

GOD'S PROPHECIES

FOR

PLAIN PEOPLE

by William L. Pettingill

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Chapter Fifteen -

The Judgment at the Great White Throne

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment." We have already, in this series of studies, seen that, instead of there being but one "Last and Final Judgment," to which the whole world hastens, the Scriptures tell of many judgments. Seven of these were reviewed in a former article.

1. *The Judgment of Believer's Sins.* This took place at Calvary, where the Son of GOD bore our sins in His own body on the tree. It is on this account that for His sins the believer "**shall not come into condemnation**" (John 5:24). "**Being now justified by his blood, we shall we saved from wrath through him**" (Romans 5:9). "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus**" (Romans 8:1). "**For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**" (II Corinthians 5:21). This was when "**Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God**" (I Peter 3:18).

2. *The Judgment of Self in the Believer.* This should be going on all the time. "**For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world**" (I Corinthians 11:32, 33). When a child of GOD falls into sin, his fellowship with GOD is interrupted. If he then judges himself before GOD, confessing his sins, GOD "**is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (I John 1:9). If, however, the believer refuses to judge himself, he compels his loving FATHER to *chasten* him, that he "**should not be condemned with the world.**" "**For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons**" (Hebrews 12:6-8).

3. *The Judgment of Believer's Works.* This will take place before the Bema, or Judgment-Seat of CHRIST, after we are caught up to meet Him in the air. Then it is that "**we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, . . . whether it be good or bad**" (II Corinthians 5:10). It is not the sins of believers that are here brought under review, but their works. Since CHRIST died for sins, they are forever put away,

but every work must be judged, to determine the believer's reward. The Apostle Paul wrote, in I Corinthians 3:10-15, explaining this Judgment as follows:

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:10-15).

4. *The Judgment of Living Nations.* This is described in Matthew 25:31-46. It will take place **"when the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him."** It is then that He shall **"sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations,"** - that is, those found upon the Earth at His second advent to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth. This judgment has already been treated in these studies. In it the Gentile nations are called to account for their treatment of Israel.

5. *The Judgment of Israel.* This is to determine who among the children of Israel found upon Earth at the LORD's glorious appearing shall go into the Kingdom. The rebels will be purged out, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: **"As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 20:33-38).**

6. *The Judgment of Fallen Angels.* CHRIST has decreed that His church shall be associated with Him in this Judgment. **"Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (I Corinthians 6:3). "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the Judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).**

7. *The Judgment of the Great White Throne.* This is to be the subject of our present article. The Scripture material is in Revelation 20:11-15.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those

things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

This is at once the most majestic and the most terrible passage in all Scripture. May GOD deliver us from studying it, or even reading it, in cold blood! Let us tread softly as we seek to realize the awful fate that awaits the enemies of our GOD and His CHRIST. How it ought to stir us to snatch the brands from the burning before it is eternally too late!

The Judgment of the Great White Throne is the Judgment of the Lost Dead, who are raised from the dead for their final judgment. It follows the Millennial reign of the LORD JESUS CHRIST as KING over the whole Earth. The closing scenes of the Millennial Kingdom are described in the verses immediately preceding the passage we are now to study. Satan has been loosed out of his prison for a little season, and he has gone out

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of Heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:7-10).

Then comes the Great Assize. The impenitent dead must now hear their awful doom, and be forever consigned to the "**Lake of Fire and Brimstone,**" to be "**tormented day and night for ever and ever.**"

Let us now behold the terrible scene, as it is here described by the HOLY SPIRIT of Truth.

The Judge

As we look upon the Great White Throne, our attention is at once directed toward "**him that sat on it.**" We know that face, for it is the face which was once marred for us; those hands, too, bear the marks of the nails by which He was pierced; and there are even other such marks upon His adorable person. His feet and His side show the openings through which poured the saving and cleansing flood as He gave His life for His enemies. He died for all, and yet there are these vast throngs arraigned before Him who would not have His salvation. They must now, therefore, face Him as JUDGE. Having rejected "**the blood of the Lamb,**" there remains for them only "**the wrath of the Lamb.**" He sits upon that Great White Throne, for to Him is committed all judgment. It was He Himself who said,

"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:22-29).

As we have already shown in this series of studies, the "hour" here spoken of does not indicate a period of sixty minutes, but rather an indefinite, or at least undefined, period of time, as in verse 25 of the same chapter, where an hour is referred to which has already lasted two thousand years. The "**resurrection of life**" is the first resurrection, which precedes the Millennium; the "**resurrection of damnation**" is connected with the Judgment of the Great White Throne, which we are now studying. In the first resurrection the Son of GOD calls forth all who have gone out of this life in rebellion against GOD, refusing the salvation He offers. "**Blessed and holy**" indeed "**is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years**" (Revelation 20:6).

These saved ones, these "**priests of God and of Christ**," as I understand it, will participate in the Judgment of the Great White Throne as associated with the glorified CHRIST in that Judgment. "**Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?**" (I Corinthians 6:2). The New Testament church, at least, since it is the bride of CHRIST, may be expected to sit beside Him as He executes judgment from the Great White Throne.

Think for a moment of the transcendent dignity of "**him that sat on**" the throne. It is written here that from His face "**the Earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was no place for them.**" Surely, language could not go beyond this in setting forth His splendor and majesty. The Judgment of the Great White Throne will not take place upon the Earth, nor yet on any of the Heavenly planets, for from the face of "**him that sat on**" the throne "**the Earth and the Heaven fled away!**" The Earth and the Heaven are His own creation, and they are now abashed at His presence, and flee from before His face. It was to this Judge of the Whole Earth that the FATHER once said:

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Hebrews 1:10-12, compare Psalm 102:12, 24-27).

The Judgment of the Great White Throne, then, must be located in space, and apart from the Earth and all the Heavenly bodies. This will all be perfectly easy for the Judge upon that throne,

for He it is who **"stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing"** (Job 26:7). **"For by him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist"** (Colossians 1:16, 17). He upholdeth **"all things by the word of his power"** (Hebrews 1:3).

The Judged

Look upon that vast sea of doomed men and women. They are the lost ones. All the saved have already been gathered into the Father's house; these are the impenitent dead. They are here to listen to the righteous judgment of the righteous JUDGE who sought to be their SAVIOUR. The JUDGE of all the Earth must do right; He must act justly. In the Gospel a way has been provided by which GOD might be just and the justifier of all who would receive His salvation, but these would have none of the salvation nor of the SAVIOUR. Look upon them with the seer who writes. He says: **"I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. . . . And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them."** Hell is merely the holding place for the unredeemed dead, and the Lake of Fire is the end for them, and will never give up the dead which are in it. The Lake of Fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels, is a place of everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41), and those who are consigned to that awful place are left without hope, in **"the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"** (Mark 9:42-48). This, let it be remembered, is the testimony of our LORD Himself, who is the True and Faithful Witness, and Who cannot lie.

Hell, the place referred to in our present passage, was, until the resurrection and ascension of our LORD, the place of all departed spirits, though between the saved and the lost there was **"a great gulf fixed"** (Luke 16:26). At our LORD's ascension He **"led captivity captive,"** whom He had first released from Hell by descending **"into the lower parts of the Earth"** (Ephesians 4:8-10). Since that time the saved, upon leaving their bodies, are at once conducted into the presence of God, and are **"present with the Lord"** (II Corinthians 5:8). Only the unsaved dead are now in Hell.

All these must come forth. Death, Hell, the sea, - these all disgorge their contents, and the lost dead are brought forth to stand in terror before Him whose grace they have despised. He had been opened to them as the Door into Heaven, but they would not enter. The Door is now at last shut, and they are left without. How terrible! Even to think of it causes us to shudder; but how much worse it will be for those who shall stand there, stripped of all distinction, awaiting the pronouncement of their inevitable doom! Oh, that our GOD might, by these **"things which must shortly come to pass,"** quicken us in His service, so that while the Door yet stands ajar we may rescue some who are tottering to the slaughter! How can we stand idly by in such a day as this?

"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" (Proverbs 24:11, 12).

The Judgment

1. **"and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works"** (verses 12, 13). These books contain the records of **"their works."** These are two reasons for the presence of these books: (1) in order that it might be shown that no man standing before that Bar of Eternal Justice could stand upon his own record for a single moment; the truth will then be demonstrated that **"there is none righteous, no, not one"** (Romans 3:10); and (2), since there are degrees of punishment, the books must be there to determine what each man's punishment shall be: **"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"** (Luke 12:47, 48).

2. **"And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. . . . And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire"** (verses 12, 15). In the 14th verse the Lake of Fire is identified with **"the second death,"** which has already been referred to in verse 6 of this chapter. That it is not annihilation is shown by comparing Revelation 19:20 and 20:10. For a thousand years the Beast and False Prophet had been in the Lake of Fire, and were still conscious and tormented. Annihilation is not taught in the Scriptures.

One turns from this subject with mixed feelings of gladness and sadness. How good it is to be saved! and how terrible to be lost! We are surrounded on every hand by those who, in the light of the Word of GOD, are going down to Christless graves, with the prospect before them of helping to make up that throng of doomed unbelievers. Let us cease not to cry aloud in their ears, that they may turn from the Broad Way that leadeth unto destruction, and enter upon the Narrow Way that leadeth unto life.

~ end of chapter 15 ~
