



The Judgment

READING FOR THIS LESSON:– Matthew 25.

On the night that Judas betrayed him, Jesus gave him one last warning:-

"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." (Mark 14:21).

By betraying his Master, Judas had wilfully turned against his Lord, and chosen the way of wickedness.

There have been people in every generation who have wilfully turned away from Jesus Christ and chosen the way of wickedness. They have to bear the responsibility of loving the ways of evil rather than the ways of God. They will receive a stern judgment.

That is why Jesus said of Judas,

"It would be better for him if he had not been born."



There must be a judgment

If we think about this, we shall see the need for a judgment after the resurrection. God is loving, but He also shows justice and truth. He will not give eternal life to men and women who have despised His love, and who – knowing that Jesus had died for their salvation - made no effort to serve and obey God and Jesus Christ.

Therefore we read the words of Paul in Romans 14:10,

"We shall all stand before God's judgment seat."

And again in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

A righteous judge

When Jesus Christ comes again, he will raise the dead, and gather them together with those of his followers who are living at that time. Then there will be a time of judgment. After the judgment, those who have been accepted will be given eternal life. Jesus Christ will say to them,

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

LIFE!

Christ himself will be the judge. In John 5:28-30, when Jesus spoke of the resurrection, we read,

"...a time is coming, when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."

He will judge with the wisdom that God has given him. We read of this in Isaiah 11:3-4, that

"...He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth."

Men judge by what they see and hear – but the Lord Jesus Christ will know the hearts of men, and he will make no mistakes in his judgment.

Who will be judged?

Those who have accepted God's gracious offer of life, and who have been baptized into Jesus Christ, will be gathered to the judgment seat of Christ. But they will not be the only ones. There will be faithful men and women of Old Testament times as well. Also there will be some who have not been faithful, but are responsible because they have heard the gospel taught.

We read in Hebrews 10:26-27,

"For if we deliberately keep on sinning after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire, that will consume the enemies of God."

Those who have never known about the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ, will not be raised to judgment.



You may remember the words of Psalm 49: 19-20 which say of such people,

"He will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life. A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish."

If you read Isaiah 26:13-14, you will see that the same thing is also taught there.

What will happen to those who are rejected?

We have seen that those who come before the judgment seat of Christ will be divided into two classes. Christ will accept some, and reject others. He will give eternal life to those he accepts. But what will happen to those who are rejected? What will their punishment be?

The Bible does not give all the details of their punishment. But some things are quite certain. First, they will be made to see how foolish they have been in rejecting God during their lifetime. They will realise what they have missed out on, and this will cause them great distress and agony of mind. Jesus said of such people,

"There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out." (Luke 13:28).



Finally, they will be completely destroyed. Jesus compared the judgment to a harvest, where the good seed is separated from useless weeds. The seed is carefully saved, but the weeds are burned in the farmer's fire, (Matthew 13:36-43).

Paul taught the same thing very clearly in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9,

" This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."

Love or fear

There are some passages in the Bible, which seem to warn us not to be too sure about our position at the judgment; whereas other verses seem to encourage us to be sure of God's mercy. There is no confusion of thoughts in this. But we must not feel so sure that we can save ourselves alone. We must feel sure of the power of God to forgive our sins and show us mercy.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8,

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."

Though we may begin by being afraid of God, by reading more about Him we shall gradually learn to love Him and trust Him completely. Think about what John wrote in 1 John 4:17-18.

"In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."



Summary

1. There will be a judgment day when Jesus Christ returns to this earth.
2. It will be after the resurrection of the dead.
3. All who have known the truth of God will be brought to judgment.
4. Those who are accepted at the judgment seat of Christ will then be given eternal life.
5. Those who are rejected at the judgment seat will suffer shame, agonies of mind, and finally be destroyed.