

# The Judgment Seat of Christ

## I. A Most Controversial Subject

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There hasn't been as much controversy over any subject as there has been over the return of the Lord. There is so much division within the body of Christ. But as we draw closer to the return of the Lord there is such a sense of urgency that a great unity is developing and evangelism is spreading today because of it. There is a greater awareness that Jesus Christ is returning, yet there is still so much conflicting doctrine floating around. We need to study it from the Word of God and make it crystal clear as to where we stand as a church.

Some believe only part of the Church is going to meet Jesus in the rapture. Others teach that none of the Church will go. Some believe the rapture will take place halfway into the tribulation and others believe the rapture won't be until the end of the tribulation. I am firmly convinced the entire Church, the entire body of Christ, will see Jesus when He returns for us and the time period is imminent. I believe Jesus is coming before the tribulation and the church will not see the time of wrath that Christ-rejecting people will experience. Jesus is going to protect us from that time and then we will return with Him at the end of that time to establish the millennial reign of a thousand years of peace and righteousness on this earth.

Satan would love nothing more than for people to think there is no rapture and there is no hope, so we might as well grit our teeth and endure the tribulation. There is not one teaching in all of the epistles that instructs the Church on how to go through the tribulation. If we are to go through the tribulation, there would be some teaching on it. Yes, we have afflictions in this lifetime, but the pressures, the trials, and the catastrophes we face are nothing compared to what is coming on this earth during that time of the outpouring of the wrath of God. I don't plan to be here.

## II. His Sheep Hear His Voice

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**John 10:1-5, 27:**

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

*But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

*To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

*And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

We are sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ. The local church is a representative of a part of the body of Christ. It is a small picture of the entire church. The pastor is the shepherd of the sheep in his congregation, but his role of shepherd is not possible without the Great Shepherd — Jesus Christ. Just like the congregation hears the voice of their pastor, we hear His voice down inside of us. Why? Because we are His sheep and we know His voice.

Have you ever tried to explain to someone how God spoke to you? They didn't hear anything, so you tell them He spoke to you down on the inside. They don't hear His voice because they are not His sheep, but when the devil speaks, they hear because he is their shepherd and they follow him.

You can be in the middle of a noisy street, cars honking, music blaring, and you'll hear when Jesus speaks to you because He doesn't speak through human ears; He speaks on the inside of you. You can be surrounded by confusion, yet still hear the voice of the Lord. He is leading you; He is guiding you; you are His sheep.

Shepherds have specific signals, or sounds, that only their sheep know. When the shepherd makes that sound, his sheep recognize the signal and no other sheep will respond to that signal. It's been told that several shepherds can gather their flocks together and while the shepherds are taking a lunch break, the sheep will intermingle with the other flocks. Since sheep are not branded, how is a shepherd supposed to distinguish his sheep from the rest of them? When it is time for that shepherd to leave, he stands up and makes his one signal. Only his sheep raise their heads. All the other sheep just keep on grazing like nothing happened. As the shepherd begins to walk away, his sheep make their way from the midst of all the other flocks and follow their shepherd over the hill.

We are in the world, but not of the world. Our citizenship is in heaven and Jesus' sheep know His voice. When Jesus Christ descends from heaven, He's going to descend with a shout and only His sheep will raise their heads and follow Him as He leads us back to heaven. The world won't see anything or hear anything. All they'll know is one minute you were standing there and next minute you were gone.

### **III. The First Coming — The Rapture**

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There are two comings of the Lord. One is *for* His Church and one is *with* His Church. Jesus could return at any moment with one purpose in mind — to bring us together and take us to heaven into His presence. Then the seven-year tribulation is going to break out onto the earth and at the end of that time, Jesus is going to return again for the world. But this time, He's coming back with His Church.

Scriptures on the rapture are found only in the epistles. Jesus didn't teach on the rapture in the four Gospels. There is no teaching on the rapture in the Old Testament because the rapture is part of the mystery, that which has been revealed in this dispensation, in these latter days.

### **Philippians 3:20-21:**

*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

*Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

The Greek word for *conversation* is *citizenship*. We are *citizens* of another planet — heaven. We are only ambassadors on this planet. We are to look for our Savior in heaven. That is where He's coming back for us. When the rapture occurs, He will appear in the sky where we will rise to meet Him in the air and return to heaven where He will be seated again at the Throne of God. There we will receive our glorified bodies, just like His. Death cannot hold it back.

At the Second Coming, He will come *through* the sky and literally touch the earth at the Mount of Olives. This time, He will be seated in Jerusalem and will rule on the earth for one thousand years, and you and I will rule and reign with Him.

If you have been born again, death has been pushed away. You may have to face physical death, but it's no longer an enemy; it's merely a doorway for entering into heaven.

Perhaps you have had loved ones die. Death is not the final victory. The final victory is right here when Jesus Christ returns and those who have gone through the door will come back through the door of death. They will take that old body and it will be resurrected into a new body. They will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Not only will *they* receive a new body, so will *we* who are alive and remain here in this earth.

The rapture is not something you work for. It's not a reward. It is a sovereign act of God that will occur whether you want it to or not. We are all going to be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. Some people think the rapture is something you work for and if your life is good enough, you can make it in the rapture. But the rapture is not just for those who are alive at this time; it is for all those who have died previously. If it was by works and not a

sovereign act of God, then they would have to be resurrected by their works and not by a sovereign act of God. Your works are not going to stop God from coming and they are not going to stop you from going in the rapture. All works will be handled before the Judgment Seat of Christ and the rapture is one act of God to get everyone together — past and present — so we can be judged at the same moment. All of the vile bodies of all the saints will be changed. The whole body will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. He won't judge part of the body and part of it still be on Earth.

## **IV. The Judgment Seat of Christ**

### **Colossians 3:1-4:**

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.  
Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

*For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.*

Notice the word *appear*. At the rapture of the church, Jesus Christ *appears* in the sky for us, and then shall we also *appear* with Him in glory. It's not saying only some of us will appear with Him in glory.

### **1 John 3:1-2:**

*Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

The world does not know us. It is amazing that the Church is here, yet the world refused to accept it. Over the past few years, we have seen more and more conservatives and Christians get elected into

government offices, we have seen Mel Gibson's *The Passion of Christ* become a blockbuster movie, and the world is trying to make excuses as to why and we, the Church, *know* why. The Church has finally gotten off its seat and is doing something. We have finally become unified before the Lord comes.

We're not going to wait to be the sons of God when we get to heaven. We are the sons of God now. If we aren't the sons of God now, we won't be the sons of God in heaven.

We should be gaining more spiritual knowledge each day. The Church is getting better and better. Yet there is coming a time when we will be changed. This mortal shall put on immortality. This corruptible shall put on incorruption. We will be taken off the earth and ushered into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of the rapture is to gather us all together so God can get us in His presence and judge us all at the same time. Carnal, spiritual, in-between — our works will be judged. Salvation won't be the issue, it will be our works done on Earth.

## **V. Changed Into a Resurrected Body**

We won't stand before God in this body we have right now. It will have to be changed into one just like Jesus has — a resurrection body that death can't hold back.

When Jesus arose from hell, when it was finished, He came into that grave, found that resurrection body, and was instantly changed. The grave clothes couldn't hold Him back. He went right through them and walked out of that cave. A few days later He walked into a room where the disciples were and walked right through the wall because nothing can hold back a resurrection body. Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives before the day of Pentecost and ascended up into the sky. He went directly through space, entered in to the third heaven, and there He was seated at the right hand of the Father. A resurrected body can go through space. I'm thoroughly convinced that God made the entire universe for us, but we won't be able to fully enjoy it until we get our resurrection body.

People often ask what we'll do in heaven forever and ever. "Are we just going to stand there in heaven and praise God?" We'll praise God forever and ever, but we won't be confined to heaven. We can be on Jupiter and praise Him. We can be in some other galaxy and praise Him. Why? Because we have a resurrection body, and God gave us the universe to enjoy. Scientists say it's getting bigger all the time. God made that for us! That's part of the privilege of having a resurrection body.

## **VI. Presented Without Spot or Wrinkle**

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### **Ephesians 5:25-27:**

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it [her].*

*That he might sanctify and cleanse it [her] with the washing of the water by the word,*

*That he might present it [her] to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will present the Church to Himself, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle. This isn't going to take place until the wedding coronation in heaven when we are presented before the Lord, holy, without blemish, without spot, and without wrinkle. At that time, Jesus Christ will take His bride and we will be presented before Him, holy and blemish-free.

This verse does not say that Jesus Christ is coming back for a Church without spot or wrinkle like many preach. We will not be without spot or wrinkle until we are presented before Him in heaven and have gone through the Judgment Seat of Christ. In the meantime, the Church on Earth still has spots, wrinkles, and blemishes. But it doesn't stop Jesus Christ from returning for us. If Jesus had to wait until the Church was without spot or wrinkle, He would never come back. The spots and wrinkles will be taken out by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

## **Jude 24:**

*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

We will be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. In the meantime, He is able to keep us from falling until He presents us. This isn't giving us an excuse to go out and live wild and loose. When I think about the Lord's coming, that doesn't make me want to go out and sin. It makes me want to lead someone to the Lord.

First John 3:3 says that if we have this hope within us, we purify ourselves, even as we are pure. We want everyone to be taken into heaven.

Can we get rid of spots and wrinkles while on this earth? Yes, we have that privilege. We can keep ourselves spotless and without blemish, but not without 1 John 1:9, because we still make mistakes. But with 1 John 1:9, we can ask the Lord to forgive us, and He cleanses us and removes all unrighteousness from us. I don't want a whole lot of blemishes when I get to heaven.

## **VII. Building Upon the Foundation of Jesus Christ**

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-12:**

*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.*

Jesus Christ is the foundation in our lives, but every man needs to take heed how he builds on that foundation. God laid that foundation in your life. Then He gave the Word of God, which is the building material. Get the building material into your heart. Build on

that foundation with the principles of the Word of God. God is not going to do it for you, you need to do that yourself.

In verse 12, *man* is singular. We're often tempted to think, "I am the one building up the gold, silver, and precious stones. It's my wife who is building up the wood, hay, and stubble." Or, "It's my husband," or "It's my mother-in-law." No, this verse is saying we have all built some wood, hay, and stubble in our lifetime. There are times we've tried to pull the wool over God's eyes and convince Him we were alright. But God is not mocked. Whatever we sow, we will also reap. If we sow to the flesh, we're going to reap corruption. The corruption described here is wood, hay, and stubble.

### **1 Corinthians 3:13-14:**

*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.*

This verse is not saying that only those who build up gold, silver, and precious stones will go to heaven. The time period we're talking about is when we will be brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ, where our works will be judged. The foundation will be rolled out along with our works. Our *works* are going to be tried. Fire won't descend upon us; it will descend upon our *works*.

This isn't a judgment of whether or not we're going to heaven, because we're already in heaven, standing before the Throne of God in a resurrection body. Heaven was a one-way ticket put in our pocket when we were born again. God said, "You're already seated with Me in heavenly places. Now act like it." But what if we don't act like it? Then we're going to build up a lot of wood, hay, and stubble. We will still go to heaven, but we're going to lose rewards when we get to heaven.

The Judgment Seat of Christ is the last purification process for us. Our first purification process was inward when we got born again. The next one will be at the rapture of the Church when our bodies

will be purified. The last thing to be purified will be our works before the Throne of God.

What happens to the wood, hay, and stubble when the fire hits it? It's going to be gone. What are we going to receive? Rewards. The wood, hay, and stubble are the wrinkles, spots, and blemishes. Once they are burned up, only the gold, silver, and precious stones will remain. This is the glorious Church standing before His presence as He has burned out all the wrinkles, spots, and unnecessary works.

I don't want much wood, hay, and stubble when I get to heaven. I want to make sure my sins are forgiven while I'm still here. If I do something wrong, I say, "Lord, forgive me of that." I want to enter with an abundance of gold, silver, and precious stones on my foundation. I want to contribute to the brilliance of heaven.

### **1 Corinthians 3:15:**

*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

What if all a person has are wood, hay, and stubble? He'll get into heaven without any gold, silver, and precious stones. He won't be on the earth going through the tribulation; he'll be in heaven with the entire Church going through the last purification rite. Then the honeymoon will begin — a thousand years of peace on earth. We're going to come back with Him and rule and reign in righteousness. The better you do *now*, the more you'll have to rule and reign over *then*. If you have been a faithful follower over a few things here, He'll make you ruler over many things there.

We're seeing the Church grow bigger by the day. We're seeing the Church do more things and get more people saved than ever before. But keep in mind we are still in the devil's world. Yes, we've made a marked influence on this earth, but the Bible has more to say about what the devil is going to do. However, I'm not concerned with what the devil is going to do because I know what Jesus is going to do. We're on Jesus' side, not the devil's side. While we still have time on this earth, we need to get more people off the devil's

side and onto Jesus' side. We need to lead more people into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.