

And After This, The Judgment

by Jack Kinsella.

If there is a central theme of Scripture, a single pinpoint of truth from which all other doctrine flows, it would have to be that of judgment.

This universe was born as a place of judgment; its very creation was a matter of judgment, and nothing within this physical universe shall escape judgment.

Judgment was born out of light. Genesis 1:4 records the very first instance of Divine judgment; "*And God saw the light, that it was good . . .*"

Throughout Scripture, God uses light and darkness as metaphors for good and evil. So it is fitting that He began this universe with His judgment of light and darkness.

Having judged light to be "good" Genesis says God exercised a different kind of judgment when He divided the light from the darkness. Without a clear division between light and darkness, everything would be shades of gray.

We often attempt to color our own moral judgments using similar metaphors; "it isn't that black and white" or, "this is a gray area" to explain and justify our compromises.

Hebrews 9:27 is a Scripture often quoted in terms of judgment; "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*"

First, note that each man has an appointment with death. We all die, eventually. But it is not a random event, any more than was our birth. The time, manner and hour are already predetermined.

Jesus used another metaphor, "born again" to describe our salvation process. We are born from the womb, but not voluntarily. When the time comes, we are expelled into the light. And it is hardly a pleasant transition.

In one second, we are in our place of warm and peaceful tranquility, oblivious to anything except our own comfortable existence. In the next, our world is violently shaken. Our environment collapses around us and begins to expel us from itself.

As we get near the light, we are yanked out of the warmth into a cold metal tray by a pair of salad spoons. The transition is our introduction to pain, beginning with a jarring slap on the behind.

The blinding light burns our eyes only slightly less than the silver nitrate. It is a moment of incomparable terror, since nothing in our experience has prepared us for what follows.

Of course, that is all from the perspective of the baby we all once were. But having tasted this life, the warm, dark comfort of the womb would be an unbearable prison. So being 'born again' is the perfect metaphor to describe the transition from this life to eternal life.

We dread the process even though we know, intellectually, that eternal life is as incomparable to this life as this life is to the womb.

Death comes also to those who don't know Christ -- for them the prospect of death must be doubly disturbing -- its an unpleasant transition to nowhere. That kind of hopelessness was best expressed on a tombstone I once saw: "Here lies an atheist. All dressed up with no place to go."

The Scriptures say that judgment, like death, comes to ALL men by appointment. For Christians, judgment comes in two parts. Hebrews 9:27 says "*AS it is appointed . . .*" the next verse completes the thought.

Look at it in context: "*And as it is appointed unto men ONCE to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was ONCE offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*"

Without sin unto salvation . . . that doesn't sound like the Second Coming, in judgment with a two-edged sword, encompassed by ten thousands of His saints, to judge the earth and destroy the antichrist and his army. Does it?

Logically, it can only refer to the Rapture -- that is the only 'second coming unto salvation' alluded to by Scripture. The dead in Christ are resurrected, then we are changed into our resurrection bodies, and we all meet the Lord in the air.

And then what?

Paul outlines the exact sequence. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* (2nd Corinthians 5:10)

THIS is the place where the Scriptures say that our works have relevance.

"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." (1st Corinthians 3:13-15)

This the Bema Seat of Christ, so-called because the judgment is not whether or not one is saved or damned. That judgment takes place here. That judgment is in this earth and this life. That judgment is in your heart and soul.

You are already judged NOW.

It is not a future judgment. If you are Christ's, you are as securely saved as if you were ALREADY in heaven. If you are lost, it is not a case that you WILL BE lost.

You are lost NOW.

It has nothing to do with being good or bad. It has to do with trusting in one's own righteousness or trusting in the righteousness of Christ.

(Let me make it simple. If you are trusting in being good to get to heaven, you aren't going there.)

That is what the second coming unto salvation refers to . . . the gathering of the saints to the Bema Seat for judgment.

This is another reason why I believe the Bible supports a pre-tribulation Rapture. The Bema Seat judgment MUST take place AFTER the Rapture. Our lives are not judged at the moment they are concluded. The influence of a man's life lives on long after he does.

How could the Apostle John be adequately judged for his rewards in the first century, when his life ended? Or John the Baptist? The influence of their lives is still affecting the Church. Their rewards are still being calculated.

That is also why the Great White Throne Judgment is reserved until the final hours of human history before the new heavens and new earth. It will take that long to calculate the measure of evil perpetrated by guys like Hitler or Stalin. (Think of it as compound interest.)

Paul writes to Timothy; *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom. . ."* (4:1)

Do you see the two separate judgments here? One is for the 'quick' -- the other is for the 'dead'. One takes place at His 'appearing' and the other takes place at 'His Kingdom.'

The 'quick' are the saved. The 'dead' are the lost. The quick are judged at the Bema Seat. The lost are judged at the Great White Throne.

("But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.")

The saved are judged for rewards, including a special crown of righteousness reserved "on that day" for those who love His appearing (2nd Timothy 4:8)

Here's what I want you to see. As in the case of the twenty-four elders, the second that we remove the doctrine eternal security or a pre-Tribulation Rapture from the narrative, it all gets too complicated to follow.

Absent the doctrine of eternal security, what does 1st Corinthians 3:15; ("*yet he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire*") mean? Absent the pre-Trib Rapture, the judgment of the "quick at His appearing" (2nd Timothy 4:8) doesn't make much sense either.

Which then means we have to come up with a whole new timeline. Or else allegorize away the one that exists, giving rise to the question, "why give one?" since the Scripture most certainly does.

The whole body of Scripture, as it pertains to judgment, separates the light from the darkness, the wheat from the chaff, the saved from the lost and the Church from the judgment due those that dwell upon the earth.

First comes the Rapture, then the Bema Seat, then the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. That is the type set forth since Genesis 1:4 -- God creates the light, judges the light, separates the light from darkness.

On the earth comes the judgment on the darkness; the Tribulation, the antichrist, the Mark, scary monsters, pestilences, persecution, death and the war of Armageddon.

Then comes the 2nd Coming of Christ.

Then comes the Millennium.

If the timeline is otherwise, we need to allegorize and spiritualize the true meaning of 1st Thessalonians 4:18, since its apparent meaning must obviously be some unfortunate translation:

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1st Thessalonians 4:18)