

# THE DIVINE PLAN OF THE AGES

## STUDY VIII

### THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The General View of the Day of Judgment--Is it Scriptural?--The Terms, Judgment and Day, Defined--Several Judgment Days Referred to in the Scriptures--The First Judgment Day and its Results--Another Appointed --The Judge--The Character of the Coming Judgment--Similarity and Dissimilarity of the First and Second Judgments--The World's Present Accountability--Two Intervening Judgments and Their Objects--Widely Different Estimates of the Coming Judgment-- How Prophets and Apostles Viewed it.

"GOD hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" --"Jesus Christ, the righteous." "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Acts 17:31; 1 John 2:1; John 5:22

A very vague and indefinite idea prevails in regard to the day of judgment. The view generally entertained is that Christ will come to earth, seated upon a great white throne, and that he will summon saint and sinner in rank and file before him to be judged, amidst great convulsions of nature -- earthquakes, opening graves, rending rocks and falling mountains; that the trembling sinners will be brought from the depths of everlasting woe to hear their sins rehearsed, only to be again returned to an eternal and merciless doom; and that the saints will be brought from heaven to witness the misery and despair of the condemned, to hear again the decision in their own cases, and to return. According to the prevailing theory, all receive their sentence and reward at death; and this, which by way of distinction is commonly called the general judgment, is merely a repetition of that first judgment, but for no conceivable purpose, since they claim that a decision which is final and unalterable is rendered at death.

The entire time supposed to be assigned to this stupendous work of judging billions is a twenty-four hour day. A discourse

recently delivered to a Brooklyn congregation voiced the general view on this subject. It affected to give a detailed account of the work of the Day of Judgment, representing it as completed within the limits of a single literal day.

This is a very crude conception, and is entirely out of harmony with the inspired Word. It is drawn from a too literal interpretation of our Lord's parable of the sheep and the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) It illustrates the absurdity of attempting to force a literal interpretation upon figurative language. A parable is never an exact statement, but merely an illustration of a truth by something which is in many respects like it. If this parable were a literal statement of the manner in which the judgment will be conducted, it would apply to literal sheep and goats, just as it reads, and not to mankind at all. Let us now look at a more Scriptural as well as a more reasonable view of the work and the result of the great Judgment Day which God hath appointed, with which reasonable and Scriptural conclusions all parables and figures should and do agree.

The term *judgment* signifies more than simply the rendering of a verdict. It includes the idea of a trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial. And this is true not only of the English word judgment, but also of the Greek word which it translates.

The term *day*, both in the Scriptures and in common usage, though most frequently used to represent a period of twelve or twenty-four hours, really signifies any definite or special period of time. Thus, for instance, we speak of Noah's day, Luther's day, Washington's day; and thus in the Bible the entire time of creation is called a day, where we read of "the day that Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2:4)--a long, definite period. Then we read of "the day of temptation in the wilderness"--forty years (Heb. 3:8,9); "the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2); also the "day of vengeance," "day of wrath" and "day of trouble"--terms applied to a period of forty years in the close of the Jewish age, and to a similar period of trouble in the end of the Gospel age. Then again we read of the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," and "his day"--terms applicable to the Millennial age, in which Messiah will reign over, rule and judge the world in righteousness, granting trial as well as rendering sentence. And of that period it is written: He shall judge the world in righteousness, and in his day shall show who is that blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Acts 17:31; 1 Tim. 6:15) Why any should suppose this day of judgment to be of but twelve or twenty-four hours, while recognizing the wider meaning of the word *day* in other similar cases, is beyond comprehension, except upon the supposition that they have been influenced by tradition, without proper evidence or investigation.

Those who will carefully consult a complete concordance of the Bible with reference to the Day of Judgment, and note the kind and amount of work to be accomplished within that period, will soon see the absurdity of the common view, and the necessity for giving to the term *day* its wider significance.

While the Scriptures speak of a great judgment or trial day yet future, and show that the masses of mankind are to have their complete trial and final sentence in that day, they also teach that there have been other judgment days, during which certain elect *classes* have been on trial.

The first great judgment [trial and sentence] was at the beginning, in Eden, when the whole human race, as represented in its head, Adam, stood on trial before God. The result of that trial was the verdict--Guilty, disobedient, unworthy of life; and the penalty inflicted was death--"Dying thou shalt die." (Gen. 2:17, margin) And so "In Adam all die." That trial time in Eden was the world's first judgment day, and the decision of the Judge (Jehovah) has ever since been enforced.

"The wrath of God *is revealed* from heaven against all unrighteousness." It may be seen in every funeral procession. Every tomb is a witness to it. It is felt in every ache and pain we experience--all of which are results of the first trial and sentence--the righteous sentence of God, that we are unworthy of life and the blessings originally provided for man when obedient and in God's likeness. But mankind are to be recovered from the sentence of that first trial by the one sacrifice for all, which the great Redeemer provides. All are to be rescued from the grave and from the sentence of death--destruction--which in view of this redemption is no longer to be considered death in the full, everlasting sense of the word, but rather a temporary sleep; because in the Millennial morning all will be awakened by the Life-giver who redeemed all. Only the Church of believers in Christ are yet in any sense released or "escaped" from this original sentence and penalty; and their escape is not yet *actual*, but only so reckoned by faith. "We are saved *by hope*"

only. Our actual release from this death penalty (incurred in Adam and escaped from by getting into Christ) will not be fully experienced until the resurrection morning, when we shall be satisfied to awake in our Redeemer's likeness. But the fact that we who have come to a knowledge of God's gracious plan in Christ "have *escaped the corruption* that is [still] on the world," so far from proving that others will have no future hope of escape, proves rather the contrary of this; for we are first-fruits unto God of his creatures. Our escape from death in Adam to life in Christ is but a foretaste of the deliverance of whosoever wills to be delivered from the bondage of corruption [death] to the liberty of life proper to all whom God shall recognize as sons. All who will may be delivered from death to life, regardless of the distinctions of nature God has provided for his sons on different planes of being. The Gospel age is the trial-day for life or death to those called to the divine nature.

But God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world. How can this be? Has God changed his mind? Has he concluded that his decision in the trial of the first man and the general sentence were unjust, too severe, that he now concludes to judge the world individually? No; were such the case, we should have no better guarantee of a just decision in the future trial than in the past. It is not that God considers his decision in the first judgment unjust, but that he has provided a *redemption* from the penalty of the first judgment, in order that he may grant another judgment (trial) under more favorable conditions to the entire race--all having then had experience with sin and its results. God has not changed one iota from his original purpose, which he formed before the world began. He distinctly informs us that he changes not, and that he will by no means clear the guilty. He will

exact the full penalty which he justly pronounced. And that full penalty has been provided by the Redeemer or substitute whom God himself provided--Jesus Christ, who, "by the grace [favor] of God, tasted death for every man." Our Lord having provided a ransom for Adam's race, with his own life, can justly give a new offer of life to them all. This offer to the Church is under the Covenant of sacrifice (Psa. 50:5; Rom. 12:1): to the world it will be under the New Covenant. Rom. 14:9; Heb. 10:16; Jer. 31:31

We are further informed that when God gives the world this individual trial, it will be under Christ as Judge, whom Jehovah will thus honor because of his obedience even unto death for our redemption. God has highly exalted him, even to the divine nature, that he may be a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31), that he may be able to recover from death and grant judgment to all whom he purchased with his own precious blood. God has committed all judgment unto the Son, and has given him all power in heaven and in earth. John 5:22

It is, then, the highly exalted, glorified Christ, who so loved the world as to give his life as its ransom-price, who is to be the Judge of the world in its promised future trial. And it is Jehovah himself who has appointed him to that office, for that very purpose. Since such are the plain declarations of the Scriptures, there is nothing to dread, but on the contrary there is great cause for rejoicing on the part of all, in looking forward to the Judgment Day. The character of the Judge is a sufficient guarantee that the judgment will be just and merciful, and with due consideration for the infirmities of all, until the willing and obedient are brought back to the original perfection lost in Eden.

A judge, in ancient times, was one who executed justice and relieved the oppressed. Note, for instance, how, when under oppression by their enemies because of transgression against the Lord, Israel was time and again released and blessed by the raising up of judges. Thus we read, "When the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised up a *deliverer*,...Othniel. And the spirit of Jehovah came upon him, and he *judged* Israel, and went out to war, and prevailed, and the land had rest forty years." (Judges 3:9-11) So, though the world has long been under the power and oppression of the adversary, Satan, yet shortly he who pays for the sins of all with his own precious blood will take his great power and reign. He will *deliver* and *judge* those whom he so loved as to redeem.

With this conclusion *all* the prophetic declarations agree. It is written: "With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." Psa. 98:9

This coming judgment will be on exactly the same principles as the first. The same law of obedience will be presented, with the same reward of life, and the same penalty of death. And as the first trial had a beginning, progressed, and culminated with a sentence, so also will the second; and the sentence will be life to the righteous, and death to the unrighteous. The second trial will be more favorable than the first, because of the experience gained under the results of the first trial. Unlike the first trial, the second trial will be one in which every man will stand the test for himself alone, and not for another. None will then die because of Adam's sin, or because of inherited imperfections. It shall no more be said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge; but *he that eateth the sour grape*, his teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sinneth, it

shall die." (Ezek. 18:4; Jer. 31:29,30) And it will be true of the world then, as it is of the Church now, that a man will not be judged according to that which he hath not, but according to that which he hath. (2 Cor. 8:12) Under the reign of Christ, mankind will be gradually educated, trained and disciplined until they reach perfection. And when they have reached perfection, perfect harmony with God will be required, and any who then fall short of perfect obedience will be cut off, being judged unworthy of life. The sin which brought death to the race through Adam was simply one disobedient act; but by that act he fell from his perfection. God had a right to demand perfect obedience of him, since he was created perfect; and he will demand the same of all men when the great work of restoring them is complete. None will be permitted to have everlasting life who then in the slightest degree fall short of perfection. To fall short of perfection, then, will be to sin wilfully against full light and perfect ability.

Any who sin wilfully, against full light and ability, will perish in the second death. And should any one, during that age of trial, under its full blaze of light, spurn the offered favors, and make no progress toward perfection for a hundred years, he will be reckoned unworthy of life and will be "cut off," though at a hundred years he would be in the period of comparative childhood. Thus it is written of that day: "As a lad shall one die a hundred years old; and as a sinner shall be accursed he who dieth at a hundred years old." (Isa. 65:20--*Leeser*) Thus all must have at least one hundred years of trial; and, if not so obstinate as to refuse to make progress, their trial will continue throughout the entire day of Christ, reaching a culmination only at its close.

The conclusion of the world's coming judgment is clearly shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), in Rev. 20:15; 21:8 and in 1 Cor. 15:25. These and other scriptures show that at its close the two classes will have been completely separated--the obedient and the disobedient; those in harmony with the letter and the spirit of God's law, and those out of harmony with it. They enter into everlasting life, and the others are remanded to death, extinction ("second death"), the same sentence as in the first judgment, from which they had been reckonedly released by Christ who secured the right to release them by the giving of their ransom--by his death. This will be their second death. No ransom will be given for them, and there will be no release or resurrection for them, their sin being a wilful, individual sin against full light and opportunity, under a most favorable, individual trial.

We do not wish to be understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." (Prov. 15:3; Eccl. 12:14) The good and the evil deeds of the present time will receive a *just* recompense of reward either now or hereafter. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after." (1 Tim. 5:24) No others than the Lord's favored "little flock" have as yet sufficient light to incur the final penalty, the second death. We here merely broach the subject of the world's present accountability, leaving the particulars for subsequent consideration.

A period of about six thousand years intervenes between the world's first and second judgment days, and during this long period God has been selecting two special classes from among men, and specially trying, disciplining and training them to be his honored instruments during the period or day of the world's judgment.

These two classes are respectively designated by Paul (Heb. 3:5,6) as the house of sons and the house of servants, the former being composed of those overcomers tried and found faithful during the Christian dispensation, and the latter being composed of the faithful overcomers who preceded the Christian dispensation. These special selections in no sense interfere with the judgment or trial promised to the world of mankind in the age to follow this Gospel Dispensation. Those who successfully pass the trial for either of these special classes will not come into judgment with the world, but will enter upon their reward when the world is coming into judgment. They will be God's agents in the blessing of the world--in giving to men the instruction and training necessary for their final testing and judgment. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Cor. 6:2

These specially selected classes, like the rest of mankind, were once under the Adamic condemnation, but became sharers by faith in the benefits of Christ's death. After being first justified by faith in God's promises, and having then fulfilled the subsequent conditions of their respective callings, they are accounted worthy of high exaltation to stations of honor and authority.

The trial or judgment of both these classes has been much more severe than the trial of the world will be in its judgment day; because these have had to withstand Satan, the prince of this world, with all his wiles

and ensnarements, while in the world's judgment day Christ will be reigning, and Satan will be bound, that he may not deceive the nations. (Rev. 20:3) These have suffered persecution for righteousness' sake, while then men will be rewarded for righteousness, and punished only for unrighteousness. These have had great stumbling blocks and snares in the way, which will be removed when the world is placed on trial. But though the trial of these two special companies has been much more severe than the trial of the world will be, the rewards are correspondingly greater.

Under the sophistries of the great deceiver, Satan, both the world and the Church nominal have been robbed of the blessed assurances of the coming time of righteous judgment. They know that the Bible tells of a coming judgment day, but they regard it with only fear and dread; and because of this fear, there is to them no more unwelcome tidings than that the day of the Lord is at hand. They put it far away from them, and do not wish to hear it even mentioned. They have no idea of the blessings in store for the world under that glorious reign of him whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness. Among the greatest of the blinding influences which Satan has devised to keep men in ignorance of the truth regarding the judgment day have been the errors which have crept into the creeds and hymn books of the various religious sects. Many have come to esteem these errors as of paramount importance to the Word of God.

How differently did the prophets and apostles regard that promised day of judgment! Note the exultant prophetic utterance of David (1 Chron. 16:31-34). He says:

"Let the heavens be glad,  
And let the earth rejoice;  
And let men say among the nations,  
Jehovah reigneth.  
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;  
Let the fields rejoice, and all that are  
therein.  
Then shall the trees of the wood sing  
aloud  
At the presence of Jehovah,  
BECAUSE HE COMETH  
TO JUDGE THE EARTH.  
O give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is  
good;  
For his mercy endureth forever."

To the same day the Apostle also points, assuring us that it will be a glorious and desirable day, and that for it the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together --waiting for the great Judge to deliver and to bless the world, as well as to exalt and glorify the Church. Rom. 8:21,22

In John 5:28,29 a precious promise for the world of a coming *judgment-trial* for life everlasting is, by a mistranslation, turned into a fearful imprecation. According to the Greek, they that have done evil--that have failed of divine approval--will come forth unto resurrection [raising up to perfection] by judgments, "stripes," disciplines. See the Revised Version.

#### Afterward

"God's ways are equal: storm or calm,  
Seasons of peril and of rest,  
The hurting dart, the healing balm,  
Are all apportioned as is best.  
In judgments oft misunderstood,  
In ways mysterious and obscure,  
He brings from evil lasting good,  
And makes the final gladness sure.  
While Justice takes its course with strength,  
Love bids our faith and hope increase:

He'll give the chastened world at length  
His afterward of peace.

"When the dread forces of the gale  
His sterner purposes perform,  
And human skill can naught avail  
Against the fury of the storm,  
Let loving hearts trust in him still,  
Through all the dark and devious way;  
For who would thwart his blessed will,  
Which leads through night to joyous day?  
Be still beneath his tender care;  
For he will make the tempest cease,  
And bring from out the anguish here  
An afterward of peace.

"Look up, O Earth; no storm can last  
Beyond the limits God hath set.  
When its appointed work is past,  
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.  
Where sorrow's plowshare hath swept  
through,  
Thy fairest flowers of life shall spring,  
For God shall grant thee life anew,  
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.  
Hope thou in him; his plan for thee  
Shall end in triumph and release.  
Fear not, for thou shalt surely see  
His afterward of peace."