

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

IN THE great Olivet Discourse of our Lord there is an unveiling by Him of important events relative to the end-time, among which is the Judgment of the Living Nations.

Christ gives us the revelation of a great judgment which He will conduct while He occupies the kingly throne on earth. It is entirely clear that the scene depicted is on earth immediately following the Lord's visible and glorious appearance as the Son of Man with the elect (the remnant of Israel) gathered before Him. The Great Tribulation is then over, and the forces of Antichrist no longer occupy the stage. Antichrist will have been eliminated by "**the brightness of His coming**" (II Thessalonians 2:10). The judgment of the nations follows the dramatic moment "**when his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives . . .**" (Zechariah 14:4). This occasion, it seems to me, is identical with the description of the event by the Lord: "**When the Son of Man shall come in glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of glory and before him shall be gathered all nations (not individuals) and he shall separate them one from another as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep (nations) on his right hand, but the goats (nations) on his left**" (Matthew 25:31-33).

THE SUBJECTS OF THIS JUDGMENT

"**Before him shall be gathered all nations.**" I am somewhat perplexed that a number of fine Bible students expand this prophecy to involve innumerable individuals, that is, the entire multitude of people who are alive at that time on earth. In the Scriptures I am unable to find any statement that the final judgment of individuals will take place on this earth. The Scriptures teach, e.g., that the believers will have their individual examination before the Judgment Seat of Christ, while the unsaved of the ages will appear at the Great White Throne before which they will be summoned when the earthly dispensations are over. These include all those who have failed to obtain salvation when it was offered.

Our Lord makes it exceedingly plain that "**All nations will appear before him**" at the Judgment of the Nations. The nations are those involved in the closing dramatic activities on earth when the Lord appears from glory and institutes that judgment.

We have now identified the subjects, the time, and the place of this solemn moment for the nations.

THE BASIS OF THE JUDGMENT

I think the passage in question is clear and precise. The basis of the judgment will be *the treatment of the brethren*. Since the whole setting is Jewish, it is obvious that the brethren to which reference is made are the faithful Jews constituting the remnant on earth who will encounter frightful suffering during the final period of the Great Tribulation. These are the brethren of our Lord in the flesh about whom John writes, “**He came unto his own . . .**” (John 1:12); that is, He came to His nation Israel in a very particular sense. From among that nation a specific remnant will emerge.

The Book of Revelation identifies this remnant as the 144,000 who will refuse to yield to the pressures of Antichrist. These will go forth in the Tribulation period preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. “**And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto the nations**” (Matthew 24:14).

Judgment will be meted out to those nations whose leaders insist on persecuting the faithful Jewish remnant. The Lord will hold these nations to a strict accountability as to their treatment of “**the brethren**.” The kingdom will be denied those who fail in their proper responsibility to the believing remnant.

GOD HAS HIS WITNESSES

Even in the darkest periods of history God has had His witnesses. We read, “**He left not himself without witness**” (Acts 14:17). I think the prophet also points to this time of witnessing in his remarkable prediction, “**And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations. . . to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory among the Gentiles**” (Isaiah 66:19)

These witnesses will move among the Gentile nations and give their startling testimony regarding the coming of the true king and the kingdom. Many of these witnesses will encounter great suffering. They will be starved, stripped, and doubtlessly a large number of them will be ostracized and imprisoned for their testimony. While they are being hated and persecuted in some of the nations, they will be received in others. Those nations which will believe the testimony of these witnesses reveal it by showing the Lord’s brethren love, by giving them to eat, by clothing them, and visiting them while in prison. These will be the sheep nations which the king will single out for recognition in that day.

But there are other nations whose leaders insist on persecuting the messengers of the kingdom. These are the goat nations which will suffer the full consequences of divine retribution for their lack of kindness and tolerance toward the remnant during their witnessing task. Stern judgment will be meted out to such nations.

While I do not wish to be dogmatic in regard to this difficult passage, I am convinced, however, that the judgment is representative rather than one involving all the individuals living on earth at that time. Remember the Lord decreed, **“I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee”** (Genesis 12:3). Historically this has been fulfilled in the annals of nations. The nations which have been anti-Semitic in their policy have been severely disciplined by God’s providential arm of judgment. On the other hand, nations which have manifested tolerance and understanding toward the Jewish minority have been blessed of God. America serves as a leading example of this fact in the course of human history.

The Jews are admirably equipped for this heroic work of witnessing once their eyes are opened to the truth of God. They understand the languages of the nations as well as the customs of peoples throughout the world. The Jews have lived as segments within most of the Gentile nations during **“the times of the Gentiles.”** How they can achieve so much in this brief period of the Tribulation, we cannot explain, but the Book of Revelation points to a great multitude **“which will come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”** (Revelation 7:13, 14). These obviously are the ones who will hearken to the testimony of those constituting the witnessing remnant.

It is most fanciful; worse than that, it is a false interpretation which makes out of the 144,000 a company of Christian believers. When such assertions are made to me, I usually retort by asking, “To which tribes of Israel do these Christians belong?” For want of an answer invariably such persons do not pursue the matter any further. The Book of Revelation states very clearly that these 144,000 are literal Israelites and that they constitute the remnant of God’s earthly people, the heralds of the kingdom during the Tribulation years of the end times.

Whether the nations will enjoy the blessings of the kingdom, and be permitted to enter therein, will be determined by the manner in which they have treated **“the brethren!”** Nations that are unworthy by this yardstick will find a stern judgment falling upon them in that hour, especially upon the leaders who stand responsible for that which happens in these years. Solemnly we remember what happened to the leaders of Nazi Germany and the Japanese war lords during the postwar trials of the arch-conspirators of aggression. The people, broadly speaking, were also affected adversely because of the evil policy of their leaders. Obviously, in the end-time, the people of such nations will suffer, too, for the evils of the rulers who formulated the wicked policy.

The judgment of the Living Nations, I take it, is a representative judgment, and is not one that directly involves every individual person who is alive on earth at that time during which the king takes over the affairs in the Messianic Kingdom.

The Second Psalm, which is primarily Messianic, has this to say, **“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel”** (Psalm 2:9). The Psalmist clearly points to the judgment of the Gentile nations for their conspiracy. Regardless of the obvious differences which may prevail in the interpretation of this particular passage in Matthew, we may safely conclude that the Judgment of the Living Nations will take place on earth.

No resurrection is mentioned, and the Church is not involved at that time, since the believers will then have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, at which time they will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. In the final overview of this point, it should be pointed out that this particular judgment involves the nations on earth and their relationship to the remnant who are the witnesses on earth following the Rapture of the Church.

THE DESTINY OF NATIONS DETERMINED

The nations which manifest genuineness and receive the testimony of the Jewish remnant will enter into the kingdom. In other words, they will remain throughout the kingdom age, and having passed that rigid examination, the people concerned will then eventually move on to the eternal state.

Indeed, these nations will occupy a special position with Israel in the kingdom. Our Lord makes it very specific in these words, **“Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”** (Matthew 25:40).

The sheep nations are welcomed into the kingdom, you see.

Now, on the other hand, the same passage indicates that there are nations which will be placed at the left side of the King before His earthly throne. The Jewish witnesses who came to them were refused, and their message was scorned. In other words, these nations rejected the last offer, as it were, and now their destiny is determined.

The King shall say unto them, **“Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”** (Matthew 25:41).

This may seem confusing and appear to parallel the last judgment, but the fact of the matter is, that the judgment depicted here will be applied to the nations on earth, yet the consequences of the rejection of the ambassadors’ message can lead to eternal separation from God.

The judgment here might be said to be the first installment of that which actually belongs to the final judgment of the nations which is presented in Matthew’s Gospel, and it is distinct from the last judgment depicted in Revelation. In Matthew you have a great judgment at the outset of the Millennium, while in Revelation, the Great White Throne Judgment is postmillennial; that is, after the dispensations on earth are concluded and eternity is about to begin.

The Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne judgments are each treated separately in this volume.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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