

# Lesson Five - The Judgment

(*End Times*, pages 143-197)

## Goals

1. To strengthen our confidence that, by faith in Jesus, we will stand secure in the final judgment.
2. To better understand the final and eternal existence and dwelling places of believers and unbelievers.

**Opening Prayer** - Lord Jesus, you have paid for my sins and washed them from God's sight forever. You have given me your own righteousness—the perfect righteousness that God demands. Because of you, Jesus, and you alone, I am filled with confidence, joy, and anticipation as I look ahead to the day of your final coming. All praise and glory to you alone. **Amen.**

## Introduction

Most people in the United States are familiar with the courtroom scene in which a prosecutor presents the evidence of a case, the jury announces a verdict of guilt or innocence on the basis of the evidence, and, when appropriate, the judge administers a fitting penalty.

1. Why will a lawbreaker, guilty as charged, be filled with anxiety and fear as he awaits the jury's verdict and the judge's announcement of punishment?
  - a. Why might a lawbreaker, in spite of his guilt, be filled with a certain hopeful optimism?
2. Why does an innocent person have nothing to fear as he awaits the jury's verdict?
  - a. Why might an innocent person, nonetheless, be filled with anxiety?

The Bible says that the Lord Jesus will function as the judge on the Last Day. In addition to raising the dead back to life, he will render, in perfect justice, a decision about the guilt or innocence of each person and will announce appropriate penalties and rewards.

## Jesus the Judge

While the Bible tells us that God is judging continuously throughout history, it also indicates that he is planning a final, all-inclusive judgment on the Last Day when he will settle all accounts for all eternity. The person of the triune God who is said to have the primary role in this final judgment is Jesus Christ, "the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

1. Read **Jude 1:6,14-15**. Who will stand before Christ for judgment on the Last Day?
2. Looking at **Revelation 12:20**, according to what will these people be judged?
3. **Ecclesiastes 12:14** says, "Yes, God will bring everything that is done into judgment, including everything that is hidden, whether good or evil." React to the fact that God has a complete record of all your thoughts, words, and actions.

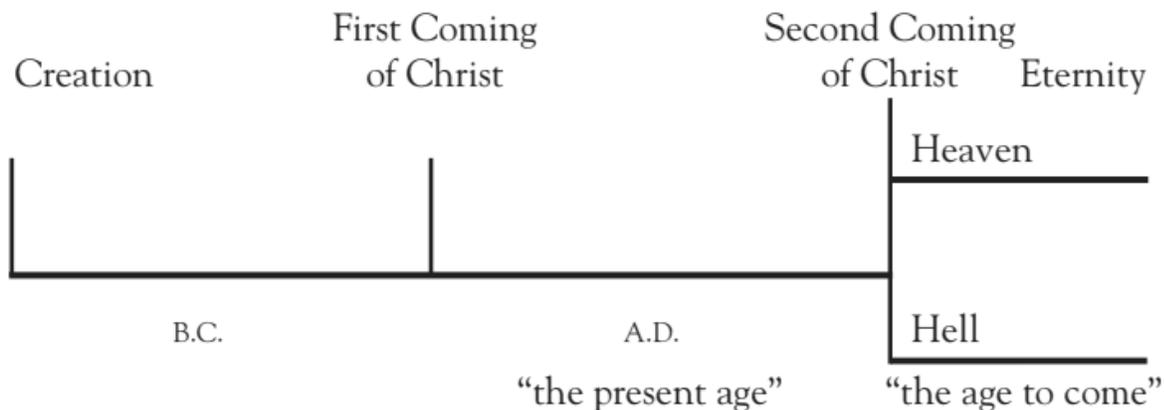
We are familiar with the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

We’re also familiar with the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25, in which the King points out the works done for him by the sheep and the lack of works in the lives of the goats: “For I was hungry, thirsty, etc...and you [helped] me.” “For I was hungry, thirsty, etc...and you did [nothing].”

Both Scriptures speak about what God will look at on the Last Day.

4. So, on what basis will all humanity be divided and judged on Judgment Day—works or faith? Explain.
  - a. After discussing, turn to **Luke 6:44**. How do these words help you settle on an answer?
  - b. Also consider an illustration from *End Times* about seeing whether or not it is windy outside.
5. What are two more surprises that will come to light at the time of the Judgment? Look at **Matthew 7:21-23** and **1 Corinthians 6:2-3**.

Recall the timeline of human history we used in Lesson 1 of this study:



## Hell

Because heaven and hell are far outside our experience and realm of existence, it is not easy for us to picture or understand exactly what either will be like. Some of the descriptions might even seem to contradict others. Still, the Bible makes the main points about each perfectly clear. Scripture teaches that hell is...

- the place where unbelievers will receive the wrath of a just and holy God over their sin (Romans 2:5).
- a place of darkness, agony, misery, suffering, and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:12).
- a place of terrible pain, raging fire, and eternal torment (Hebrews 10:27; Luke 16:24; Revelation 20:10).
- Hell is also a place where, in some way, there will be greater and lesser degrees of punishment. To the degree that people received revelation from God on earth and rejected it, to that degree they will have greater guilt before God and will receive greater punishment (Matthew 11:20-24).

Perhaps the following passages can serve to summarize the existence of those in hell: **Matthew 25:41** and **2 Thessalonians 1:9-10**.

6. Of what will those in hell be deprived? Discuss what that means (and what it doesn’t mean).

7. A number of Christian churches today do not adhere to the Bible's doctrine of hell. Some teach universalism—that all people will go to heaven and that there is no hell. Others teach annihilationism—that those who go to hell will suffer for a time but will eventually be annihilated and cease to exist. Both of these teachings are a danger to immortal souls. Explain.

## Heaven

Like the torments of hell, the glories of heaven are beyond our limited understanding. With some of the information God gives us about heaven, we aren't sure whether to take it literally or figuratively (golden streets, twelve gates made of various precious stones, wedding banquet, etc.). Regardless of how we take these and other pictures of heaven, we know the certain truths of Scripture.

8. Read **1 John 3:2** and **1 Thessalonians 4:17**, then explain the following: Heaven is the exact opposite of hell.
9. Look up **2 Peter 3:13** and **1 Corinthians 13:10**. In what fundamental way will life in heaven be different than life on earth?
- Permit a brief Latin lesson to drive this truth home. Christian teachers of various generations have used certain phrases to explain the different conditions of humans and their relation to sin.
    - In the Garden of Eden, mankind was “able to not sin,” or *posse non peccare*
    - After the Fall, mankind has become “not able to not sin,” or *non posse non peccare*
    - In heaven, believers will be “not able to sin,” or *non posse peccare*
  - In what ways do you personally find joy and comfort in that truth?

The Bible also teaches that heaven is...

- a place where believers will be filled “with joy in [God's] presence, with eternal pleasures at [his] right hand” (Psalm 16:11).
- a place where the saints will offer exquisite worship and praise to their God (Revelation 5:13) and will, in some way, serve and reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12), who reigns side by side with the Father (Revelation 22:1,3).
- a place where marriage will not exist (Luke 20:34-36) because the need for companionship will be filled completely by a perfect relationship with the Lord and the “great multitude [of other saints] that no one could count” (Revelation 7:9).
  - The Bible suggests that saints in heaven will recognize one another (1 Thessalonians 2:19,20) and, though no longer necessary, may enjoy the simple pleasures of eating and drinking together (Luke 22:29,30).
  - They will be in heaven only because God graciously predestined them for heaven (Romans 8:30).

- As an additional testimony to God’s superabundant grace, the saints will enjoy “degrees of glory”—God will give extra heavenly rewards in proportion to one’s service rendered to Christ on earth (Matthew 25:21,23).
  - One MLC professor explained this as having different buckets that are all filled to overflowing. But, we won’t care about the size of anyone else’s bucket because, remember, we won’t be able to sin or be envious or selfish in heaven.

10. Read **2 Peter 3:10,12-13** and **Revelation 21:1**. It is not perfectly conclusive as to whether the world will be completely annihilated on Judgment Day or will be renovated as part of the new heavens and new earth (pastors might refer to that as an open question). Regardless of which stance you take, what exciting thoughts does the word *new* bring to mind?

11. Look at the words of **Colossians 3:1-2**. In what ways does this passage help Christians through their day-to-day lives?

What are your comments and questions?

### Summary

On the Last Day, Jesus will judge all the living and the dead. There will be a separation on that day. Those who trusted in Jesus as Savior as evidenced by their lives will be declared innocent and will receive an eternal and bliss-filled life with their Savior-God in heaven. Those who rejected the Savior through unbelief and gave evidence of this in their lives will be condemned to an eternity of punishment in the torments of hell.

**Closing Prayer** (CW 419 v. 3 and 4)

**I build on this foundation: that Jesus and his blood  
 Alone are my salvation, my true, eternal good.  
 Without him all that pleases is valueless on earth;  
 The gifts I have from Jesus alone have priceless worth.**

**He canceled my offenses, delivered me from death;  
 He is the Lord who cleanses my soul from sin through faith.  
 In him I can be cheerful, courageous on my way;  
 In him I am not fearful of God’s great Judgment Day.  
 Amen.**

During the “Christmas break,” feel free to read Revelation 12:1-15:8. (Hint: Revelation 12 is about Christmas!)

Reminder—no class next week! When we come back together on January 3, we will tackle the false teaching of Millennialism.