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THE JUDGMENT AS DISCLOSED IN 2 CORINTHIANS 5:10.

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I. *Is There to Be a Great Public Judgment?*

This question is not, "Is there to be a private judgment of each one at death?" That there is to be such a private judgment is the teaching of the natural reason and of the word of God. The pagan myths concerning future judges, the terrors of man's guilty conscience and the necessity of some means to adjust the irregularities between men's histories in this life and their merits are so many grounds from which the natural reason argues with large probability to the fact of a private judgment ahead for each individual. The Scriptures make such a private judgment certain, in teaching that the human soul, when it leaves the body, meets God directly. Thus Eccles. 12:7: "The dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." This implies self-consciousness and self-knowledge and private individual judgment. In like manner, we read in Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, judgment." In this passage, *krisis*, the word translated judgment, is without the article. The writer does not teach that *the* judgment immediately succeeds the death of the body, but that a judgment does. Our Lord's promise to the repentant thief on the cross

that he should, that day, be with him in Paradise was, by implication, a promise of a private judgment that should result in a gracious acquittal. When it is said of Judas Iscariot that he went to his own place, there is an implication that he had a judgment of condemnation. The Scriptures thus teach a private judgment of the individual at death; but this is not an answer to our question, Is there to be a great public judgment?

Reason says, in response to this question, that it is probable that there is to be such a judgment; that, in view of the misunderstanding and maligning of God's ways amongst His creatures, He will hold such a court for the manifestation of His justice; that, in that great assize, He will show every crime, and every sin, of thought, word and deed of every individual; that He will display every advantage and every disadvantage, all talents, opportunities, difficulties, temptations, all circumstances which have influenced or should have influenced each individual's conduct, and that in judging He will proceed on the principle that much, or little, should be required of men according as they have received.

What reason makes probable Scripture abundantly confirms. It makes indubitably clear that there is to be a great public judgment. Thus our Lord himself, in Matt. 25:31-41, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats," &c. Thus Paul says, Acts 17:31, "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or evil."

In a great many places the Scriptures teach that there is to be a public judgment.

II. *Who Is to Be the Judge in That Great Court of Trial?*

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is to be the judge. So the text teaches: "We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." So other Scriptures teach, some of which have already

been quoted: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another" (Matt. 25:31, 32). "And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and dead" (Acts 10:42). "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained whereof he hath given assurance in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). In Rom. 2:16 we read of "The day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Other Scripture passages teach that Christ is to be the judge in the judgment.

2. This is a momentous fact: (1) For those who shall have denied Christ in this life; for he says, "He that denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven"; (2) for those who shall have been indifferent to Christ in this life; for he says, "He that is not with me is against me"; (3) for those who have professed him in word but denied him in conduct; for he hath said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me all ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23). Christ on the throne will not make the judgment less terrible to any who have despised, or ignored, or falsely professed him.

3. The fact that Christ is to be the judge is a blessed one for all who truly love him. Conscious of their sins, they would be in despair before that awful bar but for the reminder in the judge himself of God's mercy to them; but when they see Jesus on the throne—him who died for them, their fears will be gone, and they will look only for the completion of their redemption in the proclamation of their justification—the obliteration of the last consequences of sin. To them the fact that Christ is judge will be an unspeakable comfort.

4. That the Saviour is to be judge is a fact of poetic justice. He who was condemned by the world—unworthily condemned by the world—shall himself judge the world. We have called this a fact of poetic justice, the Scriptures represent it as a part of his reward for the humiliation involved in his incarnation and death. "He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." Phil. 2:8-10.

Christ is to be judge in this public judgment.

III. *Who Are to Appear Before Him and Receive Judgment?*

1. The text says: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in the body." How inclusive is the *we* used here, in "we must all appear?" Paul has been using what has been called the editorial *we* in the context; yet it is plain that when he says, "We must *all*," he is including others along with himself. Some commentators hold that he includes with himself all Christians merely, but does not include non-Christians. But the context seems to make it plain that he includes all men. For in the next verse he says, Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord we persuade men. He does not say, persuade *you*, but men—men in contrast with God to whom he is manifest and whom he does not need to persuade. Remark, he does not say "Christians" or "you," i. e. the Christians of Corinth, or "all Christians," but men. He has in this close connection with our text the thought of men, as such, before him. They have all to appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

2. Other Scriptures teach that men universally shall be judged in that day, Matt. 25:31, 32, "And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." Acts 17:31, "God hath appointed a day in the which he shall judge the world." These expressions, "all nations," "the

world," include every individual of the race. The primeval pair shall be before the judgment seat of Christ. Cain, the first murderer, and his brother Abel, whom he murdered; Noah, who builded the ark, and those that scoffed at him, all the antediluvians, the early descendants of Noah, the Patriarchs, Israel in all its ages, and its foes, whether of the valley of the Euphrates, or of the Nile Valley, the peoples of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, of every age, shall be there. The Christians of the early Church with their many martyrs, and their persecutors, Paul and Nero, John and Domitian, shall be there. All Europe, down through the avalanches of barbarians, through the blotting out of the Gracco-Roman civilization, through the period when every one did that which was pleasing in his own eyes as far as he could, when the Church was more and more paganized; all Europe during the abortive efforts at reform and through the Reformation, and through the French Revolution, and through the upbuilding of the power of Prussia, and through this war of the nations; yes, Leo I and the Europe of his day, Charlemagne and the barbarous Europe of his day, Frederick Barbarossa, Richard Coeur de Leon and Philip Augustus, of France, and the chivalric, adventurous, youthful Europe of their day shall be there. Charles V and Martin Luther, and John Calvin and John Knox and all the earnest and turbulent and formative Europe of their day, Frederick the Great, Catherine of Russia, Voltaire and the Europe of their day; Napoleon and Wellington, and Metternich and Kant, and Wm. Carey and the Europe of their day; Bismarck, Von Moltke, Gladstone, Spurgeon, and the Europe of their day; and Wilhelm and Von Hindenburg, and Joffre and Poincare, and Kitchener and Lloyd-George, and Brussiloff and Ruzsky, and the Europe of their day, and China, Japan and Korea and India, all Asia and Africa and Australia and the Americas of all their ages shall be there. What is of more concern to us: You shall be there and I shall be there, in that crowd, but not hidden from the judge. There is no member of the human race too great, or too obscure, to escape that trial. Emperors

and scullions shall stand side by side before that august bar. The Apocalyptic seer saw, in this judgment, "the dead, small and great stand before God; the books opened, and another book 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."

Aye; the crowd will be larger still; for, according to Scripture, the fallen angels shall be there. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment," 2 Pet. 2:4. "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.

All sinful angels and every member of Adam's race shall be there to be judged.

IV. *Are We to Be Shown As We Are in This Judgment?*

1. The text says: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." This is the translation of the Revised Version. It only does justice to the original.

Let us try to take in what this means: If we are breakers of God's law, we shall be shown to be such. If we have other gods than the true God, that shall be shown. If we worship God by images or any other way not appointed in His word, that shall be shown. If we have taken His name in vain, that shall be shown. If we have broken the command to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, that shall be shown. If we have failed to honor our parents and all in rightful authority over us, that shall be shown. If we have been guilty of malice, or envy, or jealousy, or any impulse which, if grown great would eventuate in murder, that must be shown. If we have been guilty of impurity of thought, speech or behaviour, that must be shown. If we have been guilty of in-

ternal or external theft, that must be shown. If we have been guilty of false or hurtful speech, that must be shown. If we have been guilty of covetousness, that must be shown.

2. If we have been rejecters of Christ's overtures of mercy that must be shown, if we have been indifferent to those overtures of mercy, that must be shown. If we have been professed followers, but in works have denied him, that must be shown.

3. On the other hand, every honest effort to keep the moral law and every humble, faithful attempt to live a believer's life, every scintilla of true faith and repentance shall be brought out.

4. All these things, with all the circumstances that either aggravate, or mitigate any one's guilt shall be brought out, as Paul teaches, Rom. 2:11 and 16, "For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ."

5. The Scriptures indeed teach that our sins are to be blotted out as a ground of condemnation against us; that, as such ground, they are to be remembered against us no more forever; but they also teach that we shall be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that all secrets will that day be disclosed.

V. *Are We to Receive Our Doom For Weal or Woe at This Judgment?*

1. The text says: "That everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." According to this teaching, if a man have done evil in act, he shall receive according to the evil of his act; if he have done evil in word, for words are deeds of a kind, he shall receive according to the evil of his word, even as our Lord himself hath said: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." (Matt. 12:36). If he have done evil in thought, or evil in feeling, for it is the feeling that

gives moral color to the thoughts, and feeling and thought which give moral character to conduct, he shall receive according to the evil of his thought and his feeling.

If a man have rejected Christ he shall be rejected of him; if he have been indifferent to Christ, he shall receive according to his indifference; if he have professed Christ in word but in works denied him, Christ will "profess unto him, I never knew you: depart from me you that work iniquity."

But if a man have received Christ and tried to keep his commandments—to keep them in thought, word and deed, he shall, for Christ's sake, for the wrought-out righteousness—the achieved righteousness—the merit of Christ's life's obedience and the satisfaction of outraged law by his death, receive life—pardon and a title to heaven, and shall receive a blessedness therein proportioned to his improvement of all the grace God shall have given him here below. Such seems to be the teaching of this text when taken in the light of other Scriptures.

From other Scriptures we gather the same lesson, that in this judgment, we receive a final and irretrievable doom corresponding to our conduct. Thus we read in Matt. 25:34-46: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in. * * * Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in. * * * Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal."

We read further, in Gal. 6:7: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;"

in Eph. 6:8, "Know that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord;" in Rev. 22:12, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

These passages taken together leave no ground of doubt that we shall, in this public judgment, receive an eternal doom of weal or woe corresponding to our characters.

VI. *Is There to Be a Period of Preparation for This Judgment Other Than This Life, for Any Men?*

The text seems to settle that question: It teaches that everyone is to "receive *the deeds done in the body*, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." If a man's deeds in the body must be rated evil, evil he must receive. This passage is decisive against any future probation with a possibility of change of the doom—decisive against any period of future preparation to avert the doom of evil due to the ungodly on separation of soul from body.

There is a good deal of talk in Great Britain, at present, about a period of future probation for the brave fellows, meeting death on the Somme and other fronts, who are not prepared now for a happy issue in the great assize. However much we may sympathize with bereaved hearts at home, and our own sympathy for them is beyond expression, in the light of this and other Scriptures, we can not but regard the view as a delusion and a snare—a possible stone of stumbling to many who yet have time in this life to prepare for the great trial.

Some very respectable Bible students, however, profess to find Bible ground for this hope; and point to two passages in the first epistle of Peter as furnishing the ground, viz.: 1 Pet. 3:19: "By which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison;" and 1 Pet. 4:6, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, and live according to God in the Spirit."

1 Pet. 3:18-20 has been a *pons assinorum* to a host of interpreters. A very able and judicious Scriptural exegete once replied to an inquiry of our own as to Peter's meaning in this passage: My brother, I do not know what he meant. I have often thought that when I get to heaven I will ask the Apostle what he meant." He who thus spoke was no other than the venerated Dr. Thomas E. Peck. All those who knew Dr. Peck will recognize the sobriety and simple earnestness of his reply.

It is to such a *terram incognitam*, that the advocates of second probation would point us for Scriptural support for their view. The three verses together read: "For Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which he went also and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

For myself, I follow, in the interpretation of this passage, Augustine, Aquinas, Hugo St. Victor, Bede, Beza, Gerhard, Besser, Fuller, Hofmann, Schweitzer, the Hodges, Dabney, etc., and Principal Salmond. I would appropriate the language of the last mentioned worthy: This passage "defers the scene of the preachings to earth instead of Hades, and the time of the preaching to Noah's day instead of the period between Christ's death and the resurrection. It takes the preacher to have been Christ himself in His preincarnate activity, and the preaching to have been in the form of the divine warnings of the time, the spectacle of the building of the ark, and the various tokens of God's long-suffering.

The strain of the paragraph so understood becomes this: Be content to suffer. There is blessing in so doing, provided you suffer for well-doing and not for ill-doing. Look to your Lord's example—how He did good to the most unworthy and died for the unjust. Think what the issue of injurious suffering was to Him; if He suffered even unto death as regards the mortal side of His being, He was raised as regards the spiritual to a new life with new powers. Look back on the remote past, ere He had appeared in the flesh. Reflect how

then, too, He acted in this gracious way, how He went and preached to the guilty generation of the Flood, making known to those grossest of wrong-doers, by the spectacle of the ark a-building, the word of his servant Noah, and the varied warnings of the time, His will to serve them" (Christian Doctrine of Immortality, p. 474). (For effective blocking of other interpretations, see Salmond *idem* pp. 458, ff.)

For our purposes, however, it was not necessary to undertake the interpretation but only to show that, if it be granted that this passage teaches that Christ descended between his death and resurrection to the prison in which the ungodly contemporaries of Noah were kept and preached to them (a hypothesis which I do not grant) it can not teach that he did this with a view to their repentance and preparation for a happy issue on the day of judgment. For the spirit which inspired these words of Peter's inspired the plain words of our text, and there can be no conflict between them. Further, the Spirit speaks by Peter, again, in 2 Pet. 2:4-9, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the ungodly * * * (he) "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Surely, in warning those to whom he wrote against ungodliness, he would not have illustrated God's ability to "reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished," by the divine treatment of Noah's contemporaries, if God's mercy had moved him, notwithstanding their misuse of their earthly probation to new efforts for their salvation. This passage in Second Peter makes it clear that in 1 Pet. 3:18-21, there is no basis for the doctrine of any other probationary period than that of the life in the body.

1 Pet. 4:6, in the light of the context, teaches nothing of preaching to men after they are physically dead. The Apostle is exhorting Christians to be ready to meet suffering in the path of duty. In this verse he tells them that the gospel was

preached (while they yet lived) also to some that are dead (by judicial process) that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit." It is admitted that the word dead in this sixth verse is taken with a somewhat different meaning (judicially dead) from that it has in the fifth verse (dead at the last day), where it is said that God "is ready to judge the quick and the dead," but this clause is a by-clause in the progress of the discourse. Our interpretation makes verse 6 of a piece with the whole body of the exhortation. It is a strong reason why they should not allow suffering to deflect them from the path of duty. God designs some to suffer and live. If suffering meets you, accept it as a part of God's plan. Bear it cheerfully. (cf. Salmond, *ibid* 477.)

We return, then, to the teaching of the text, that the period while we are yet in the body is the period of probation—the period during which all preparation for this judgment must be made. We remind you of the confirmation of this teaching in 2 Pet. 2:4-9.

This teaching is confirmed by still other Scriptures, e. g.: "As it is appointed unto men once to die but after this a judgment." A man's private judgment begins at death. With the public judgment it must coincide as Scripture shows. In John 9:4, we read: "The night cometh when no man can work." The night here is death. When that cometh, "no man can work." Here our Lord teaches that with death the opportunity to do work which belongs to us as having bodies ceases, but the most important of earthly duties is getting right with God, living so as to win His favor. This work then must be done while we are in the body.

Does any one say: It is unjust, or at least unmerciful, in God to let men go to perdition who have never had a chance to accept Christ—men to whom the Gospel has never been preached? We read in Rom. 3:19: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." This passage gives the death blow

to the supposition that it was needful for our Lord to preach to the dead in order to make good the lack of justice, or of mercy, in the lives of any men of any age of the world. The law given on Sinai and engraven on the heart will shut every mouth in the day when men shall see the truth.

This is the one period of probation for the graet assize.

VI. *What is the Proper Attitude of Men, in View of These Solemn Truths?*

1st. It goes without saying that Christians should use the graces God has bestowed upon them with all well considered diligence. They shall receive according to the deeds done in the body.

2d. It goes without saying also that Christians should give themselves to the spread of the Gospel and the winning to Christ their kindred and friends and neighbors at home and abroad.

These are the paramount duties, in view of the truths of this Scripture, for them.

3d. It goes without saying that the non-Christian should become Christian now, and become more Christian with every passing day.