

"The Hour of Judgment"

In the final proclamation of the everlasting Gospel to all the earth, there is one new feature. It is not a new truth, which is then revealed for the first time, but it is the re-statement of an old truth, with the added emphasis that the time has come when it is to be fulfilled. "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). The whole earth is concerned in this solemn event, and it is to be made known to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. This is to be a leading thought in the last message. **A work of judgment begins in heaven at the same time that a special preaching of the Gospel begins on earth, and the work on earth derives a special significance from the work of judgment that is carried on in heaven.**

Not a Secret Kept from Men

"Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). God does not hide His work from men. He dwells in the light, and it is not His fault if men are found in darkness, so that God's dealings take them by surprise. When the time is at hand for the hour of His judgment, God takes care that everyone shall know about it. He sends a special message to everybody concerned, and in the message He gives full and clear information as to the judgment, the standard, the witnesses, the Judge, and every other point in which the subjects of the judgment are interested. He states clearly what is expected of men, and how they may be prepared for the test.

The standard of holiness is the law of God. If a man fails to meet this standard in his life, he is a sinner, but "the doers of the law will be justified" (Rom. 2:13). Every transgression is condemned by the law of God. "I would not have known sin except through the law" (Rom. 7:7). "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). This law is the test in the judgment. If a man's life record reveals obedience to God's law, and a love of its principles, he will not be condemned. "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:12, 16).

The Divine Judge is a Man

Jesus Christ is the Judge. It is a Man who judges men. God does not sit in judgment on men, but leaves it to One who has Himself met the temptations that beset men, and knows what it is to be human. "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all

judgment to the Son, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:22, 27). It is the law as revealed in the life of the Man Christ Jesus that is the standard of the judgment.

The Divine Standard

It is for this reason that God is now calling attention to the fact that, although His law is unchangeable, a human ordinance has been substituted for the fourth commandment, teaching men to honor a day which God has not set apart, and leading them to dishonor the rest day divinely appointed. Sabbath keeping was a prominent feature in the life of Christ and now that men are to be judged by that life, the true standard is to be lifted up that none may be deceived by human alterations. Some are receiving God's correction; others are fighting against it. They hate the human instruments through whom God has brought before them the reform for which He is calling. If they could only realize that the hour of God's judgment has come, and that their lives are being tested by the law of God, they would value the light that comes, and turn from every commandment of men to be fashioned after the Divine Pattern.

The Judgment is Glad Tidings

Notice that the declaration of the judgment is a part of the everlasting glad tidings. Men tremble at the thought of judgment to come, but it is a necessary part of the Gospel. Paul says that "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16). Peter, when preaching the Gospel to Cornelius, said: "He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42), "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord. **For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth**" (Psalms 96:11–13).

That the judgment is a necessary part of the Gospel is seen when we consider that, without the judgment, there would be no second coming of the Lord, or resurrection from the dead. The judgment is the separating of the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, it is the making up of God's treasure, and the conclusion of Christ's work in behalf of His people. It is the time when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The time when the dead are judged is the time "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" (Rev. 11:15–18). If it were not for the judgment, the present state of things would go on forever. Wrong would always trample down the right, the rich would oppress the poor, Satan would continue to be the god of this world, and God's people would never enter

into their inheritance. For it is only those that are "counted worthy" who obtain the world to come, and the resurrection from the dead. (Luke 20:35). It is in the judgment that men are "counted worthy." When the hour of God's judgment has come, the solemn moment has arrived when the books are opened (Dan. 7:9-14), and the dead are judged according to the things that are written in the books.

Judgment begins at the house of God. (1 Peter 4:17). The closed up records of lives that have long been forgotten among men are brought forth. They have not been forgotten in heaven. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15); and He does not forget any that have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. Loving memories stir afresh in angel hearts as familiar names are called from the book of life. The record of their lives is read: it is seen that on earth they endured the cross, despising the shame, and they are counted worthy of a place in glory. Name after name is called, and for every one that Christ acknowledges, called and chosen and faithful, there is joy among the angels over a soul snatched from Satan's power, and saved for the Redeemer's kingdom.

Denied by Christ

But what of those who heard the call, and girded on the armor, who fought the good fight a while, and then made peace with the enemy, and returned to his yoke? "But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:33). "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5).

The list of names of the overcomers is a long one, glory to God, "a great multitude no one could number" (Rev. 7:9), but there comes a time when the last of the sleeping saints is passed, and none are left but those who are alive on the earth. These will not know it, but as they go about their daily work, an hour will come when their name is called above, their record is read, and their destiny sealed for ever. This is the moment of which we read, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11). The following verse (v. 12), shows that these words, so fraught with life or death to every soul, are spoken before the coming of the Lord. Death arrests the development of character, and fixes man's destiny. As the tree falls so it lays. The same stop comes then to living men, but they do not know that the fateful word has been spoken, the division has been made, the choice has gone forever. "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:34-35).

The Gospel's Power

Great as will be the need of those who serve God in such a time, the grace will be even greater. As Christ calls men to such an experience as Enoch and Elijah had, **His Gospel furnishes the power and salvation that will fulfill the same work in every believer. The everlasting Gospel is no empty form. It is the living power of God. It consumes sin as fire consumes stubble.** It fills the believer with spiritual power, "according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph. 4:7). Its first fruit is an all-absorbing love that forgets self in service for others, and knows no fear in the hour of judgment. (1 John 4:17, 18). As the message of the everlasting Gospel is received, it does its work. Once more the days of the apostles will be seen, the church of Christ, revived by the latter rain, will take up its long neglected work, and carry a pure Gospel to earth's remotest bound, while the sentence that comes from heaven, where the judgment sits, is, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

Christ Judged by Men

As God's people take up this work, they reveal what spirit they are of. It is seen that the effect of the Gospel is to put into men the Spirit that was in Christ, "who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). Christ will be admired in all them that believe. Men can find nothing then to say against Him, for His life is only good. The Lord has been judged by His people. Their unfaithfulness has brought dishonor upon Him. Now He is vindicated. The hour of His judgment has come, and His faithful witnesses bear true testimony to His wonderful love and great salvation. Henceforth none but His enemies, who hate Him simply because He is good, can speak a word against Him. As the church of Christ comes into harmony with His own life, He is free to work with power. In the past, he has been bound because His people have been unlike Him, and He could not work mightily through them without seeming to countenance their evil ways. Now there is nothing to hinder His full co-operation with His church, and the full tide of divine life flows with mighty power through His people. They go forth upon their work conquering and to conquer.

The Vindication of the Savior

It is in this clearing of Christ from the misjudgment of men, and setting Him before the world in His true light, that Christians will meet the issues of the hour of judgment. They cannot be present in the courts above, except as they commit themselves to Christ, the Advocate. He cannot be present on the earth, where He is being judged, except as He can find ambassadors here who will represent Him. If we will confess His name here, and bring honor to His name among men, He undertakes to speak for us in heaven, and procure glory for us there. (Matt. 10:32). So it is here, and not in heaven, that we meet

the test of the judgment. The decision is in our own hands. We are not to be in fear and trembling, waiting for the moment when the judgment may pass from the dead to the living. If we do not know yet that our interests are secure in heaven, we can make them so at once, and put the matter beyond question, by becoming whole-hearted, blood-bought witnesses for Jesus Christ, who follow Him fully. Whatever others may say or do, we can take our stand boldly in the place where the angelic verdict of the judgment approvingly descends: "Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

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