

# GOD'S PROPHECIES

FOR

PLAIN PEOPLE

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## Chapter Four -

### What Occurs at CHRIST's Judgment Seat

Real difficulty in connection with the study of the Word of Prophecy is presented in the fact that so many things need to be unlearned by most of us before we can get a real start. We are apt to come to the study with our minds already made up regarding the subject in hand. An example of this is related to our subject for the present study. The mention of a Judgment Seat is likely to bring before the mind's eye the terrible scenes of "the Last and General Judgment," when all who have ever lived will stand before the throne of GOD to have it determined where each soul shall spend eternity. Such an idea, however, is entirely foreign to Scripture, which, despite the contrary views of commentators and hymn-writers, know nothing about a "General Judgment."

Many judgments are found in the Bible, but none of them may properly be called a General Judgment. Let us look at seven Bible Judgments.

*First*, On the Cross of Calvary, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, our *sins* were judged, and the penalty of death was borne for us by the Son of GOD in vicarious and substitutionary sacrifice. In GOD's reckoning we ourselves died there; therefore, since GOD is righteous, we shall never again be brought into jeopardy on account of sin. This is the heart of the Gospel - the good news of our salvation through the death and resurrection of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

Thus it is that, according to our LORD's own testimony, the believer "**hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24). And, again, as it is written in Romans, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**" (Romans 8:1) On Calvary, "**To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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 5:19-21). On the Cross, CHRIST was "**made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that**

hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 5:13).

### The Believer's Wonderful Position

Let us never cease to praise GOD for Him "**Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed**" (I Peter 2:24); and let it be remembered that when the Son of GOD hung on the Cross it was for us that He hung there, and that He suffered for our sins, "**the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God**" (I Peter 3:18). He was indeed "**delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification**" (Romans 4:25). The believer, according to GOD's righteous reckoning, is in the position of a criminal who has been executed, and then raised from the dead into a new life.

"Death and judgment are behind us,  
Grace and glory are before;  
All the billows rolled o'er JESUS,  
There they spent their utmost power.

"JESUS died, and we died with Him,  
Buried in His grave we lay,  
One with Him in resurrection,  
Now 'in Him' in Heaven's bright day."

*Second.* In the New Testament there is frequent mention of a Judgment concerning which the believe is constantly exhorted. It is the Judgment of *self*. Self-judgment is supernatural and superhuman. It can be done only in the dynamic energy of the HOLY SPIRIT. But unless it is faithfully done, GOD, Who is a faithful FATHER, is under obligation to take the matter in hand, and the result in such a case is, not condemnation, but chastening. This particular form of judgment begins and ends with the house of GOD, for when judgment has to do with the world the sure result is condemnation. GOD condemns the world and chastens His children. "**If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons**" (Hebrews 12:7).

In the Corinthian church there was a man living in sinful relations with his father's wife, that is to say, his step-mother. He refused to judge himself, and the church was directed by apostolical authority to hold a meeting "**It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**" (I Corinthian 5:1-5). This man was evidently brought to self-judgment and restored to fellowship "**But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow**" (II Corinthians 2:5-7).

But, on the other hand, there were others in that same Corinthian church who were not brought to judge themselves, and who were actually made sick, and some of them taken away by physical death under GOD's chastening hand, and yet they were not condemned. This is recorded in I Corinthians 11:26-32. The trouble was connected with the observance of the LORD's Supper.

**"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 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 11:26-32).

*Third.* Our *works* as Christians are to come up for Judgment before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST in the heavens. This will follow the Rapture of the church, and will take place during our absence from the Earth between the Rapture and the Revelation of CHRIST and His saints in His Second Advent to the Earth. This is the subject of our study for this week, but we pass it by for the moment, returning to it after reviewing briefly the other four judgments.

*Fourth.* The Judgment of the *Living Nations* found upon the Earth at the Second Advent of CHRIST. This is described in the 25th chapter of Matthew, and is to form the subject of a subsequent study. Let it be noted in passing that this Judgment of Nations has almost nothing in common with the Judgment of Believer's Works, nor yet with the Judgment of the Great White Throne described in Revelation 20. There is a great need in connection with this whole subject that we be "**rightly dividing the word of truth.**"

### **Sifting Out the Rebels**

*Fifth.* In the 20th chapter of Ezekiel the Judgment of the *Nation of Israel* is described. This Judgment will take place on Earth, in the wilderness of Judaea, after the return of CHRIST in His glory, and will be for the purpose of sifting out the rebels against the LORD and His rule. These will be kept from entering into the Land of Promise in connection with the setting up of the Kingdom of David. Let the members of the class study Ezekiel 20:33-44 and Psalm 50, for details concerning this Judgment.

*Sixth.* The Judgment of the *Lost Dead* will take place at the end of the Millennium. Its description is found in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, verses 11-15. This scene will come before us later on in the series.

*Seventh.* The Scriptures speak of a coming Judgment of *Angels*, though the time and place of this Judgment are not made known. Christians are to be associated with the LORD in this Judgment, as in some of the others. See I Corinthians 6:3; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

Let us now turn to the passage in which the Judgment of Believers' Works is taken up. It is the

third chapter of I Corinthians, verses 11-15. The passage reads as follows:

**"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."**

It is perfectly clear that this Judgment has to do only with Christians, those who have the great Foundation Stone already laid. They have CHRIST and He is the Foundation. They build upon that Foundation.

And it is equally clear that in this Judgment the matter of our salvation does not come up at all. There are rewards for acceptable service, and there is loss for failure in service, but even those who suffer loss are saved, though narrowly, nakedly, **"so as by fire"**: **"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"** (I Peter 4:17, 18). In this Judgment all the judged ones are saved, but not all are rewarded.

Paul had this scene in mind constantly. In II Corinthians, he says: **"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"** (II Corinthians 5:9, 10).

Paul's ambition was to be well-pleasing unto his LORD. The commendation of CHRIST was **"the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** for which he ran in the race (Philippians 3:14). The disapproval of CHRIST was the thing he feared in I Corinthians 9:27: **"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."** He had preached to others, and he did not want to be a castaway (*adokimos*= disapproved).

### **When GOD Will Find Something to Praise**

It is in view of this coming Judgment of Believer's Works that Christians are so frequently exhorted not to judge one another:

**"But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"** (Romans 14:10).

**"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God"** (I Corinthians 4:5).

"Praise of GOD!" Surely, that is reward enough for any one. How wonderful it is that He should ever praise us! And yet He will do so. He will find something in the work of even the smallest of

His children that He may praise. **"and then shall every man have praise of God!"** How good it will be to hear words of praise from His mouth!

This reward is reserved for us against the day of His coming. He says: **"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be"** (Revelation 22:12).

Crowns are used in Scripture as symbols of rewards laid up for believers who earn them. There are five crowns thus offered.

1. The Crown of *Rejoicing*: The reward for faithfulness in ministry: **"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy"** (I Thessalonians 2:19, 20) and **"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved"** (Philippians 4:1).

2. The Crown of *Righteousness*: The reward of faithfulness in testimony: **"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"** (II Timothy 4:8).

3. The Crown of *Life*: The reward of faithfulness under trial. Note the distinction between *Life* and the *Crown of Life*. Life is salvation, and salvation is a gift. The crown is a reward, and a reward is earned by works: **"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"** (James 1:12) and **"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"** (Revelation 2:10).

4. The Crown of *Glory*: The reward of faithfulness in suffering: **"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"** (I Peter 5:4) and **"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"** (Hebrews 2:9).

5. The Crown *Incorruptible*: The reward of faithfulness in the exercise of self-control in the race for CHRIST's approval: **"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway"** (I Corinthians 9:24-27).

To receive the Crown of Rejoicing from His pierced hand, or the Crown of Righteousness, or Glory, or Incorruption, will be blessed indeed. But still more blessed will be the privilege of casting all our crowns before Him Who alone is worthy. And thus it shall be:

**"And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:9-11).**

But for Him, there could be no crown for us. But for His Crown of Thorns, there could be nothing but death and dismay for us. And all this was planned in His love from before the foundation of the world. From the beginning, before the world was, we were in His thought, and in His heart, and in His plans. This was **"the joy that was set before Him."**

From the palace of His glory,  
From the radiance and the rest,  
Came the Son of GOD to seek me,  
Bear me home upon His breast.  
Far away, undone, Forsaken,  
Not for Him my heart was sore;  
But for need and bitter hunger -  
CHRIST desired I nevermore.

"Could it be that in the glory,  
Ere of Him I had a thought,  
He was yearning o'er the lost one  
Whom His precious blood had bought?  
That it was His need that brought Him  
Down to the accursed tree.  
Deeper than His deep compassion,  
Wondrous thought! His need of me?"

"Trembling, I had hoped for mercy,  
Some low place within His door -  
But the crown, the throne, the mansion,  
He made ready long before.  
And in dim and distant ages,  
In those courts so bright and fair,  
Ere I was, was He rejoicing,  
All He won with me to share."

~ end of chapter 4 ~

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