Part A: Salvation, Part B: Judgment, Part C: The Ages to Come

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B-2: Judgment Seat of Christ

Because of its importance and relevance to those who are believers and call themselves Christians, it is well worth going over and expanding on some of the points introduced in the previous Post about the *Resurrection*, which, as far as we can tell, includes also the *Judgment Seat of Christ.*

For many of us, the question of judgment in the Afterlife is a subject we might prefer to avoid even thinking about. For it's like going to the doctor for a check-up. We're afraid because of the bad news we might hear, even though in the back of our minds we know that it might go a long way towards safeguarding our future health and well-being. Furthermore, we have to confront issues like vigilance and self-discipline, which quickly bump us up against the wall of our lethargic human nature, which finds it all too easy to neglect such things. It's all too easy to neglect to *"examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves"* (as wrote the apostle Paul in 2Corinthians 13:5).

So, rather than fearing the "check-up", let us examine what the New Testament has to say on the subject of our personal judgment and inheritance in the Afterlife: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body… whether good or bad."* (2Corinthians 5:10)

In the previous post we learned about those who have *"part in the first resurrection"* – those whom Jesus taught would be *"counted worthy to attain that Age and the resurrection from the dead."* (Luke 20:35) For

these followers of Christ, those who have embraced the Light of God, it will be joyous celebration in the Heavenly Realm. And for many it will include the honor and blessing of being invited to the *Marriage Supper of the Lamb*. (Revelation 20:6, 19:9)

But this *Resurrection* will also be a day of reckoning, *"for the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is."* (1Corinthians 3:13-15) In Daniel 12:1-2 the angel Gabriel declares that *"every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be rescued"* and *"will rise up"* – resurrected, yes – but *"some to everlasting* (*) *life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace".* (NLT)

> **(* Note: the word *"everlasting"* is a misleading translation of the original Greek. For more information on this point, see here in C-4: *"Everlasting Punishment… Forever and Ever"* – Meaning?.)**

On this final point about *"shame and… disgrace",* we read in 1John,

> ***"Remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame."* (2:28, NLT)**

Or in another translation,

> ***"Stay in happy fellowship with the Lord so that when he comes you will be sure that all is well and will not have to be ashamed and shrink back from meeting him."* (TLB)**

To arrive in the Heavenly Realm feeling ashamed will not be a pleasant experience; we might even call it a bit of "Hell in Heaven". For this reason Paul exhorted the Corinthian church to spend their earthly lives wisely:

> ***Let each one take heed how he builds on it* [the foundation of Jesus Christ]*… Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear, for the Day* [Judgment Seat of Christ] *will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he***

> ***will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*** **(1Corinthians 3:10, 12-15)**

A little further ahead, Paul asks the Corinthians, *"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?"* (1Corinthians 6:9) Then he lists several activities that could jeopardize one's future Afterlife standing. He was not saying that a person could lose their citizenship in God's Kingdom.

One commentary puts it this way:

> **"Paul's use of the word *unrighteous* implies that those whose behavior is indistinguishable from the unbelieving world may not be among the 'saints' at all." (from ESV Study Bible, pg. 2198)**

No, they could not be among the "saints" but they could very well be among those whom Gabriel said long ago would *"rise up… to shame and everlasting disgrace."* (Daniel 12:2, NLT) They are not ousted from the Kingdom but are exiled into its outer fringes, we might say. And they would, of course, lose much of the inheritance that could have been theirs had they been more inclined to follow God's plan for their lives.

Jesus also spoke of how important it is to be *"wise"* and build one's *"house"* (or life) on the *"rock"*, that is, the solid foundation of obedience: *"whoever <u>hears</u> these sayings of Mine, and <u>does</u> them."* By so doing, one's *"house"* will stand during the storms of judgment. (Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:46-49)

A similar thought shows up again in 2Timothy 2:

> ***The solid foundation of God stands… But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.*** **(2:19-21)**

And also, 1Corinthians 11:

> ***For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But***

> ***when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*** **(11:31-32)**

Here, to *"judge ourselves"* means having the wisdom to evaluate ourselves and let God refine us in whatever way is needed. In this way we become a better testimony – *"that we may not be condemned with the world."* Jesus made it clear that the refining process is just part of what it means to *"abide in Me"*: *"every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."* (John 15:2,4)

This exhortation was not intended to make life miserable for His followers, but as He explains further ahead in the same passage,

> ***You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you… These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*** **(John 15:7,11)**

To further understand this subject, we could look at the Parable of the Talents. In the story the *"servants"* (i.e. God's people) who diligently invested the money given to them to make more money, their *"lord"* gave reward. But to the servant who buried his talent, the lord called him a *"wicked and lazy"* and *"unprofitable servant"* and ordered him to be *"cast into the outer darkness"*, to experience *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"*. (Matthew 25:14-29)

A similar fate awaited the servant who failed to take care of his master's household and began to *"beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards"*. He wound up being appointed *"his portion with the hypocrites"* and also had to experience *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"*. (Matthew 24:49-51)

Sad tales these are, but a helpful reminder that, even though we might make it into the Kingdom, if we don't spend our earthly lives wisely, there could be some regrets and tears that God will have to *"wipe away"*. (Revelation 7:17, 21:4) It may not be as drastic as the *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* experienced by those who must enter the region of *Hades* or the *Lake of Fire*, but there can be some degree of it, even in the Kingdom.

Although believers have certain advantages that unbelievers don't have – namely, the certainty of their citizenship in the Kingdom – nevertheless, the same rules for earthly conduct apply to all. According to the Scripture oft-quoted in this study,

> **"[God] *will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil… but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good… God does not show favoritism* [neither to Jews nor Gentiles]." (Romans 2:6-11, NIV)**

Would it seem surprising then to understand that even non-Christians will take part in the Resurrection? There are many probably who did not have opportunity to come to Christ during their earthly lives due to their cultural surroundings and upbringing. But if they were doing *"the truth"* and their *"deeds"* had *"been done in God"*, as Jesus taught, they would have been deemed as born-again "pre-Christians", worthy to be welcomed into the Kingdom. (John 3:21)

> ***For you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.* (1John 2:29)**

Even though such folks would not have had the benefit or certainty of Salvation beforehand, yet because they listened to their conscience and followed what bit of Light they had, it was to their credit. And we can recall what Jesus said once,

> ***Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.* (John 20:29)**

The apostle Paul wrote of something similar in the *Book of Romans:*

> ***For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness.* (2:14-15)**

And if this understanding is correct – that many non-Christians will rise in the *First Resurrection* – then that's going to include a lot of people! And indeed, that's the picture we get in chapter 7 of the *Book of Revelation*:

> ***I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands… "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God…"***
> **(7:9,14-15)**

If they went through the *Great Tribulation* and now stand *"before the throne of God"*, then they must be the ones who were taken up in the Rapture (gathering-together) at the Second Coming. And this vast number does not even include all those faithful ones who died previous to this final era of the *Great Tribulation* at the *End of the Age*.

Anyway, getting back to the question of judgment in the Afterlife: This region of *"outer darkness"* where there is *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* bears some resemblance, it would seem, to the *"shame and everlasting disgrace"* that Gabriel mentions in Daniel chapter 12 in connection with the final deliverance and resurrection of the people of God. (12:2, NLT) Or to Jesus' statement that He would have to say to those whose religion was a pretense, *"I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws."* (Matthew 7:23, NLT) Now does this mean that these unfaithful servants go to Hell or the *Lake of Fire*? Maybe some do and some don't.

To shed more light on this question, we could look at a different version of the Parable of the Talents found in Luke 19. The story line is similar except that, in addition to *"servants"*, the lord (*"nobleman"*) also has *"enemies"*. As in Matthew 25, the unfaithful servant is punished, this time by being demoted and stripped of the money he had been given. (Luke 19:11-27)

Nevertheless, he remains as one of the servants and did not fall into the same category as the nobleman's *"enemies"*. They *"did not want me to reign over them,"* the nobleman said, so he ordered, *"Bring here those*

enemies of mine… and slay them before **me." (19:27)**

So there seems to be a distinction here between those who belong to the household of Christ (both the faithful and unfaithful servants) and those who have rebelled and refuse to bow to the authority of Christ. The former are citizens of the Kingdom; the latter are destined for the *Second Death* and the *Lake of Fire* – separation from the Kingdom and fellowship in the not-so-pleasant company of their fellow-rebels, the *"devil and his angels".* (John 3:19, Matthew 25:41, Revelation 20:14-15)

The truly rebellious, the haters of God, symbolized in the parable as *"enemies"*, will receive the ultimate punishment of the *Second Death*, or separation from God. But the "punishment" that some Christians will have to receive is of a different sort. It is not separation from God.

Maybe it could be compared to being in a reformatory where there is a loving atmosphere in a "tough love" sort of environment, the kind that can help wayward teenagers or addicts rehabilitate until they are ready to enter society – comparable to believers being prepared to enter in and enjoy more fully the blessings and privileges of the Heavenly Kingdom.

And those who find themselves separated from God in the *Lake of Fire*, well, who knows? Maybe that is just the medicine they need that will drive them into wanting to come to God. (More about this in the Post "Deliverance from the Lake of Fire?")

Well, it seems we are running into a bit of a dilemma here. For when we consider who are the "evildoers", it seems we'll have to include some who have come to Christ. And because they came to Christ, they cannot be counted as "enemies". But they did turn away, and for many of them their lives ended up being a poor testimony. This paradoxical but sad reality seems to be inherently understood in the parables of Matthew 24-25.

These passages start off with the Lord describing how His coming will be "unexpected". *"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."* (Matthew 24:44) And *"a faithful and wise servant… would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into."* (Matthew 24:45, 43)

The parables that follow tell of the faithful and wise servant versus the evil servant, the ten virgins, the talents, and the final judgment. All are exhortations to prepare for Christ's coming by giving attention to one's moral behavior, faithfulness in one's spiritual life, diligence versus slothfulness in service, compassion towards the needy.

We all fall short, of course, but in these parables the Lord is making the point that no believer is unaccountable or exempt from responsibility to live his or her life in a way that is pleasing to Him and to the Father.

Before a person comes to Christ, there is a certain understanding that sinful behavior can be excused to some extent because of a person's ignorance. The apostle Paul said of himself, *"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief."* (1 Timothy 1:13, NIV) Then once he came to Christ and repented (with his *"ignorance and unbelief"* gone) he received total forgiveness, along with restoration of his sight.

Then afterwards, as Paul would often preach, believers *"should… prove their repentance by their deeds."* (Acts 26:20) It's not that believers will become perfect and never make mistakes. But what really counts is a person's commitment to go in the right direction, to follow the Light of God in his or her life.

Getting back then to the question of what happens to believers in the Afterlife, we can look at what Christ said of Himself:

> **[The Father] *has given Him* [the Son of Man] *authority to execute judgment… Do not be surprised at this; for a time is coming when all those who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and they will come out—those who did good things [will come out] to a resurrection of [new] life, but those who did evil things [will come out] to a resurrection of judgment [that is, to be sentenced].* (John 5:27-29, AMP)**

The *Judgment Seat of Christ*, as it is called in 2Corinthians 5:10, will feature the same general division – *"life"* and *"judgment"* – except that *"judgment"* could be called *"shame and everlasting disgrace"*. (Daniel 12:1, NLT) It doesn't seem likely that this latter group will be allowed to

participate in or be invited to the *Marriage Supper*, since this honor will be given to those who have made themselves *"ready"* and are *"arrayed in fine linen",* symbolic of the *"righteous acts of the saints".* (Revelation 19:7-8)

How can this be, we may wonder? If they believe the right things, shouldn't that be qualification enough? No, for as the apostle James taught, *"you see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."* (James 2:24) Christ also made it very clear, regarding the Final Judgment, that a person's works were the needed qualifications. To those who show goodness and kindness to the destitute, He will say, *"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."* But to those whose religion was only a pretense, who failed to show compassion, He will have to send them off for re-training into the *"fire"* of purification. (Matthew 25:34,40,41,45)

Now, it should be understood that if one has been *"born again"*, Jesus promised that *"the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."* (John 3:7, 6:37) But of course, if, during their lifetime, a person fails to show the compassion to others that Christ talks about here at the end of Matthew 25, then they can't expect to inherit much that could have been theirs in the Afterlife and will probably have to suffer some grief and sorrow, some *"weeping and gnashing of teeth",* as mentioned in some parables, before *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* (Matthew 24:51, 25:30, Revelation 7:17, 21:4)

Perhaps it will help to think of God's Kingdom as including rehabilitation centers. On Earth we use such environments to care for unruly teenagers or addicts, with the hope of bringing them back into being law-abiding citizens. If we on Earth can establish such centers, why not even more so and more effectively in God's Kingdom?

We understand from several Scriptures that the Second Coming of Christ will feature that wonderful, supernatural, joyous gathering-together of God's people from all ages. But Jesus alluded to this great celebration as being also a time of judgment, or separation, amongst God's people. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the five who had made sure to replenish the oil for their lamps (symbolic of faithfulness to stay close to the Light of God) were welcomed into the master's wedding celebration, while the

other five were left out. (Matthew 25:1-13) In another parable a wedding guest, who was not dressed in a wedding garment (not *"arrayed in fine linen*", symbolic of the *"righteous acts of the saints*"), had to be removed from the wedding celebration. (Matthew 22:11-14, Revelation 19:8)

So it is clear that a judgment is coming – a separation of the *"wise"* and *"those who lead many to righteousness"* from those who end up in *"shame and… disgrace".* (Daniel 12:2-3, NLT) But whether invited to the *Marriage Supper* or not invited, all those who have come to Jesus, He *"will by no means cast out".* They will have the great honor and privilege of entrance into the Kingdom.

The obvious conclusion from Christ's parables is that, in the Kingdom of God, there will be no escape from having to account for our lives. And for those who fail to use what God has given them to further His Kingdom (like the unfaithful servant), or misuse His benefits (like the servant who oppressed his household), or fail to stay connected (like the foolish virgins), or fail to show compassion to the needy (like the *"goats"* in the Final Judgment Parable), then there will be a Day of Reckoning, known as the *Judgment Seat of Christ*. In Christ we are forgiven, of course, but that doesn't mean that many of us won't have to endure a painful process of realizing our errors before re-instatement or being granted full participation in the Heavenly Realm.

> **It is easy to develop an attitude that sin doesn't matter so much, since we have salvation and our sins are already forgiven, but such an attitude shows a lack of understanding of what the Bible teaches about sin and its effects. Scripture tells us that sin is an offense to God, including the sin of a Christian. Being judicially forgiven is a wonderful gift of God; but as believers, we are in relationship with Him, a relationship which suffers damage when we sin. While our sins are forgiven, there can still be consequences in our lives or in the lives of others due to our sin.**
>
> **As pursuers of Christlikeness, those seeking for holiness, we must face the fact of sin in our lives and respond to it appropriately. God has given us a conscience, the inborn ability to discern the difference between right and wrong, which helps us judge whether or not an act we have planned or have already carried out is moral. As Christians, we fine-tune our conscience as**

> **we align it with God's moral will, when we agree with what God has revealed in Scripture about what is right and wrong, what is godly, what actions reflect His nature and being. We are called to follow our Scripture-informed conscience, to avoid sin, in order to remain in close relationship with our Father.**
>
> **("More Like Jesus: Holiness (Part 4)", *Directors' Corner*, 18 October 2016)**

We all have "blind spots", of course, and *"there is none righteous… for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:10,23) What matters more than anything, as the above quote stresses, is "to remain in close relationship with our Father", to keep loving God throughout life, and to keep loving others, as Jesus taught. (Matthew 22:37-39) In this way we please God, and Christ welcomes us into the Kingdom, saying *"You were faithful over a few things… Enter into the joy of your lord."* (Matthew 25:21,23) How much better this, than that sinking feeling of having to *"shrink back from him in shame".* (1John 2:28, NLT)

Such shame, upon entering the Realm of Heaven, such crisis of conscience, this shattering of old mindsets, the regret and remorse, are symbolized in phrases like *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"* and *"outer darkness"*. We usually think of those phrases as referring to what happens in the domain of Hell. In some Parables Jesus stated that *"at the end of the Age"* the angels would *"separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* That definitely sounds like Hell. (Matthew 13:36-43, 47-50)

But in other Parables, where Jesus used the same *"wailing and gnashing of teeth"* expression, the context is more general and does not seem to distinguish clearly in which realm it is happening. And the reason may be, simply, that similar experiences can happen in the various domains of Heaven, Hell, and In-Between. The big difference, though, is the bleak prospect in Hell of separation from God's presence – no heavenly environment, no access to heavenly beings and comforters or to the Lord Himself. And presumably, the *"gnashing of teeth"*, symbolizing regret and remorse, can (for those not in the Kingdom) turn into hostility towards God if there is no repentance.

The point is, regret and remorse over past errors is not an aspect of life

unique to those in Hell; it can happen in Heaven too – but with the notable difference that *"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* (Revelation 7:17, 21:4)

We saw in the Parable of the Talents that the unfaithful servant was cast into *"outer darkness"* to experience *"weeping and gnashing of teeth"*. Then in a different version of the Parable, the unfaithful servant (who *"hid his lord's money"*) is portrayed as continuing in the landowner's estate and is not included among the landowner's *"enemies"*.

It seems logical enough then to conclude that some of the chastisements that we normally might think belong only to those in *Hades* or the *Lake of Fire* may bear some similarity to what many of us will have to go through at the *Judgment Seat of Christ*. In other words, it doesn't matter what religion, race, nationality, earthly status or power one has, or even what kind of salvation experience one has had. The same rules apply to all. For He *"will render to each one according to his deeds… For there is no partiality with God."* (Romans 2:6-11) How a person lives his or her life will have a great bearing on what he or she can expect in the Afterlife.

Being *"born again"* is a wonderful thing and a step in the right direction and comes with its own great reward. (John 3:7) But as followers of Him who is the *"Light of the world"*, Christians should not limit or define themselves as those who've been fortunate enough to find Hell's escape hatch. (John 8:12) They should be known as those who are leading the way to bringing their families, schools, communities, workplaces, or nations out of the darkness of ignorance, poverty, destitution, pollution, injustice, and so on. *"Among whom you shine as lights in the world."* (Philippians 2:15)

So when will this *Judgment Seat of Christ* happen? Perhaps it happens privately to each person at their *First Death* as they enter the Spirit Realm. Or perhaps it coincides with or follows soon after the *First Resurrection*. On that grand occasion of Christ's Second Coming, many will hear the Lord's commendation, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."* (Matthew 25:21) Others, however, will suffer the kind of fate that befell the unprofitable servant – *"shame and everlasting disgrace"* as Daniel 12:2 puts it.

Perhaps this doesn't jibe very well with our usual conception of what we think Heaven is supposed to be like. But it seems an inescapable fact that, even though we may be born again and know we're headed for the Heavenly Realm, that doesn't mean there's no accounting for our earthly lives.

Yes, we're given a free ticket into the Kingdom of God, but for many there may be a period of rehabilitation, to learn a new set of priorities and attitudes which hadn't been learned during their earthly lives, and it probably won't be so easy. Rehabilitation is always a difficult process – at least until the lessons are learned and release is granted.

When a person has *"passed from death into life"*, that in itself is a wonderful thing for he or she *"shall not come into judgment"*. (John 5:24) *"Judgment"* comes from the Greek *krisis*, which was often used in the ancient language to mean "separation". And when a person comes into *"judgment"* (sometimes translated as "condemnation"), he is being "separated".

Several passages point to this idea of separation: *"one will be taken and the other left."* (Matthew 24:40-41) The Parable of the Wheat and Weeds illustrates how in this life the two groups – the righteous and unrighteous – are permitted to dwell side by side. Then at the *"close of the age"*, the *"wheat"* (the righteous) will be freed, or separated, from the *"weeds"* (the unrighteous) who right now are busy polluting the Earth with their destructive ways. (Matthew 13:24-30, ESV)

Each will go off into different realms – either to places of heavenly reward and blessing or to areas of chastisement and gloom. Most of the parables about Judgment and the Final Day seem to involve this idea of separation. *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just."* (Matthew 13:49)

Now for those who land in God's Kingdom at the *First Resurrection* when the *"people shall be delivered"* (at the Second Coming), there is no possibility of the judgment of separation from God, or from the Kingdom. (Daniel 12:1) But that does not mean that other forms of "judgment" will not be implemented – which in this case means "separation" from higher honors and greater rewards. *"For we must all appear before the judgment*

seat of Christ." **(2Corinthians 5:10)**

Not only will He separate the righteous from the unrighteous on the basic level; that is, those who must be sent to Hell will be separated from those who participate in the *First Resurrection* (or Rapture as it is often called). But of those who enter the Kingdom, there will be another separation between those who land in *"shame and everlasting disgrace"* and those who receive the rewards of *"everlasting life"* and *"will shine like the brightness of the sky"* and *"like the stars."* (Daniel 12:2-3, NLT)

And by these parables the Lord warns that our conduct during this earthly life will have a great bearing on our future standing in the Heavenly Kingdom. It is true that those who come to Christ have *"passed from death into life"*. (John 5:24) Salvation is a work of God's grace and opens the door into the Kingdom of God. Judgment, on the other hand, comes later when our lives are over and determines what kind of reward we shall receive and has everything to do with works – works which, nonetheless, must be *"done in God".* (John 3:21)

That is, we allow God to work through us, to use our strength, wisdom, and other gifts to do or say as He wishes. This is *"the answer of a good conscience towards God",* out of which good works spring forth naturally. (1Peter 3:21) Works done with the wrong motives won't count for much, if anything. (The apostle Paul's famous discourse on love in 1Corinthians 13 elaborates well on that subject.)

Whether this *Judgment Seat of Christ* happens at the time of our entrance into the Afterlife, or at the Second Coming, or at both times, is not altogether clear. But Scripture does indicate that it will happen.

At this crucial juncture or turning point in history of the Second Coming, the *Book of Revelation* declares that

> ***the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.* (11:15)**

And it is to be a time of Judgment:

> ***The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of***

> ***the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth."* (11:18)**

This may be speculation, but perhaps at the time of our passing into the Heavenly Realm we have a "private" judgment and receive then a good part of our "inheritance". Then after the Second Coming a more public victory celebration will be conducted – the *Judgment Seat of Christ* in all its fullness and glory – with the handing out of rewards and honor and so on before a universe of souls, angels, and other created beings.

This Judgment includes the destruction of the present world system and of *"those who destroy the earth"*. In other words, the *Judgment Seat of Christ* at the end of the present Age appears to be comprehensive, affecting the entire scope of our world, and even the Celestial Realm to some degree.

For example, in our realm, one of the main features of Earth's convulsions then will be *"a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth… and the cities of the nations fell."* (Revelation 16:18-19) And in the Celestial Realm, Satan will be *"cast out* [of heaven]… *to the earth"* and then *"into the bottomless pit"*. (Revelation 12:9, 20:3)

This grand turning point in history includes then such varied aspects as the *Resurrection*, the *Marriage Supper*, destruction of the Antichrist and False Prophet *Beasts* and their armies, judgment on the nations, imprisonment of evil angels (Satan and his demon hordes), distribution of rewards to those who are citizens in the *Kingdom of God*. Thus, when we speak of the *Judgment Seat of Christ*, it helps to understand it in the context of all the other judgments and events that are going on at this time.

As a final thought, we may consider these words of the apostle Peter: *"For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"* The kind of *"judgment"* Peter had in mind might be called the refining or purging that empowers Christ's followers to become

better examples to the world and to prepare them for life in the Heavenly Realm.

And *"if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"* (1Peter 4:17-18, ESV) If Christ's followers need to pass through a refining process during this life and/or in the Afterlife (in the *Judgment Seat of Christ*), how much more refining will be required for unbelievers and evildoers? (And it is better to see it as refining, not just punishment; this is a subject that will be addressed in upcoming posts.)

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Continue to B-3: What Happens to the "Left Behind" Folks?