

The Angel Message Tracts

Chapter 8

THE ETERNAL JUDGMENT

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*And I saw another angel fly in the midst
of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
to preach unto them that dwell on the
earth.---Revelation 14 : 6 : : :*



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The Other Unwise Builder

Edwin Markham has this modern parable:

But there is flying through the world the story of another builder, a foolish eye-servant, a poor rogue. He and his little ones were wretched and roofless, whereupon a certain good Samaritan said, in his heart, "I will surprise this man with the gift of a comfortable home." So, without telling his purpose, he hired the builder at fair wages to build a house on a sunny hill, and then he went on business to a far city.

The builder was left at work with no watchman but his own honor. "Ha!" said he to his heart, "I can cheat this man. I can skimp the material and scamp the work." So he went on spinning out the time, putting in poor service, poor nails, poor timbers.

When the Samaritan returned, the builder said: "That is a fine house I built you on the hill." "Good," was the reply; "go, move your folks into it at once, for the house is yours. Here is the deed."

The man was thunderstruck. He saw that, instead of cheating his friend for a year, he had been industriously cheating himself. "If I had only known it was my own house I was building!" he kept muttering to himself.

Every man who tries to cheat God or his neighbor ends by cheating himself. We are building for eternity. The house we build we must live in. The reward we work for we shall get.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 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.—1 Corinthians 3: 10-14.

The Eternal Judgment

CHAPTER 8

The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.—1 Samuel 2:3.

Our theme is not a popular one in polite society. It is not a theme that is often discussed at dances or at card parties or at feasts. Society has agreed to ignore it. It is tabooed.

But God does not always observe good form (according to some standards, at least). He thrust this subject upon the attention of King Belshazzar at a time when he was giving a feast to his wives and concubines and a thousand of his nobles (Daniel 5).

The king beheld a hand in the act of writing on the wall. When the king with shaking knees and quavering voice asked for the interpretation, Daniel gave it. In part it was:

“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”

That was in harmony with our text: “The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”

What bad taste (some might say) to drag a pair of balances upon the scene of that great social function and proceed to weigh the king and to write the result on the wall for all to see. But God is no respecter of persons. At some time every man who ever lived must be weighed in the balances. Are you ready for the test?

MEN JUDGED NOW

In a certain sense judgment is going on now. Men are constantly judged and punished or rewarded, according to the laws of Nature, which are the laws of God.

If you put your hand into the fire you commit a physical sin and you are judged and punished immediately. If you do a mean, contemptible, vile act, the result to yourself may not be so obvious, but it is no less sure. Paul speaks of some whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron.

Spiritual injuries, malformations, and deformities resulting from corrupt thinking and doing are more hideous, monstrous, and terrible than anything resulting to the flesh from violation of physical laws.

Men bear in their own souls the marks of God's judgments on sin. You can see it in their eyes.

Nevertheless, many apparently escape the consequences of their evil ways, to an extent at least; though probably their immunity is more *apparent* than *real*. On the other hand many innocent people suffer for the sins of others, due to the interdependence of humanity; for no man liveth to himself alone. Consequently in the providence of God there is a set time coming when all things will be equalized and every man will get his deserts.

Men may appear to sin with immunity for a time, but it is a true saying: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7.)

Ye have plowed, ye have sowed, and the harvest shall be of its kind;

What ye sowed ye shall gather and grind;

What ye grind ye shall bake, saith the Lord, and, or bitter or sweet,

In the days that shall be ye shall eat.—Shoemaker.

SPECIAL JUDGMENTS

There are special judgments of God, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). A case in point also is that of King Belshazzar already referred to. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah might be mentioned in this connection. Their object is mentioned in Isaiah 26: 9: "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

We must not flatter ourselves that these special dispensations are altogether a thing of the past:

Did ye deem that my wrath was a cloud that had thundered and gone,

Swallowed up in the smile of the dawn?

PRELIMINARY JUDGMENT

There are also what might be termed preliminary judgments. We are told that at death: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12: 7.)

All kinds of men are dying all the time. All kinds of spirits are ascending to God. Do they all remain with him?

We understand that those who find favor with him are received into paradise to await the final judg-

ment; while the wicked are sent to the prison house to await the same great event. This presupposes a sort of preliminary judgment at death.

To the penitent and forgiven thief Jesus said: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23: 43; see also Revelation 14: 13; 2: 7; 2 Corinthians 5: 1-9).

While of the wicked and unforgiven it is said:

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.—Psalm 9: 17.

And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit.—Isaiah 24: 22. See also Psalm 55: 15; Zechariah 9: 12; 2 Peter 2: 4-9; Ezekiel 31: 16, 17.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

But there is also to be a final great day of judgment. We are told:

He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.—Acts 17: 31.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was 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.—Revelation 20: 12.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO THAT DAY

Jesus is to come again. He left that definite promise on record: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again" (John 14: 3).

The angels confirmed this promise at the time of his ascension:

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven,

shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.—Acts 1: 11.

His departure was real and personal; his second coming will be real and personal:

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.—Matthew 16: 27.

At his coming the first resurrection, that of the righteous, is to take place, and they are to be with him a thousand years:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.—1 Thessalonians 4: 16.

And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.—Revelation 20: 4-6.

This is followed in John's account by his description of the great judgment when the dead both great and small were judged.

The events then are: The second coming of Jesus; the first resurrection, at which time the dead in Christ are resurrected and the living righteous meet him; the thousand years millennial reign; the resurrection of the wicked, followed by the loosing of Satan for a time; and afterward the final great judgment.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THAT JUDGMENT

John tells us (Revelation 20) that both small and great shall stand before God,—the king from his

throne, the peasant from his hovel, Dives who lived in luxury, Lazarus who lived in rags,—all will be there.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it.” The men who now sleep in the luxurious staterooms of the *Titanic* and the *Lusitania* at the bottom of the sea, in the most splendid coffins ever constructed by man, will be there.

“And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.” The most remote recesses of the bottomless pit will yield up the lost spirits that cower there. Men must face that judgment bar. It is not a matter of choice but a matter of necessity.

The judgment will be just. God will be our righteous judge in that day, in connection no doubt with the Master: “Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17: 31).

He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. . . . and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.—Isaiah 11: 3, 4.

A judge stopped a runaway horse and saved a man. Afterward that man was charged with murder and arraigned before that judge. He pleaded, “Judge, you do not know me. You saved me once, you can not take my life from me.”

The judge replied: “I was your savior then; but now I am your judge.”

When Jesus was here he said:

I came not to *judge* the world, but to *save* the world.—

John 12: 47. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him *in the last day*.—John 12: 48.

Jesus came once to save the world. Presently he is coming to judge the world. He is both savior and judge. By his word we shall be approved or condemned.

THE BASIS OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

It is distinctly stated that all men are to be judged according to their works:

And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*.—Revelation 20: 12.

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man *according as his work shall be*.—Revelation 22: 12.

This idea of merit as a basis of reward appeals to common sense. It is just, as God is just. Yet it controverts the old theological idea of one great, eternal reward of everlasting glory in heaven, and one great eternal, everlasting punishment in hell,—just two places and conditions,—heaven on the one hand, hell on the other.

A LINE OF MEN FOR JUDGMENT

To illustrate: let us in imagination arrange a line of men before us for judgment. At one end of the line is the meanest man that ever lived. At the other end is the best man that ever lived. They are graded down morally from the best to the worst, and stand shoulder to shoulder, scarcely an inch apart physically and morally.

Tell us now, where can we put our hand down in

this line and say that all on this side shall go to heaven and all on that side shall go to hell?

And if God fixes the dividing line between two certain men, will he say that this man who has missed hell only by the thickness of a hand shall go into heaven and share celestial glory equally with the best man who ever lived? And that this other man who has lost heaven by an inch shall go to hell and suffer the same punishment that is meted out to the worst man who ever profaned the human form?

We do better than that here, in our high schools and our police courts. We at least try to give reward in proportion to merit and mete out punishment according to degree of guilt.

DRAWING THE LINE ELSEWHERE

But one says, We will not draw the line in that way. We will draw the line between those who accept Jesus and those who reject him. Very well, we will rearrange our line of men.

But the problem is not solved in that way. For there still exists the utmost diversity of character, service, merit, and development among those who have accepted Jesus. Some are not worthy to *receive*, neither are they prepared to *enjoy* the reward that others merit. And the same great differences exist among those who have not accepted Jesus.

Most noteworthy of all, perhaps, some who have professedly accepted him are not so worthy as some who have failed to accept him. Following is a case from life. It is a true incident, excepting that the correct names are not given.

A CASE FROM LIFE

Henry Clay Bates, a young man, member of a well-known aristocratic family of Virginia, fell in love with a dissolute girl of the neighborhood. He became so enamored of her that he took his young wife, mother of his little boy, riding in his automobile, stopped at a lonely place on the road, took a shotgun from the weeds where he had hidden it, and killed her.

He was arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged. After he had carried the case through the various courts, and exhausted every artifice that money and legal talent could employ, after appeal for pardon had failed, and as the day of execution drew near, and the time approached to set the death watch at his cell door, he sent for a clergyman of an orthodox church (so-called), confessed his crime, "accepted Jesus," received "religious consolation," and declared, "I die happy."

We are asked to believe that the executioner swung him, black-faced and strangling at the end of the hangman's noose, right into eternal glory. Can you picture Peter meeting him, removing the hangman's cap, loosening the noose, taking him by the hand, and saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord"? Will John the Beloved and the devout Stephen move over to make room for Henry Clay Bates, up close to the great white throne?

What about Mrs. Bates? She was a good woman, but not a member of the church. She had not accepted Jesus, by formal profession. Her husband

gave her no time for confession. We are asked to believe that the explosion of that gun that blew her gentle mother spirit from her breast blew it right into hell. Must Judas Iscariot and Jezebel move over to make room for Mrs. Bates, up close to the hottest fire for ever and for ever?

THE THEOLOGIANS' GOD

If judgment were held before that kind of a God we believe that some one would be there with courage to stand up and declare, "You may be a God of power, but you are not a God of justice." And that kind of a God would have no answer to that kind of a charge. He might stop that man's mouth with brimstone and fling him into the bottomless pit; but he could not answer him.

But, thank God, such a deity is merely a creation of the theologians. He does not exist. Our God is a God of knowledge, and a God of justice, by him "actions are weighed." By him men are judged, "according to their works," for so his word assures us.

THE GLORY OF THE STARS

God has a reward for every man proportionate to his works, his merit, his service, his spiritual development. He has a punishment for those who are condemned, adapted to the degree of moral turpitude of each. And he punishes to reform; not for vengeance.

Paul says:

The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars;

for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.—1 Corinthians 15: 40-42.

The heavens refute the theologian's travesty upon divine justice. As the psalmist says, "The heavens declare the glory of God."

The glories and rewards that he will bestow are as diverse as the glories of the stars, the moon, and the sun. They range from the glory of the dimmest star that you can perceive, to yonder constellation of the first magnitude, and on up to glories like that of the moon and the sun.

It is clear, too, that he will differentiate in punishment as in reward. Jesus said of certain people: "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matthew 10: 15).

PREDESTINATION AND MOHAMMEDANISM

Needless to say, this basis of judgment according to works is utterly opposed to the old predestination theology, which is stated in one of the creeds thus:

By the Decree of God for the manifestation of his Glory, some Men and angels are predestined upon everlasting Life, and others foreordained to everlasting Death.

These Angels and Men thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it can not be either increased or diminished.

And this creed goes on to say that God did not base his foreordination on any foreknowledge of their faith and good works, or the reverse. He merely selected some for eternal bliss and chose to pass others by, reserving them for hell, and all "to the praise of his glorious justice."

This accords well with Mohammedan theology, which is thus stated by Clarke:

Accordingly, when God—so runs the tradition,—I had better say blasphemy—resolved to create the human race, he took into his hands a mass of earth, the same whence all mankind were to be formed, . . . having then divided the clod into two equal portions, he threw the one half into hell, saying, “These to eternal fire, and I care not”; and projected the other half into heaven, adding, “and these to paradise, and I care not.”—Ten Great Religions.

But it does not accord with the divine love and justice of God; who is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3: 9).

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.—1 Timothy 2: 3, 4.

SALVATION AND REWARD

Jesus has worked out our salvation in the sense that he has made it possible for us. He made the sacrifice. He lived the perfect life. He presents the divine plan. It is ours to accept and obey. But while he saves us out of love, when it comes to the question of *reward*, we must work that out. We will get that for which we work.

This is made very clear in the following:

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.—1 Corinthians 3: 11-15.

Some, then, may be saved terribly, and as by fire, and receive little or no reward. Others may receive reward according as they have built of precious stones, gold, or silver on the foundation laid for them in the divine wisdom and mercy.

It is conceded that works have a vital bearing on salvation, and acceptance of Jesus has a vital bearing on reward; but broadly speaking, salvation comes by acceptance of Jesus, and reward comes according to works. By acceptance of Jesus we mean sincere acceptance and obedience. Many profess to accept him who do not accept him at all, neither obey him. Others make no outward profession, yet really accept some at least of the truths that he taught.

By and by the hypocrites will be exposed. By and by those who now accept a part will openly accept all,—if they follow the leadings of God, otherwise they will go backward and lose that which they now have.

BUILDING OUR MANSIONS

It becomes of the utmost importance then that we shall begin now to build wisely and well, that our works may stand the test mentioned above, and we receive the highest reward. Jesus said:

Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.—Matthew 7: 24.

In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.—John 14: 2.

We do not presume that those mansions will be

like rows upon rows of tenements, each exactly like its neighbor, and with no individuality. But each will express perfectly the individuality of its occupant.

In a sense we are building our own mansions on high. Oliver Wendell Holmes strolling along the seashore picked up the cast-off shell of a chambered nautilus. Holding it in his hand he soliloquized:

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past years dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step the shining archway through,
Built up the idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no
more.

Then the poet turns upon himself and with introspective gaze continues:

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

The eternal judgment is not a popular theme in polite society. It has been tabooed. Yet it is not such a terrible theme excepting to the unprepared. It is not presented to frighten.

In it are revealed the greatness, love, mercy, justice of our God, "Who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."