Lesson 21 - The Pre-Advent Judgment



In our last study, we discovered that the sanctuary was God's show and tell of the entire plan of redemption. In the next few studies, which will end these series of Bible lessons, we will consider what the sanctuary truth reveals about the closing events of this earth's history. The purpose of these studies is to strengthen your faith in Christ and prepare you for the final crisis that will transpire prior to the Second Advent and the end of the world.

One of the events that will take place before Christ comes to take believers to heaven is the vindication of the saints against the accusations of the devil. The Bible tells us that Satan is “the accuser of the brethren...which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10). In the battle for souls, Satan is determined that none of the believers make it to heaven.

Therefore, before the Second Advent can take place, Christ, our great and faithful High Priest, has to vindicate the saints in the judgment. This is part of the good news of salvation. The Pre- Advent Judgment of the saints is often referred to as the Investigative Judgment, and is what we will examine in this study.

1. What change takes place in our status when we believe in Christ? John 5:24

As we discovered in Lesson 5 (especially Questions 2-9), at the cross the entire human race was executed in Christ, our Substitute. Because of this supreme sacrifice, every sinner who receives Christ by faith passes from death (condemnation) to life (justification). This is what righteousness by faith is all about.

2. Do believers have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Romans 14:10

Since believers have already passed from condemnation to justification, the question is often asked, Why do believers have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Is it because God needs to investigate our cases to see whether we qualify for heaven? Of course not! He who does not forget a sparrow and who has numbered the hairs of our heads (Luke 12:6, 7) also knows who are His (2 Timothy 2:19). Believers stand before the judgment seat of Christ because they are being accused (see the next question). Since God is just (Romans 3:26), He will not simply bring believers to heaven, while ignoring the accusations of Satan. If He did not clear Satan's accusations against the saints in a pre-advent judgment, God would appear to be arbitrary in justifying some while not justifying others. Because God is just, He reveals the secret thoughts and motives of even the ungodly who believe on Him (Romans 4:5) - not to condemn them, but to clear their names forevermore. This "evidence" will be made available for the saints to review during the millennium (See Lesson 24: Question 16). If God did not do so, Satan would have a legitimate claim against God for not bringing him to heaven, too.

3. Who accuses the believers and how often does he do this? Revelation 12:10

4. Who is on the believers' side in this controversy over the saints? Romans 8:31

What Paul is saying here is that since God is on the believers' side, it does not matter who is against us. As we shall see, all three members of the Godhead are on the side of believers. This is indeed good news!

5. How do we know that God the Father is on the believers' side? Romans 8:32

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus earnestly pleaded with His Father, "If it is Your will, take this cup away from Me…" (Luke 22:42). The cup He was referring to was the curse of the law against us (see Galatians 3:13). Although Jesus sweated blood when making this earnest request, the Father's reply was "No!" Because of His great love for mankind, God spared not His Son. Without the cross mankind could not be justified (Romans 8:33).

6. How do we know that Christ is on the side of the believers? Roman 8:34

In Christ, we not only have a perfect Savior but also a High Priest who intercedes for us. He will defend us against all the accusations of Satan, now and in the Pre-Advent Judgment (see 1 John 2:1).

7. What testimony does the Holy Spirit bear to every believer? Romans 8:16

This is clear evidence that even the Holy Spirit is on the side of the believers. Therefore, as Christians we have nothing to fear in the Pre-Advent Judgment because all three persons of the Godhead - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - are on the side of the believers. With such a defense on our side, we can be sure that Satan has no chance in the judgment to win his case against us.

8. According to Peter, with whom does the final judgment begin? 1 Peter 4:17

The term "house of God" refers to believers, all those who by faith have accepted Christ as their personal Savior and whose names are written in the Book of Life. In this judgment, Satan is the accuser and Christ is our advocate.

9. What will be exposed in the judgment of the believers? 1 Corinthians 4:5

We humans judge each other by our outward acts, but God judges us by the desires of the heart. Unfortunately, our acts often contradict the desires of the heart (see Romans 7:15-23). This is part of our Christian struggle.

10. Besides saving us, what were we created in Christ to do? Ephesians 2:10

Not only did Christ save us from death to life, i.e., from condemnation to justification, but also from a life of sin to a life of good works. These works of faith do not save us, but they are the evidence of our salvation. Christ will bring them up in the judgment as a witness of our faith (see Matthew 25:31-36).

11. What is dead if we do not produce good works? James 2:17

Genuine justification by faith always produces good works. However, the believer may not be aware of these good works since they are the fruits of the Holy Spirit (see Matthew 25:37-40).

12. Who profits from the good works of believers? Titus 3:8

Good works do not save us, but they do give evidence to others that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. People judge us by our behavior, and they must see the love of Christ manifested in every believer.

13. What did Christ say is the greatest proof of genuine Christianity? John 13:34, 35

The greatest proof we Christians can give to the world that we are Christ's disciples is our selfless love for one another. According to the Bible, such love is the true keeping of the law (see Galatians 5:13, 14).

14. How is a person justified before God? Romans 3:28

Justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Our law-keeping does not save us, but is the evidence of our salvation. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15, 1 John 3:24, 5:1-3).

15. How will we be judged in the Pre-Advent Judgment? Ecclesiastes 12:14

The Bible clearly teaches that believers are justified by faith apart from any good works they do (see Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5). Yet they are judged and rewarded according to their works (see Matthew 16:27; John 5:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 5:10). How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? This will be answered in the next few questions.

16. How is God glorified by Christians? Matthew 5:14-16

As Christians, we are to be the light of the world. It is not by our words that we give evidence of this but by our works (see 1 Corinthians 4:20). Jesus said that the world will know us by our fruits or works (see Matthew 7:16-20).

17. What should be peculiar about God's redeemed people? Titus 2:14

18. What did the works of Abraham prove? James 2:22

Abraham's works proved that his faith was genuine. In the same way, works of faith will be used as evidence by Christ to vindicate the believers in the Pre-Advent Judgment.

19. What kind of works will not justify a person before God? Galatians 2:16

We must not confuse works of faith, which are the fruits of the gospel, with works of the law. The phrase "works of the law" always refers to good works or law-keeping in order to earn salvation. In English, we call it legalism. In contrast, "works of faith" are the fruits of the Spirit. While these fruits do not contribute toward our salvation, they do give evidence of it. That is why they will be brought up in the judgment as evidence to prove a believer's justification by faith.

20. How many will stand before the judgment seat of God? Daniel 7:10

Daniel is here describing the Pre-Advent Judgment of the believers. While they themselves will not be physically present, they will be represented by their great High Priest and Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous One. This is illustrated beautifully in Zechariah 3:1-4. Joshua, who represents the people, was clothed in filthy rags, but Jesus vindicates God's people in Joshua. Jesus tells Joshua that He has removed the iniquity from him and will clothe him with rich robes, which represents His righteousness. That is the vindication of God's people in the Pre-Advent Judgment. Note that Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus. In Christ our sins have been removed. We must make this truth ours individually, by faith.

21. In this Pre-Advent Judgment of the saints, who will be vindicated? Daniel 7:22

Praise God, the verdict in the Pre-Advent Judgment will be in favor of the saints! That is why, when we truly understand the love of God and His saving grace, all fear of the judgment will be removed (see 1 John 4:16-18).

22. What will the saints receive once the Pre-Advent Judgment is over? Daniel 7:27

This is the consummation of the ages, the blessed hope of all believers. The Pre-Advent Judgment will be followed by the Second Advent when God will usher in His everlasting kingdom of peace and righteousness. Praise God!

My Response to Lesson 21

• The whole purpose of the "Pre-Advent Judgment" is to vindicate believers against the accusations of Satan. This is necessary before Christ can come to take them to heaven. Do you accept this doctrine as part of the plan of salvation?

Response: _____

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Lesson 21, Supplement - Why a Pre-Advent Judgment?

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Why a Pre-Advent Judgment?

THANKS GUYS, I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR COMING OUT TO REVIEW LESSON 21 OF THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD BIBLE COURSE WITH ME TODAY. IT SURE SOUNDED LIKE GOOD NEWS, BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT, I AM A LITTLE CONFUSED. I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY I HAVE TO BE JUDGED. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT THAT "THE LORD KNOWS WHO ARE HIS" (2 TIMOTHY 2:19), SO HE WILL

SIMPLY REWARD THEM WHEN THEY DIE AND GO TO HEAVEN. WAIT A MINUTE... LET ME CORRECT MYSELF... I MEAN, "AT HIS SECOND COMING." I REMEMBER WE STUDIED THAT IN LESSONS 12 AND 17.

I'M GLAD WE'RE TALKING MORE ABOUT THIS, BECAUSE NOW I REMEMBER ANOTHER VERSE (JOHN 10:14) WHERE JESUS CALLED HIMSELF THE GOOD SHEPHERD. HE SAID THAT HE KNEW HIS SHEEP. ISN'T THAT SUFFICIENT? SO WHY DOES GOD HAVE TO BE SO FORMAL IN JUDGING US?

Lee, you are absolutely right! God knows who are His. But do I detect a little fear in that voice of yours, or are you really

wondering why God is particular about how He judges us? Donna

A LITTLE OF BOTH, I SUPPOSE. I MEAN, I ALWAYS FELT GOOD ABOUT NOT NEEDING TO FACE "THE JUDGE," BUT I'VE KIND OF LOST THE "WARM AND FUZZIES," NOW THAT I REALIZE THAT WE SHALL ALL STAND BEFORE THE

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST (LESSON 21: QUESTION 2). OBVIOUSLY THAT MEANS ME, TOO! AND SINCE YOU ASKED, DONNA, I FIGURE THAT SINCE GOD IS ALL- KNOWING, WHY GO THROUGH ALL THE HASSLE OF JUDGING EVERYONE?

You and many other people share these same concerns. They feel uncomfortable about standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Why? Because they feel inadequate, naked so to speak. That's because so many people believe that the ultimate deciding factor in determining their eternal fate is their performance. Pardon my forthrightness, Lee, but that's legalism, and it's poison.

Tina

As Christians, we must realize what the apostle John tells us in 1 John 4:17-19, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." In other words, when the Father sees us, He sees Jesus because we two are one.

Remember what we studied way back in Lesson 6? In Question 12 of that lesson, we saw that by Christ's perfect life and sacrificial death we stand complete in Him. In Question 21 we saw that while we believers do not condone sin, we still possess

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sinful natures and in a weak moment may fall. Then what? Are we deprived of justification? No, we have an advocate. Then in Question 22 we saw that the first fruit of being justified by faith was peace with God. Peace means no fear, and that is what the very next two verses of 1 John 4 (that we didn't finish reading a second ago) say. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears (or I might say he who lacks faith) has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

Sounds great,

Because this is so important, is it OK if I rehash more material that we covered in our earlier studies?

Donna!

Great! We saw that by nature as well as by performance, we are sinners and deserve death (Lesson 3: Question 9). Even the apostle Paul admitted that he was a sinner in need of a Savior (Lesson 1: Question 19). Lee, salvation is by grace alone in what Christ has done (Lesson 3: Question 8). It's a free gift that comes through the life and death of Jesus Christ (Lesson 3: Question 10).

Without Christ, we stand condemned to eternal death and therefore live in fear of the judgment.

But the moment we are born again, we pass from death to life (Lesson 8: Question 9). We receive the free wedding garments that give us entrance into God's eternal kingdom. We studied this in "The Courtyard" section of the sanctuary walkthrough (Lesson 20: Supplement). But remember, even though as Christians we stand justified by faith in Christ, we are still sinners in ourselves and Satan accuses us before God day and night (Lesson 20: Question 14). Praise the Lord, we can boldly enter God's presence through our High Priest, Jesus Christ (Lesson 20: Supplement, "7 -The Inner Veil").

Let me close by asking you a question. Can you say for certain that you have eternal life and that you will stand in the judgment? Before you answer, let me ask you the question that was posed in Lesson 3: Question 13: "What assurance does John give to those who believe in Christ?" When we studied that a few months ago, you read 1 John 5:13 aloud. Will you read that verse again, please?

GLADLY! IN FACT, I THINK I REMEMBER THE VERSE, BUT LET ME LOOK IT UP AGAIN TO BE SURE. HERE IT IS. "THESE THINGS I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD,

THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, AND THAT YOU MAY CONTINUE TO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."

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WOW, THAT'S GREAT! I CAN SEE THAT I NEED TO BECOME MORE GROUNDED IN THE WORD OF GOD AND NOT RELY SO MUCH ON MY FEELINGS.

TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, "YES, I AM SURE THAT I WILL STAND IN THE JUDGMENT. BUT LET ME TELL YOU LADIES SOMETHING, IF I MAY. IT'S ONLY BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST THAT I WILL BE ABLE TO STAND. SO IF YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING SO, PRAISE THE LORD!

Amen! I'll second that!

NOW HOLD ON A SECOND. I DON'T THINK YOU EVER ANSWERED MY FIRST QUESTION… YOU KNOW, THE ONE RELATED TO GOD BEING HASSLED WITH A JUDGMENT. ONLY THIS TIME I'M NOT ASKING BECAUSE I FEAR THE JUDGMENT, BUT BECAUSE I WANT TO HAVE AN ANSWER FOR MY FAITH.

YOU SEE, WITH ALL THIS TALK OF THE JUDGMENT, I REMEMBER WHAT I ONCE HEARD A PREACHER SAY A FEW YEARS AGO. HE SAID THAT THE PRE-ADVENT JUDGMENT (ACTUALLY HE CALLED IT THE "INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT") CONTRADICTED THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH. BUT FROM WHAT I RECALL, HE LINKED THIS TEACHING WITH THE BELIEF THAT WHEN YOU FIRST COME TO CHRIST, GOD JUSTIFIES YOU. JUSTIFICATION IS SUPPOSEDLY THE FORGIVENESS OF PAST SINS ONLY. SOMETHING LIKE GOD WIPES THE SLATE CLEAN, AND THEN GOD HELPS US BE GOOD THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT. IN THE JUDGMENT WE WILL BE SCRUTINIZED AND IF WE HAVE BEEN BAD, OR IF OUR UNCONFESSED SINS ARE GREATER THAN OUR GOOD ACTS, OR IF WE FORGOT TO CONFESS ONE SIN, WE WILL NOT PASS THE JUDGMENT.

I GUESS HIS MAIN POINT WAS THAT THE BELIEF IS THAT OUR CONDUCT WILL ULTIMATELY DECIDE IF WE ARE GOOD ENOUGH TO GO TO HEAVEN. HE CONDEMNED SUCH THINKING AS LEGALISM, WHICH I HAVE HEARD YOU SAY TODAY A COUPLE OF TIMES. YET I DON'T HEAR YOU SAYING THE THINGS HE SAID. HIS FINAL POINT WAS THAT BOTH BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS WILL BE JUDGED AT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. CAN YOU HELP ME SORT THIS ALL OUT IN MY MIND?

Wow! That's some pretty heavy stuff. You're right, or should I say he's right in having a problem with the idea that justification is the forgiveness of past sins only. We discussed how some try to use Romans 3:25 as support for this idea, but we saw the true meaning of that passage in Lesson 4: Question 5. Nowhere in the

Bible is that taught. Such teaching would imply that every

time you made a mistake you would become un-justified until you repented. In Christ one minute, out the next.

As for believers and unbelievers being judged at the Second Coming of Christ... Tell you what. Let us gather our thoughts, and when we come back next week, we'll address these questions instead of moving on to Lesson 22. Deal? Deal!

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One week later...

Donna, Tina, and Lee met at the university commons at 7:00 in the evening to grab a bite to eat. They often enjoyed the company of each other over a meal before studying the Bible together. This time Lee offered up prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide them in their study. As usual, Donna was excited about tackling the meaty issues without much delay, so she picked up where they left off in the library lobby a week ago...

Lee, Tina and I decided to split the two questions we ended

with last week. I'll address the Pre-Advent Judgment in the light of justification by faith.

OK, Ladies!

And I will address the issue of when the judgment of believers and unbelievers takes place.

You'll have to bear with me as I develop the framework for our study. I'm going to pour the cement first, and then I will do the framing. When I'm done with that, I'll finish the house. Bet you didn't think I could do that, did you?

Pouring the Cement

Let's look at the Biblical procedures for judging, which are quite similar to what we are accustomed to in even our secular society. According to Scripture, the judgment, be it of believers or unbelievers, involves three steps:

(1) The trial. For believers, this takes place before Jesus returns. As you know, before a person can be convicted there must be a trial where evidence is presented for and against the accused. Witnesses are brought forward and the jury (or judge) decides on the outcome of the case based upon the evidence, which includes the testimony of the witnesses.

We already looked up a couple of excellent verses that describe the trial in Questions 2 and 20 of Lesson 21. Let's take the latter one. I can see how people might shake in their boots if they stopped at verse 10 of Daniel 7: "...Ten thousand times ten thousand (that's 100,000,000!) stood before Him. The Court (or judgment) was seated, and the books were opened." That's phenomenal, and it's obviously a trial.

(2) The verdict. In the Bible there are two verdicts, or

outcomes. Let's look at them in Deuteronomy 25:1, "If there

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is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,..." In other words "innocent" or "guilty". That's pretty straightforward.

(3) The execution of the verdict. What do you think these two

alternatives could be?

I WOULD SAY THAT SOMEONE WILL RECEIVE EITHER A REWARD OR A PUNISHMENT.

Precisely! Let me give you an example. In Revelation 14:14-

20, the apostle John has a vision wherein he sees the earth's harvest (people) being reaped. Jesus had previously explained that as taking place at the end of the world (Matthew 13:39). Some will receive rewards (Matthew 25:34); others will receive punishments (Matthew 25:41, 46).

Rewards for the saints (believers) will be given at the Second Coming of Christ. Punishments will be meted out to the wicked (unbelievers) at the end of the thousand years, after the saints have reviewed the evidence against the unbelievers (during millennial trials, so to speak), and have concurred with God's verdict. When this second verdict is executed, it will be a sad day for all. We'll study more about this in Lesson 24.

Doing the Framing

Now that we have poured the cement, let's do some framing. We've established the three steps that comprise a judgment. Now let's look at the objective facts of the judgment, which we must be clear on, in order to understand the Pre-Advent Judgment correctly. When I say "objective judgment" I mean something that took place regarding us, but outside our personal experience.

In Romans 5:12, Paul explains the universal sin problem: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Universal sin and death entered the human race through Adam.

Then in Romans 5:16, Paul applies this where the objective facts of the judgment are brought out. "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment (verdict) which came from one offense resulted in condemnation…"

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Condemnation to how many? Romans 5:18a tells us. "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation…" Before any human being was born, the human race was already condemned because of the sin of one man. We studied this in Lesson 1: Question 5. This is an objective truth that has nothing to do with our personal experience. It is something that we inherit.

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That was the bad news. Now for the good news. In John 12:31 we read, "Now is the judgment of this world (Jesus is talking about the execution of the verdict, in other words, it is time for the world to be executed); now the ruler of this world will be cast out." How is that good news, you may ask?

Just as one objective fact is that all sinned in Adam and therefore stand condemned, the other objective fact is that the whole world was already judged, executed, in Jesus Christ. We were executed not only for Adam's sin, but for our sins, too.

When God executed Christ on the cross (Remember, that was the meaning of the cross from a Jewish perspective. See Lesson 4: Questions 12-15), He executed Him for Adam's sin plus the sins of the whole world: past, present, and future. We discussed this as we stopped in the sanctuary walkthrough at the "1 - The Altar of Burnt Offering" in Lesson 20: Supplement (green portion). This is also found in Romans 5:16b (the second half of the verse, which we never finished a couple minutes ago): "but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification."

Let's read all of Romans 5:18 now. "Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." Is this making sense?

IT IS VERY CLEAR TO ME THAT WHAT ADAM DID AND WHAT JESUS DID UNIVERSALLY AFFECTED ALL MANKIND. I WOULD, THEREFORE, SUMMARIZE THE OBJECTIVE FACTS OF THE JUDGMENT AS (1) IN ADAM, THE WHOLE WORLD STANDS JUDGED, CONDEMNED TO ETERNAL DEATH; AND (2) LIKEWISE, THE WHOLE WORLD HAS BEEN JUSTIFIED BY THE LIFE, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

I WOULD ADD THAT WHAT I JUST MENTIONED IN (2) IS THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL. I THINK I AM FINALLY BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE GOSPEL REALLY IS. SO SIMPLE, YET

SOMETIMES… WELL, I GUESS IT'S TRUE WHAT YOU HAVE SAID ABOUT NEEDING TO COME TO THE BIBLE AS A LITTLE CHILD, WITHOUT PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT WHAT'S WHAT.

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Exactly. The only difference is that what is true of us in Adam is ours by nature (we inherit it). What is true of us in Christ is not ours naturally. It is a gift, and according to Romans 5:17, only those who receive the gift of righteousness will reign in life.

Donna, and don't forget John 3:18, where Jesus says that whoever believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already.

Oooh, good verse! Thanks for the queue. Lee, Tina's right.

Jesus is saying that the reason some will be condemned is not because we are sinners. It is not because we are breaking the law.

Does that mean I can live anyway I

please?

Lee Chen, what am I going to do with you? Of course not! I'm not even going to answer that. But I will tell you that the answer can be found in Lesson 6: Question 19. (Or at Romans 6:1, 2).

Juuust Kiiidding. I thought you were going to

send me to Romans 3:8. I

couldn't resist!!

I owe you one! Back to serious stuff… The reason some are condemned is not because they are breaking the law. This is a really important point, which God has made plain in His Word. Romans 3:20, 28 and Galatians 2:16 make it absolutely clear that no one can be justified before God by the works of the law. How can God judge us for not keeping His law when He told us repeatedly that it is impossible to be saved by keeping it? The reason some are condemned is because they have deliberately rejected the gift of God.

Now check out these gems. Jesus said that every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men (people), but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men (Matthew 12:31). How so? What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? In John 16:7, 8, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin. Why? Because they do not believe in Him. The only sin that will deprive any person of being in heaven is a deliberate, willful rejection of the gospel.

Excuse me again, but I can't help but think of John 5:24, which says that he who believes Jesus' word and believes in the Father who sent the Son has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment (or really condemnation, according to the original Greek) but has passed from death into life.

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Another excellent verse, Tina! From all this, it becomes abundantly clear that the issue in the judgment will really not be the law of God, but the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Wherever the gospel is preached in its clarity, the hour of judgment has come because the moment you have clearly heard the gospel and the Holy Spirit has convicted you, you have to make a choice for or against Christ.

Finishing the House

Even though we just ate, I've practically worked up another

appetite from all this physical labor. Not easy pouring the cement and framing the house!

All right,

already!

We're almost ready to discuss why we need to go through a judgment even though we are saved by grace and we have already accepted salvation in Jesus Christ. First, we need to identify three groups of texts that are found in the Bible regarding our works relative to the judgment.

First Group of Texts

The first group of texts seems to indicate that we are saved by works. Last week, we saw that the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels (or motives) of the hearts (Lesson 21: Question 9). Oh, and there are a bunch more -

• "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10);

• "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:27);

• "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28, 29);

• And others such as 1 Peter 4:17, Revelation 20:12, and Revelation 22:12: "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

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Sounds like a

You're exactly right… if you stop there. And that's where some people stop. These poor people never have any peace or joy because they are constantly trying to prove to God that their works are good. They want to be sure they are "good enough" for heaven and (supposedly) have a little buffer zone between them and hell. Their motives are impure because first, their motivation is selflove, which we will see (in Lesson 22: Footnote 1) was at the heart of Lucifer's rebellion in heaven. Second, they are ultimately depending upon their goodness, or what Christ does through them, to earn their way into the kingdom of God.

works trip.

These people are "between a rock and a hard place," because on the one hand they are trying to get total victory over their flesh. They think this is going to give them the peace that they desperately seek. On the other hand, they don't realize that God will never give them victory if they are looking at that victory for assurance. Why? Because they are asking God to do something that contradicts His plan of salvation. Our assurance must never be in our feelings, but by faith (Romans 10:9-13; Hebrews 11:6), we must believe that what God promised, He will do.

Second Group of Texts

There is another group of texts that tell us that salvation is by grace alone without any works or any law-keeping. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28). "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). God saved us "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy…" (Titus 3:5).

Do you know what the first group of people do in an effort to maintain their own internal belief system and defend their doctrines against the people who cling to the second set of verses we just read? They attack Paul. They jump on the poor guy by using a couple of verses where Peter says that some of Paul's writings are hard to understand, and which people twist to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15, 16). They conclude that if you are using Paul to establish your understanding, you have entered into dangerous territory.

I have totally heard people say

Yeah, sure, if people are using Paul's comments such as not being under law, but under grace

that!

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(Lesson 11: Question 13) or living under liberty as a license to

sin, which you, Lee Chen, joked about a few minutes

Oops

ago. But instead of fighting Paul, who wrote about

half the books in the New Testament, they need to realize that he was set apart to proclaim the gospel (Acts 9:15; Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:11, 12; 2:7, 8, etc.). If you can't beat Paul (and you can't), why not join him?

While the people we just spoke of memorize all the verses in the Bible that agree with the first group of texts to the exclusion of the second group of texts, guess what others do?

Ignore the first group of texts

I'm afraid so. But Lee, we need to be honest with the Word of God. If we build a belief system around one group of texts and ignore another, that's the "twisting of Scripture" that Peter was talking about (in 2 Peter 3:16).

and use only the

second?

Third Group of Texts

The next obvious question is how do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory sets of verses? We can do this with a third group of texts. For example -

• We previously read Ephesians 2:8, 9. I purposely left out verse 10 to make a point here. Now let's read the whole passage together. "8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10For we are His workmanship,created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." No one can say they are going to heaven because they are good, however God prepared believers to do good works!

• We included Titus 3:5 in the second group of texts, but once again I purposely left out verse 8, which says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men."

• In Titus 2:11, Paul said that "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." That sounds like a verse that belongs to the second group of texts, saying that grace is what saves us. But look what grace also does in verse 12: "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we

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should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." And then in verse 14, "that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

What is this all saying? Genuine justification by faith always produces works.

But we must never confuse works of faith with works of the law. Externally they look the same, but they are really worlds apart. For example, let's say that Fred and Jan both tithe. We studied that in Lesson 16: Questions 12-15. Fred pays a tithe because he wants to keep his slate clean before God. Jan on the other hand returns a tithe because she recognizes that all that she has and is are God's. Jesus has purchased her with His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19), and she is returning her tithe to God as a sign of her total dependence upon Him. There is no difference in the act; the difference is in the motivation.

And Lee, so that you don't revert back to a subtle form of

legalism - I feel I can talk directly to you like this because we are friends - I need to mention that works of faith may not be the same for everybody. Jesus mentioned in the parable of the sower that all the seeds that fell on the good ground produced fruit, but some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred" (Mark 4:20).

Donna, You sure call a spade

a spade!

Oh yeah, and when a person does works of faith, he/she may not even be conscious of it. When Jesus says, "I was hungry and you gave Me food…" (Matthew 25:35-39), we will not say, "You're right, Lord, I have kept a detailed journal of all these things I did." But the legalist will say to Jesus, "Lord, have I not prophesied in Your name, and done many wonders (or wonderful works) in Your name (Matthew 7:22)? I was a deacon in the church, and I cast out devils… Notice that these are all good things, not bad things. But Jesus will say to him, "I never knew you…" (Matthew 7:23).

So Lee, don't look at your performance to see whether you are doing works of faith or works of the law. Keep your sights on Jesus and the works will take care of themselves. When we stand on the platform of "Not I, but Christ" (Lesson 7: Question 6), when we let Him take over in our lives, it is guaranteed that we will produce works because Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

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We're now ready to tackle a passage that is a stumbling block to so many people: James Chapter 2. If we read it carefully, we see that in verses 1-7, James is rebuking Christians who have failed to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ. They are still practicing discrimination.

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DONNA, THAT IS STILL TRUE TODAY OF MANY PEOPLE. THEY WEAR RELIGION ON THEIR ARM, YET THEY WON'T GO TO CHURCH WITH SOMEBODY OF ANOTHER COLOR.

IN FACT, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE LOOK "DIFFERENT", THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO

WOULD FROWN UPON THE FACT THAT YOU, TINA, AND I ARE GOOD FRIENDS.

Trust me, I know what you are talking about. But all we can do is pray for these people and pray for ourselves that we may represent Christ to them, despite how they may act toward us.

In verses 8-11, James discusses the royal law, which applies to the last six of the Ten Commandments. He is showing what it means to show the love of Jesus. He comes right out and says that if we show partiality (we might call that being racist), that's sinning (verse 9). John is also tough in this area. He says that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15).

Now we come to a favorite verse of those who believe that they will be judged by the law. "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). The Bible defines the law by itself as a yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1). The law of liberty is the gospel. The issue is, "What have we done with the gift of God, Jesus Christ?"

In John 8:32, Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (or shall set you at liberty)." He then defines truth: "If the Son (not the law) makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Now let's see what Paul says about this liberty. "Now the Lord is the Spirit (i.e., the Holy Spirit represents the Lord), and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

And he tells us what this liberty does for us: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror (or reflecting) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

When Moses came down from Sinai after being given the Ten Commandments, the people could not look at his face because of

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the glory of the Ten Commandments (2 Corinthians 3:7). But Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:16 that when we come to Christ, the veil is removed. You are now free! You can come to God with a clear conscience, without guilt (Hebrews 10:22). Your sins are washed away through Jesus Christ.

James 2:17, 20 sum up all of James 2:14-26 by saying that faith without works is dead. James then gives an example of how Abraham was justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar (James 2:21). Wow! Does this contradict justification by faith? Let's see.

When was righteousness accounted to Abraham? When he believed God. James says that in verse 23. What was it that Abram (Abraham) believed? That God would give him an heir from his own body, and that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:4-6).

In other words, when was Abraham justified by faith? When, at approximately 120 years of age, he offered up Isaac, as some would suggest James 2:21 to say? Or at 75 years old, when he believed that God would give him a son (Genesis 12:4, 7)?

James is simply defending the true meaning of justification by faith, which Paul also defends, i.e., that genuine justification by faith produces works.

Abraham was justified by faith when he was 75 years old, when he believed God. But he was justified by works when he was 120. This simply means that his justification was revealed when he offered up Isaac. James is saying that Abraham's works did not save him, they did not make him righteous, but they proved that he was already righteous by faith. Perhaps this is best summarized in verse 22: "Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" Abraham's faith was proven in that act, not his righteousness.

Conclusion

Let me now conclude the question you had last week, when you mentioned hearing a pastor say that the Pre-Advent (or Investigative) Judgment contradicted Justification by Faith.

Does it? No way. In Lesson 13: Questions 16-19, we saw that all three members of the Godhead are on our side. But we have an accuser (Satan), who accuses us "before our God day and

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night" (Revelation 12:9, 10), even when we are sleeping.

Here's the crux of the matter. Our sins do not make us

sinners. That's the "cart before the horse." They only prove what we already are. An apple tree is an apple tree, whether it has apples on it or not. And we are still sinners to our dying day, whether we have experienced thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold victory.

When Satan comes to us to tell us we are not good enough for heaven, we agree. But then we defend ourselves by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). We tell him to get behind us, because Jesus died for our sins!

That's our defending ourselves here. But in heaven, there comes a time, praise the Lord, when my name, your name will come up in the Pre-Advent Judgment. Perhaps it already has come up. We won't know when it happens.

Remember, God is just. We discussed that in Lesson 21: Question 2 (Note). He doesn't just ignore Satan's accusations against us. So what God will do is use our works - not to prove our righteousness or salvation - but to prove our faith. Once He has proven our faith, our great High Priest will have defended us, because this will have proven our union with Christ. Since Satan cannot find a single flaw in Christ, he can no longer find fault with us. And so shall those words be echoed once and for all, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan!... Is this not a brand plucked from the fire" (Zechariah 3:2)? The Lord rebuke you, Satan!

And that, my friend, is the Pre-Advent Judgment in complete harmony with the precious doctrine of Justification by Faith.

AMEN! YOU KNOW, THIS IS REALLY AWESOME! THIS MESSAGE IS WORTH

UNDERSTANDING SO I CAN TELL SOMEBODY ELSE ABOUT THE WONDERFUL GOOD NEWS OF THE JUDGMENT MYSELF. I CAN'T BELIEVE I AM ACTUALLY SAYING THIS!

There's nothing better than serving the Lord, Lee! I'm really excited about hearing you say that you want to tell others what wonderful things the Lord has done for you.

And with that, guys, I've got to run. My night class starts in 7 minutes. Lee, since I didn't get a chance to answer your last

Great

question, why don't you join Donna and me at our picnic Saturday afternoon - 2:00 at Mirror Lake. Over lunch, I'll cover the material I was going to present today.

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Saturday Afternoon at Mirror Lake...

What an awesome day for a picnic and a Bible study! Like the last time the trio got together, they began with food, and after they had eaten their last raspberry for dessert, Tina asked Donna to pray to begin their study.

Lee, what Donna covered last meeting was excellent! It was really the "main course", which I just enjoyed listening to. That topic never gets old with me.

I would classify today's topic as a side dish - something that I hope will complement the main dish. It relates to the timing of the judgment in relation to other events.

You mentioned that you had heard both believers and unbelievers will be judged at the Second Coming of Christ. What we have to remember is that God does not work in the context of time, but in the context of eternity.

Often in the Bible He will weave two or more thoughts together. Let's take the disciples' question as to when Jerusalem would be destroyed and when Jesus' coming would be (Matthew 24:1-3). Here are two distinct events, separated by almost 2000 years at least, and Jesus lumped them together in His response which encompassed all of Chapter 24 and beyond.

The pastor you heard was right in that there are many texts in the New Testament which imply that the judgment of believers and unbelievers will take place at the same time, but we will dig a little deeper to discover that they are in fact separate events.

Let's start by looking at when the rewards for the believers are handed out. Revelation 22:12 says, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me..." If the reward to the believers takes place at the

Second Coming of Christ, the trial and the verdict, which Donna spoke of last time, must take place prior to the Second Coming.

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Another thing is that the Bible never teaches that when Christ comes the second time, He will be our Advocate. It actually says the very opposite, that Christ will appear a second time apart from sin, for salvation (Hebrews 9:28). He will have already dealt with sin in terms of our justification in heaven. We have an advocate now, but when Christ comes the second time, He will come as King and Lord (Revelation 19:16). In addition, the Bible indicates that the judgment of believers will be pre-advent. Donna touched upon some of this last time when she referred to Daniel Chapter 7. If you look, you'll notice that all three steps of the judgment are addressed. The trial is mentioned in verses 9 and 10. The verdict is in verse 22. And the execution of the verdict (in this case the reward, because it applies to the believers) is found in verses 26 and 27. This is consistent with Peter's statement in the New Testament that judgment begins at the house of God. We already looked at that in Lesson 21: Question 8. I could stop right here, but are you interested in finding out more specifically when the Pre-Advent Judgment began? Excellent! But I have to confess that I'm not going to give you the answer on a platter. I will give you some clues, and you are going to have to do some digging to find the treasure.

Sure!

Aw, That's

no fun!

Believe it or not, it's very fun. It's kind of like doing

detective work in your Bible. Let me get on my soapbox for a minute. There is only one solid platform you can stand on for your spiritual authority. That's the Bible. It's not Donna's word, my word, some preacher's word or anybody's church's word. You, Lee Chen, are going to have to take the approach that the reformers took to lead us out of the oppressive Dark Ages, when the Word of God was kept out of the hands of laypeople like you and me. You're going to have to search the Bible for yourself and know that what you believe has its foundation there and nowhere else. You must never let any authority or ecclesiastical body sway you to follow them unless they can back up everything they do from the Bible. Back to the clues. They relate to the Book of Daniel. Here they are…

1. Daniel employs the principle of parallelism as he repeats historical events, through his various chapters, from different perspectives. You will find parallels in Chapters 2, 7, and 8.

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2. The stone that was cut out without human hands in Daniel Chapter 2 is the event that parallels the key events in Chapters 7 and 8. 3. The starting point for the judgment is found in Daniel, Chapter 8, by way of parallel application to Chapter 7.

4. You will have to read to the end of Daniel Chapter 9 to find the event that marks the starting point for what will be a time period that you will have to calculate (this is closely linked to clue 3). You see, there was some major "unfinished business" in Chapter 8 that Daniel was "dying" to understand. He was "left hanging" for several years, until he received his clues in Daniel 9.

5. You will need to become familiar with the Book of Ezra in order to discern which event Daniel 9 is discussing. 6. You are going to have to brush up on your history of Western Civilization to assign "real live" dates to the years of kings you will encounter in the Book of Ezra.

7. Oooh, last clue: You will have to apply the principle found in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 to calculate the year properly. I'll give you a week to figure out the starting point for the judgment, that's if you are up to the challenge, of course.

LET ME GIVE IT A SHOT! TINA, DONNA, I AM SERIOUS ABOUT LEARNING THIS MATERIAL. THE ETERNAL VALUE OF WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY COVERED HAS IMPACTED ME MORE THAN YOU KNOW. I ACTUALLY FIND MYSELF PONDERING MANY OF THE TOPICS WE HAVE STUDIED EVERY DAY, AND I ACTUALLY CAN'T WAIT FOR EACH NEXT MEETING. THANK YOU BOTH SO MUCH, AND THANK YOU, JESUS! ONCE AGAIN, I NEVER THOUGHT I'D HEAR MYSELF SAYING THAT! Great! Hey, what do you say we go over to the agricultural center

to look at the animals? I hear they have a new bull that's absolutely gorgeous!

I'm game!

Sounds like

a plan!

Notes

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