not close any door before looking through it honestly.

Only with an open mind will you know the truth that he is Messiah and Lord.

The Pharisees argued that Jesus' claim was legally invalid because he had no other witnesses. Jesus responded that his confirming witness was God himself. Jesus and the Father made two witnesses, the number required by the law (Deut. 19:15).

He who is spiritual judges all things.

1 Corinthians 2:15

But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

Non-Christians cannot understand God, and they cannot grasp the concept that God's Spirit lives in believers.

Don't expect most people to approve of or understand your decision to follow Christ. It all seems so silly to them. Just as a tone-deaf person cannot appreciate fine music, the person who rejects God cannot understand God's beautiful message. With the lines of communication broken, he or she won't be able to hear what God is saying to him or her.

No one can comprehend God (Romans 11:34), but through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believers have insight into some of God's plans, thoughts, and actions—they, in fact, have the "mind of Christ." Through the Holy Spirit we can begin to know God's thoughts, talk with him, and expect his answers to our prayers.

Are you spending enough time with Christ to have his very mind in you? An intimate relationship with Christ comes only from spending time consistently in his presence and in his Word. Read Phil. 2:5ff for more on the mind of Christ.

After death comes the judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually.

We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (Hebrews 9:26);

he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our high priest (Hebrews 9:24); and he promises to return (Hebrews 9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

Mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13

For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

Only God in his mercy can forgive our sins. We can't earn forgiveness by forgiving others. But when we withhold forgiveness from others after having received it ourselves, we show that we don't understand or appreciate God's mercy toward us (see Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21ff; Ephes. 4:31-32).

Chapter 2

As you judge, you will be judged.

Matthew 7:2

"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Jesus tells us to examine our own motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often the habits we dislike in ourselves. Our untamed bad habits and behavior patterns are the very ones that we most want to change in others.

Do you find it easy to magnify others' faults while excusing your own? If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

God's judgments are just.

John 5:30

"I can do nothing on my own initiative as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.

Those who have rebelled against Christ will be resurrected too, but to hear God's judgment against them and to be sentenced to eternity apart from him. There are those who wish to live well on earth, ignore God, and then see death as final rest. Jesus does not allow unbelieving people to see death as the end of it all. There is a judgment to face.

Do not judge and you will not be judged.

Luke 6:37

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

A forgiving spirit demonstrates that a person has received God's forgiveness. Jesus uses the picture of measuring grain in a basket to ensure the full amount.

If we are critical rather than compassionate, we will also receive criticism. If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, these qualities will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them.

Careless words will be accounted for.

Matthew 12:36

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment.

Jesus reminds us that what we say reveals what is in our hearts. What kinds of words come from your mouth? That is an indication of what your heart is really like. You can't solve your heart problem, however, just by cleaning up your speech. You must allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with new attitudes and motives; then your speech will be cleansed at its source.

Who are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:12

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

Jesus summarized the law as love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40), and Paul said that love demonstrated toward a neighbor would fully satisfy the law (Romans 13:6-10). When we fail to love, we are actually breaking God's law.

Examine your attitude and actions toward others. Do you build people up or tear them down? When you're ready to criticize someone, remember God's law of love and say something good instead. Saying something beneficial to others will cure you of finding fault and increase your ability to obey God's law of love.

The judgment of God falls on those who practice judgment.

Romans 2:2

And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

In his kindness, God holds back his judgment, giving people time to repent. It is easy to mistake God's patience for approval of the wrong way we are living.

Self-evaluation is difficult, and it is even more difficult to expose our conduct to God and let him tell us where we need to change. But as Christians we must pray constantly that God will point out our sins, so that he can heal them. Unfortunately, we are more likely to be amazed at God's patience with others than humbled at his patience with us.

No judgment comes to those who judge rightly.

1 Corinthians 11:31

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

When Paul said that no one should take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, he was speaking to the church members who were rushing into it without thinking of its meaning.

Those who did so were "guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Instead of honoring his sacrifice, they were sharing in the guilt of those who crucified Christ. In reality, *no one* is worthy to take the Lord's Supper. We are all sinners saved by grace.

This is why we should prepare ourselves for Communion through healthy introspection, confession of sin, and resolution of differences with others. These actions remove the barriers that affect our relationship with Christ and with other believers.

Awareness of your sin should not keep you away from Communion but should drive you to participate in it.

Do not pass judgment before the time.

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who both will bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God

It is tempting to judge fellow Christians, evaluating whether or not they are good followers of Christ. But only God knows a person's heart, and he is the only one with the right to judge. Paul's warning to the Corinthians should also warn us.

We are to confront those who are sinning (see 1 Cor. 5:12-13), but we must not judge who is a better servant for Christ. When you judge someone, you invariably consider yourself better—and that is arrogant.

All judgment is given to the Son of God.

John 5:22

"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, Because of his unity with God, Jesus lived as God wanted him to live. Because of our identification with Jesus, we must honor him and live as he wants us to live. The questions "What would Jesus do?" and "What would Jesus have me do?" may help us make the right choices.

Chapter 3

The judgments of God are unfathomable.

Romans 11:33

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

This doxology is a prayer of praise to God for the wisdom of his plan. Although God's method and means are beyond our comprehension, God himself is not arbitrary. He governs the universe and our lives in perfect wisdom, justice, and love.

God judges in the midst of rullers

Psalm 82:1

God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.

This psalm calls the rulers and judges of Israel "gods" and "sons of the Most High." They were called gods because they represented God in executing judgment. John 10:34-36 records Jesus using this passage to defend his claims to be God.

His argument was as follows: if God would call mere men "gods," why was it blasphemous for him, the true Son of God, to declare himself equal with God?

Jesus came into the world for judgment

John 9:39

And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, so that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind."

The longer this man experienced his new life through Christ, the more confident he became in the one who had healed him. He gained not only physical sight but also spiritual sight as he recognized Jesus first as a prophet (John 9:17), then as his Lord. When you turn to Christ, you begin to see him differently.

The longer you walk with him, the better you will understand who he is. Peter tells us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). If you want to know more about Jesus, keep walking with him.

Stricter judgment is given to teachers.

James 3:1

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Teaching was a highly valued and respected profession in Jewish culture, and many Jews who embraced Christianity wanted to become teachers.

James warned that although it is good to aspire to teach, the teachers’ responsibility is great because their words and example affect others’ spiritual lives. If you are in a teaching or leadership role, how are you affecting those you lead?

Judgment with truth brings peace within your gates.

Zechariah 8:16

These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.

For more than 15 years, God and his prophets had been urging the people to finish building the temple. Here again, God encouraged them with visions of the future.

We may be tempted to slow down for many reasons: people aren't responding; we feel physically or emotionally drained; the workers are uncooperative; the work is distasteful, too difficult, or not worth the effort.

God's promises about the future should encourage us *now*. He knows what the results of our labors will be, and thus he can give us a perspective that will help us continue in our work for him.

God promised to give his people rich rewards, reassuring them that despite the punishments they had endured, he would not change his mind to bless them. But he also said they had a job to do—

“These are the things you are to do.” God will be faithful, but we also have responsibilities: to tell the truth, exercise justice, and live peacefully. If you expect God to do his part, be sure to do yours.

Examination should not be done by human court.

1 Corinthians 4:3

But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself.

Paul urged the Corinthians to think of him, Peter (Cephas), and Apollos not as leaders of factions, but as servants of Christ entrusted with the secret things of God (see the note on +1 Cor. 2:7).

A servant does what his master tells him to do. We must do what God tells us to do in the Bible and through his Holy Spirit. Each day God presents us with needs and opportunities that challenge us to do what we know is right.

Be complete and of the same mind in judgment.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Paul founded the church in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Eighteen months after he left, arguments and divisions arose, and some church members slipped back into an immoral life-style. Paul wrote this letter to address the problems, to clear up confusion about right and wrong, and to remove the immorality among them.

The Corinthian people had a reputation for jumping from fad to fad; Paul wanted to keep Christianity from degenerating into just another fad.

By saying “brothers,” Paul is emphasizing that all Christians are part of God’s family. Believers share a unity that runs even deeper than that of blood brothers and sisters.

To “agree with one another,” allow for “no divisions” and “be perfectly united in mind and thought” does not require everyone to believe exactly the same. There is a difference between having opposing viewpoints and being divisive. A group of people will not completely agree on every issue, but they can work together harmoniously if they agree on what truly matters—Jesus Christ is Lord of all. In your church, speak and behave in a way that will reduce arguments and increase harmony. Petty differences should never divide Christians.

God will bring all things into judgment.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.

We often hear people say, “It doesn’t matter.” But many of your choices will be irreversible—they will stay with you for a lifetime. What you do when you’re young *does* matter. Enjoy life now, but don’t do anything physically, morally, or spiritually that will prevent you from enjoying life when you are old.

Those who believe will not come into judgment.

John 5:24

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

“Eternal life”—living forever with God—begins when you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. At that moment, new life begins in you (2 Cor. 5:17). It is a completed transaction. You still will face physical death, but when Christ returns again, your body will be resurrected to live forever (1 Cor. 15).

Chapter 4

After death will comes the judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually. We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future.

He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (Hebrews 9:26); he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our high priest (Hebrews 9:24); and he promises to return (Hebrews 9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

Man is judged according to the foundation on which he builds.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Judgment and Destruction will come to the ungodly.

2 Peter 3:7

But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

In Noah's day the earth was judged by water; at the second coming it will be judged by fire. This fire is described in Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10-15.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

I said to myself, "God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man," for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

Solomon's point in this section is that God has a plan for all people. Thus he provides cycles of life, each with its work for us to do. Although we may face many problems that seem to contradict God's plan, these should not be barriers to believing in him, but rather opportunities to discover that, without God, life's problems have no lasting solutions!

Judgment of abomination

Deuteronomy 17:2

"If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant,

The fact that this command was included probably indicates that some Israelites were sacrificing imperfect or deformed animals to God. Then, as now, it is difficult and expensive to offer God our best (i.e., the first part of what we earn).

It is always tempting to shortchange God because we think we won't get caught. But our giving shows our real priorities. When we give God the leftovers, it is obvious that he is not at the center of our lives. Give God the honor of having first claim on your money, time, and talents..

Chaos will come as judgment

Isaiah 34:11

But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, and owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line of desolation And the plumb line of emptiness.

Darkness will come as judgment.

Matthew 25:30

"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This last man was thinking only of himself. He hoped to play it safe and protect himself from his hard master, but he was judged for his self-centeredness.

We must not make excuses to avoid doing what God calls us to do. If God truly is our Master, we must obey willingly. Our time, abilities, and money aren't ours in the first place—we are caretakers, not owners.

When we ignore, squander, or abuse what we are given, we are rebellious and deserve to be punished.

This parable describes the consequences of two attitudes to Christ's return. The person who diligently prepares for it by investing his or her time and talent to serve God will be rewarded.

The person who has no heart for the work of the kingdom will be punished. God rewards faithfulness. Those who bear no fruit for God's kingdom cannot expect to be treated the same as those who are faithful.

Chapter 5

Deceit Leading to Judgment

Psalm 5:6

You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.

God cannot condone or excuse even the smallest sin. Therefore we cannot excuse ourselves for sinning only a little bit. As we grow spiritually, our sensitivity to sin increases. What is your reaction to sin in your life? Are you insensitive, unconcerned, disappointed, or comfortable? As God makes us aware of sin, we must be intolerant toward it and be willing to change. All believers should strive to be more tolerant of people but less tolerant of the sin in others and in themselves.

Judgment of the earth

Deuteronomy 32:22

For a fire is kindled in my anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Some will awaken to everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

This is a clear reference to the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked, although the eternal fates of each will be quite different.

Up to this point in time, teaching about the resurrection was not common, although every Israelite believed that one day he or she would be included in the restoration of the new kingdom.

This reference to a bodily resurrection of both the saved and the lost was a sharp departure from common belief. (See also Job 19:25-26; Psalm 16:10; and Isaiah 26:19 for other Old Testament references to the resurrection.)

The White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

At the judgment, the books are opened. They represent God's judgment, and in them are recorded the deeds of everyone, good or evil.

We are not saved by deeds, but deeds are seen as clear evidence of a person's actual relationship with God. The book of life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them.

Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. God's judgment is finished. The lake of fire is the ultimate destination of everything wicked—Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the demons, death, Hades, and all those whose names are not recorded in the book of life because they did not place their faith in Jesus Christ.

John's vision does not permit any gray areas in God's judgment. If by faith we have not identified with Christ, confessing him as Lord, there will be no hope, no second chance, no other appeal.

Judgment according to works

Romans 2:6

Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Although God does not usually punish us immediately for sin, his eventual judgment is certain. We don't know exactly when it will happen, but we know that no one will escape that final encounter with the Creator. For more on judgment, see John 12:48 and Rev. 20:11-15.

Judgment of demons

Ezekiel 28:16

“By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Some of the phrases in this passage describing the human king of Tyre may describe Satan. Great care must be taken to interpret these verses with discernment. It is clear that, at times,

Ezekiel describes this king in terms that could not apply to a mere man. This king had been in the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:13), had been “anointed as a guardian cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14), and had access to the holy mountain of God (Ezekiel 28:14), but was driven from there (Ezekiel 28:16-17).

Ezekiel, therefore, may have been condemning not only the king of Tyre, but Satan, who had motivated the king to sin.

Judgment of Fallen Angels

Matthew 25:41

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

This parable describes acts of mercy we all can do every day. These acts do not depend on wealth, ability, or intelligence; they are simple acts freely given and freely received. We have no excuse to neglect those who have deep needs, and we cannot hand over this responsibility to the church or government. Jesus demands our personal involvement in caring for others’ needs (Isaiah 58:7).

Chapter 6

Judgment of nations

Matthew 25:32

"All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

Divorce is as hurtful and destructive today as in Jesus' day. God intends marriage to be a lifetime commitment (Genesis 2:24). When entering into marriage, people should never consider divorce an option for solving problems or a way out of a relationship that seems dead. In these verses, Jesus is also attacking those who purposefully abuse the marriage contract, using divorce to satisfy their lustful desire to marry someone else. Are your actions today helping your marriage grow stronger, or are you tearing it apart?

Jesus said that divorce is not permissible except for unfaithfulness. This does not mean that divorce should automatically occur when a spouse commits adultery. The word translated "unfaithfulness" implies a sexually immoral life-style, not a confessed and repented act of adultery.

Those who discover that their partner has been unfaithful should first make every effort to forgive, reconcile, and restore their relationship. We are always to look for reasons to restore the marriage relationship rather than for excuses to leave it.

The Judgment Seat

Proverbs 20:8

A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

No one is without sin. As soon as we confess our sin and repent, sinful thoughts and actions begin to creep back into our lives. We all need ongoing cleansing, moment by moment. Thank God he provides forgiveness by his mercy when we ask for it. Make confession and repentance a regular part of your talks with God. Rely on him moment by moment for the cleansing you need.

After death will come the judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually.

We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (Hebrews 9:26); he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our high priest (Hebrews 9:24); and he promises to return (Hebrews 9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

Miracles Bringing God's Judgment

Leviticus 10:1-2

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

What was the unauthorized fire that Nadab and Abihu offered before the Lord? The fire on the altar of burnt offering was never to go out (Leviticus 6:12-13), implying that it was holy. It is possible that Nadab and Abihu brought coals of fire to the altar from another source, making the sacrifice unholy. It has also been suggested that the two priests gave an offering at an unprescribed time.

Whatever explanation is correct, the point is that Nadab and Abihu abused their office as priests in a flagrant act of disrespect to God, who had just reviewed with them precisely how they were to conduct worship. As leaders, they had special responsibility to obey God. In their position, they could easily lead many people astray. If God has commissioned you to lead or teach others, be sure to stay close to him and follow his advice.

Aaron's sons were careless about following the laws for sacrifices. In response, God destroyed them with a blast of fire. Performing the sacrifices was an act of obedience. Doing them correctly showed respect for God. It is easy for us to grow careless about obeying God, to live our way instead of God's.

But if one way were just as good as another, God would not have commanded us to live his way. He always has good reasons for his commands, and we always place ourselves in danger when we consciously or carelessly disobey them.

Parables about the Last Judgment

Matthew 13:47-50

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind;

The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is part of the kingdom of heaven and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we.

Judgment Seals

Mark 13:24

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

Is it possible for Christians to be deceived? Yes. So convincing will be the arguments and proofs from deceivers in the end times that it will be difficult *not* to fall away from Christ. If we are prepared, Jesus says, we can remain faithful. But if we are not prepared, we will turn away. To penetrate the disguises of false teachers we can ask:

- (1) Have their predictions come true, or do they have to revise them to fit what's already happened?
- (2) Does any teaching utilize a small section of the Bible to the neglect of the whole?
- (3) Does the teaching contradict what the Bible says about God?
- (4) Are the practices meant to glorify the teacher or Christ?
- (5) Do the teachings promote hostility toward other Christians?

God's judgment on sin

Isaiah 26:21

For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.

When God comes to judge the earth, the guilty will find no place to hide. Jesus said that the hidden will be made known because his truth, like a light shining in a dark corner, will reveal it (Matthew 10:26). Instead of trying to hide your shameful thoughts and actions from God, confess them to him and receive his forgiveness.

The judgment of Babylon

Revelation 18:10

standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

Those who are tied to the world's system will lose everything when it collapses. What they have worked for a lifetime to build up will be destroyed in one hour. Those who work only for material rewards will have nothing when they die or when their possessions are destroyed. What can we take with us to the new earth? Our faith, our Christian character, and our relationships with other believers. These are more important than any amount of money, power, or pleasure.

The trumpet judgments

Revelation 8:7

The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Since only one-third of the earth is destroyed by these trumpet judgments, this is only a partial judgment from God. His full wrath is yet to be unleashed.

War as a result of judgment.

Leviticus 26:25

'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands.'

If the Israelites obeyed, there would be peace in the land. If they disobeyed, disaster would follow. God used sin's consequences to draw them to repentance, not to get back at them. Today, sin's consequences are not always so apparent. When calamity strikes us we may not know the reason. It may be

(1) the result of our own disobedience,

(2) the result of someone else's sin,

(3) the result of natural disaster. Because we don't know, we should search our hearts and be sure we are at peace with God.

His Spirit, like a great searchlight, will reveal those areas we need to deal with. Because calamity is not always the result of wrongdoing, we must guard against assigning or accepting blame for every tragedy we encounter. Misplaced guilt is one of Satan's favorite weapons against believers.

The weather as judgment

Joshua 10:11

As they fled from before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.

How did the sun stand still? Of course, in relation to the earth the sun always stands still—it is the earth that travels around the sun. But the terminology used in Joshua should not cause us to doubt the miracle. After all, we are not confused when someone tells us the sun rises or sets. The point is that the day was prolonged, not that God used a particular method to prolong it.

Two explanations have been given for how this event occurred:

(1) A slowing of the earth's normal rotation gave Joshua more time, as the original Hebrew language seems to indicate. (2) Some unusual refraction of the sun's rays gave additional hours of light. Regardless of God's chosen method, the Bible is clear that the day was prolonged by a miracle, and that God's intervention turned the tide of battle for his people.

Chapter 7

All were judged according to their deeds.

Revelation 20:12

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

At the judgment, the books are opened. They represent God's judgment, and in them are recorded the deeds of everyone, good or evil. We are not saved by deeds, but deeds are seen as clear evidence of a person's actual relationship with God. The book of life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them.

Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. God's judgment is finished. The lake of fire is the ultimate destination of everything wicked—Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the demons, death, Hades, and all those whose names are not recorded in the book of life because they did not place their faith in Jesus Christ. John's vision does not permit any gray areas in God's judgment.

If by faith we have not identified with Christ, confessing him as Lord, there will be no hope, no second chance, no other appeal.

All judgment is given to the Son.

John 5:22

"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, Because of his unity with God, Jesus lived as God wanted him to live. Because of our identification with Jesus, we must honor him and live as he wants us to live. The questions "What would Jesus do?" and "What would Jesus have me do?" may help us make the right choices.

All careless words will be faced on the Day of Judgment.

Matthew 12:36

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the Day of Judgment.

Jesus reminds us that what we say reveals what is in our hearts. What kinds of words come from your mouth? That is an indication of what your heart is really like. You can't solve your heart problem, however, just by cleaning up your speech. You must allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with new attitudes and motives; then your speech will be cleansed at its source.

God will enter his judgment on behalf of Israel.

Joel 3:2

I will gather all the nations
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat
Then I will enter into judgment with them there
On behalf of My people and My inheritance,
Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations;
And they have divided up My land.

The restoration of the Jews, and the final victory of true religion over all opposers, appear to be here foretold. The contempt and scorn with which the Jews have often been treated as a people, and the little value set upon them, are noticed. None ever hardened his heart against God or his church, and prospered long.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print