



**LESSON SIX**

*ESD, 2017*

# JUDGMENT TO COME

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The Roman governor Felix had an interesting, if not puzzling, case on his hands. In his custody was the Apostle Paul. After hearing the prosecution and Paul's defense, Felix was not ready to punish the man, nor was he inclined to release him. It seems Felix was especially intrigued by the cause for which Paul so vigorously labored. Christianity and the message of Paul sparked Felix's interest, and the governor wanted to hear more. In Acts 24:24, Felix and his wife sent for Paul and listened to the great preacher concerning the faith in Christ. We do not have the entire sermon, but we are given a general outline. Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and judgment to come. The sermon was so powerful that Felix was trembling before it was over. What had Felix so frightened? Certainly, it was the prospect of coming judgment. For the sinner who has not obeyed God, the thought of an eternal judgment is a terrifying expectation. Addressing God's judgment, Hebrews 10:31 says, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* Felix, however, responded to the sermon as many people do to things they fear—he turned away. He sent Paul off, planning to hear Paul again at a *"more convenient time."*

When something frightens us, our natural reaction is to look away or to avoid the object of our fear. When it comes to the judgment of God, however, such a reaction is a tragic mistake. Turning a blind eye will not change the certainty of judgment; thus, we should instead prepare for the judgment; therefore, in this brief study, we are considering the judgment to come so we can prepare for it.



## WHY IS THERE A JUDGMENT?

We see throughout the Bible that God is holy and righteous. Many passages drive home God's perfection and holiness (Psalm 18:30; 99:3; 1 John 1:5). Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness." Because God is perfectly holy, He cannot abide sinfulness in any way. This presents a problem for mankind, for all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). No man, then, is worthy of being in the presence of God.

Thankfully, God is merciful and loving. Not wishing mankind to be eternally lost, He sent Jesus to pay the price man could not pay. By living a perfect life and dying on the cross, Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for sin. As we have seen in previous studies, that sacrifice is God's gracious gift to mankind—the gift of salvation. But we must accept the gift. Only when we accept the gift through obedient faith are we cleansed of our sins and declared righteous in God's sight. Those who refuse to accept God's gift remain in their sins.

## WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT TO COME?

When Paul preaches of "judgment to come," the phrase may seem mystical or enigmatic, but we are not left in the dark about what he is teaching. In fact, the Bible speaks at length concerning the judgment everyone will face. Simply put, judgment is an evaluation. When a judge presides over a case, he looks at the evidence, decides whether the accused is innocent or guilty, and pronounces judgment. Hollywood might dramatize the courtroom, but rest assured, there will never be a higher-stakes court proceeding than when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There, Jesus will evaluate whether each one of us is to be declared righteous or unrighteous.



## WHO WILL BE JUDGED?

Who must face the judgment of Christ? Everyone. Many people will never sit on trial in a courtroom to have their fate weighed and determined by a judge, but every single soul will be called to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. There are men and women who skip town and evade the authorities so they do not have to stand trial, but no one can run away from the appointment that is set for judgment by Jesus. Hebrews 9:27 says, “...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.” Paul says in Acts 17:31 that God has “fixed a day on which He will judge the world”—not just a group of people, not just a country, not even a few countries, but the whole world. Paul goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that, “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Whether we accept it or not, there is coming a time when **EACH OF US** will stand before Christ and be judged by Him.

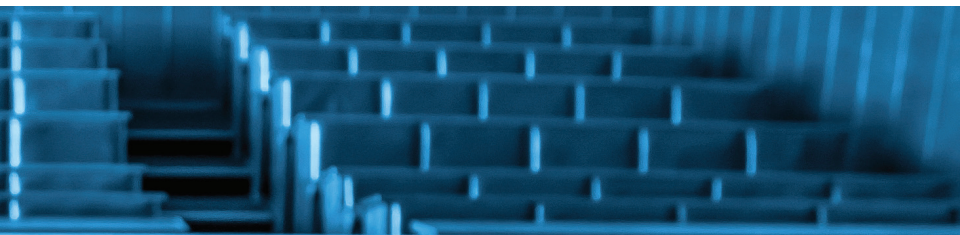
Because God is perfectly \_\_\_\_\_, He cannot abide with sinfulness in any way.

Those who refuse to accept God's gift of salvation remain in their \_\_\_\_\_.

Who will be judged by Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

“It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes the \_\_\_\_\_.”

“We must \_\_\_\_\_ appear before the judgment seat of Christ.”



## HOW WILL WE BE JUDGED?

We might naturally ask the question: “How will we be judged?” Again, the Bible is clear. First, our judgment will be **just**. In the courts of men, judges sometimes make mistakes. Sometimes guilty people are declared innocent, and innocent people are sentenced as guilty. Before the throne of Christ, however, there will be no miscarriage of justice. Jesus is the perfect Judge. Not only does Jesus know our actions, He knows our thoughts and motives! He has all the evidence that is needed, and He is pure and righteous in His evaluation. Scripture reveals that in judgment, God and Jesus are:

- Righteous (2 Timothy 4:8)
- Impartial (1 Peter 1:17; Colossians 3:25)
- Just (Psalm 7:11)

No one will enter Heaven by mistake and no one will be condemned by mistake. If you seek to make Heaven your home, the only way is to obey Jesus. If you faithfully obey Jesus, take comfort in knowing that when judged, you can be certain you will receive your crown of life!

Secondly, our judgment will also be **thorough**. Occasionally, a court case cannot produce a verdict due to a lack of evidence. This will not be the case for a single soul on the day of judgment. We will not be judged by some of our deeds—we will be judged by *all* of them. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, “**God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.**” Nothing we do is hidden from our omniscient Judge—even the things that nobody else knows about are known to God.

In addition to all our deeds, we will be judged on all our words. Jesus warns in Matthew 12:36, “**...every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.**” In addition to our deeds and words, 1 Corinthians 4:5, says the Lord, “**...will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.**” Yes, even our thoughts and motives are fully known to Christ! In the courts of men, determining motive is difficult, subjective, and sometimes just an educated guess; however, all our thoughts and motives will be fully revealed before our final Judge. The judgment of our souls will be thorough!

Christ's judgment is righteous, \_\_\_\_\_, and just.

Will anyone be condemned by mistake? \_\_\_\_\_

Will we be judged by some of our deeds or all of them? \_\_\_\_\_

"Every idle \_\_\_\_\_ men may \_\_\_\_\_, they will give account of it in the day of judgment."

Our deeds, words, thoughts, and \_\_\_\_\_ will all be known to Christ on the day of Judgment.

## WHEN WILL THE JUDGMENT COME?

Surely, we can see by now why Felix was terrified. To the unrighteous, the prospect of standing before a Judge who knows all of one's deeds, words, and thoughts is frightening enough. Another sobering truth is that even though the judgment to come is certain, we do not know when it is coming. Many have tried to predict the end of the world, but this is a fruitless effort. Jesus explains, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). In 2 Peter 3:10, we read, "...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." We simply do not and cannot know when the Lord will return. It may be hundreds or thousands of years from now, or He might return this very day.

Even if the Lord's return is far away, we are not guaranteed even one more day of life. The world might continue for thousands of years, yet our opportunity to prepare for the judgment could run out today. In Luke 12:16-20, Jesus tells of a rich man who decided to build many barns to store his goods. The man says to himself, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." But God says of the man, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you!" People pass away every day, and many of those people begin their day with no idea that it will be their last.

We simply cannot foresee when our soul will be required of us or when we will run out of opportunities to prepare for the judgment to come. Thus, it is imperative that we prepare ourselves now, while we have time and opportunity!

## WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE JUDGMENT?

Earlier we saw that judgment is an evaluation. This evaluation will lead to a great separation. Consider the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-34:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . ."

In verse 41, Jesus addresses the second group: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Verse 46 sums up the result of Judgment Day: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The earth is currently shared by those seeking to serve God and those who oppose Him. The righteous and the wicked both share in God's creation. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:45, God "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." After the judgment, this will no longer be the case. After that day, the wicked will be eternally separated both from the righteous and from God; and they will live in the place the Bible calls Hell. Jesus Himself describes this terrible place in chilling and vivid terms:

- A place prepared for Satan and his angels. (Matthew 25:41)
- A place of fire and everlasting punishment. (Matthew 25:46)
- A place of darkness, filled with weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:12)

This separation will be a great blessing for the righteous, for they will never again be tempted to sin, nor will they be oppressed or afflicted by the devil or those people who rejected God. For the unrighteous however, the separation will seal their devastating and eternal fate. Never again will they be able to be influenced by the righteous. Never again will they be presented with the gospel or the opportunity for salvation. Never again will they experience the blessings of God, for they will be wholly and completely separated from their Creator.



Hell is a place where there is no hope because God is not there. Even though this terrible place was created for the Devil and his angels, it will also serve as the eternal destination for those who refuse to accept God's gift of salvation.

Does the Bible tell us when the world will end or when Judgment Day will occur?

\_\_\_\_\_

When should we get prepared for judgment and eternity? \_\_\_\_\_

The day of Judgment will be a day of evaluation and \_\_\_\_\_.

Will Hell be a place of temporary or everlasting punishment? \_\_\_\_\_

Those condemned to Hell will be eternally \_\_\_\_\_ from God.





## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JUDGMENT TO COME?

Felix trembled when he heard about judgment to come, because he was unprepared. He was unrighteous in that he had not accepted God's gift of salvation. Felix then made the worst mistake of his life; he sent Paul away, promising to call him again at a more convenient time. As far as we know, that time never came. Many people today make the same choice—they turn a blind eye to the truth of judgment to come. They push thoughts of judgment and punishment out of their mind until, with time, the fear lessens and then dissolves. Human forgetfulness will not change the certainty of the judgment; it only increases the likelihood that one might face judgment unprepared.

Perhaps you realize that you are unprepared for judgment. Like Felix, you tremble at the thought of standing before Christ, the righteous judge. Perhaps you know that if you were to stand in judgment right now, you would be separated from God forever. If this is the case, what is preventing you from being prepared for the judgment? Perhaps the question on your heart is “How do I get prepared?” Assuredly, there is only one way to be prepared—you must have your sins washed away by Jesus Christ. How can we know that our sins are washed away?

The only way to be sure that our sins are forgiven, we must follow the pattern laid out by Jesus found in the Bible and the Bible alone. There, we read that to have our sins washed away, we must first believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus says in John 8:24, “if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” Those who die in their sins will not be granted everlasting life: they will be condemned to eternal torment.

Is belief all that is required to be forgiven of sins? Not according to the Bible, which teaches that a sincere faith in God moves a person to obedience. Acts 3:19 says “Repent therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Much more than just regret, repentance is a change of mind and focus, an active decision to stop committing sin and the resolve to begin obeying Jesus' commands.

Saving faith also leads one to confess the name of Jesus. Romans 10:10 teaches that “with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”



If you believe in Jesus, are ready to repent of your sins, and are willing to confess the name of Jesus, then you are ready to complete your obedience of the gospel by being baptized for the remission of your sins. In 1 Peter 3:21, we read, “**there is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**” Some people teach baptism is not important, but Peter clearly states that baptism is part of God’s saving plan! Remember—to be prepared for the judgment to come, we must be forgiven of our sins. Listen to what Saul of Tarsus was told by the preacher Ananias in Acts 22:16—“**Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord!**” The Scriptures teach that our sins are washed away only when we submit to the full pattern that God has provided. When we believe in Jesus, repent of our sins, confess our faith in Jesus, and are baptized for the remission of sins in Jesus’ name, then we can rejoice in knowing that our sins have been forgiven and our name has been added to the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 20:12).

It is important to note that our obedience to Christ does not stop at baptism. In fact, it is only the beginning. Revelation 2:10 states, “**be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**”

What if we commit sin after we are baptized? In 1 John 1:9 through 2:1, the apostle teaches that Jesus is our advocate with the Father; and if we will confess our sins, then God is faithful and just to forgive us.

The judgment to come does not have to be a day of terror. For those who have had their sins washed away, it will be a day of wonder, for on that day those who are saved through Jesus will inherit the blessings of Heaven and eternal life. If you are not prepared to meet Christ as your Judge today, won’t you accept the gift of salvation and have your sins washed away?

Which way can we know our sins are forgiven: by following the words of men  
or the pattern of Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

Is belief alone all that is required to be forgiven of sins? \_\_\_\_\_

Ananias told Saul, "Arise and be \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ your sins, calling on the name of the Lord!"

Our sins are washed away only when we submit to the \_\_\_\_\_ pattern of  
God. That pattern is to:

\_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus Christ

\_\_\_\_\_ of our sins

\_\_\_\_\_ our faith in Jesus

Be \_\_\_\_\_ for the remission of sins

Does obedience stop at baptism? \_\_\_\_\_

"Be faithful until \_\_\_\_\_, and I will give you the crown of \_\_\_\_\_."

Are you prepared for the judgment? \_\_\_\_\_

## **COURSE CONCLUSION**

Our prayer is that you have enjoyed this course and that it has helped you grow in your knowledge of God's Word. As this course comes to an end, we encourage you to prayerfully consider the things you have learned and to take the steps that will make your own calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

In concluding this course, please answer the following questions with a "Yes" or "No."

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. God will accept a person who is not scripturally baptized
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Were you christened as a baby?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Is infant christening scriptural baptism?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have you been taught that you were saved before you were baptized?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Is a person saved before baptism?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Do you have a personal responsibility to see that you are scripturally baptized?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Is your baptism scriptural?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Would you like us to assist you in being scripturally baptized?

If studying God's Word has caused you to realize that you are not prepared for God's final judgment and you would like to change that, please let us know. It would be our joy and honor to assist you in accepting God's gift of salvation so that your sins might be washed away. If you have previously obeyed the gospel, we hope this course has stirred up your faith and further equipped you for your daily walk of faith.

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:12-14).

Name

Email

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