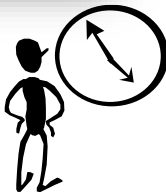


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## Time of Assembly



### Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

### Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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## Is Judgment Day Coming Upon God's People?

By Steve A. Hamilton

God's word is infallible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As such, every word is inspired of God. God wrote the Bible via inspired men through the Holy Spirit. There are no contradictions in scripture. If a contradiction seems to exist, that alone is proof of error. For example, if I take the position that only non-Christians are subject to God's Judgment and I find a single verse in the Bible that says otherwise, that is proof that my argument is wrong.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "*For 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.*" (NKJV) Paul wrote the second letter to the Corinthian brethren. The pronoun "we" would specifically include the apostle himself and the brethren he is writing. That means Paul expects to stand before Christ in the Judgment to come along with all Christians that ever lived (a necessary inference). In fact, Paul implies that if he had done anything wrong while he lived, he would deservedly receive punishment as his reward at that time.

Paul repeated this understanding in Rom. 14:10. He wrote to the brethren in Rome saying, "*But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*" (NKJV) In no uncertain terms, Paul says we will all be judged by Christ. Again, the "we" includes Paul and all the brethren in Rome. In fact, Paul implies that brethren who show contempt for other brethren will receive a deservedly just punishment at that time.

Was Paul the only apostle to hold such a radically confrontational position? Doesn't Paul know that Christians do not

sin (1 John 3:9)? Doesn't Paul know that Christians who live righteously all their lives already know they are going to heaven? Doesn't Paul know that everyone in Paradise automatically gets to go to Heaven? (I write facetiously.) Obviously, Paul knows more on this subject than we know.

The Apostle John agrees with Paul's statements concerning the Judgment to come. *"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"* (1 Jn. 4:17; NKJV). The pronoun "we" would include John himself needing boldness in the day of Judgment. Why would John and the Christians that he writes need boldness on the Judgment day unless there is a chance that some of them could be eternally lost?

The Apostle Peter would agree that Christians will be judged on the judgment day. He wrote, *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God"* (1 Pet. 4:17; NKJV)? Peter expects to be part of the house of God (i.e. the Church) that will be judged on that great day. Notice the judgment begins with Christians of which Peter includes himself. He implies that beginning hasn't taken place yet. In other words, judgment is not an ongoing process as people die. Judgment is a time specific event in the future.

In the explanation of the Parable of the Tares Jesus makes this statement, *"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt. 13:41-42; NKJV). Though Jesus does not say the event He is referring to is the Judgment, it seems rather logical that it could only be the Judgment as the Christians that are gathered out of His kingdom are thrown into the fire "at the end of this age" (Matt. 13:40).

Jesus and three apostles affirm that Christians will be judged on the Judgment Day. So how is it that some people claim that only non-Christians will be subject to the judgement?

Some well-meaning members of the church will turn to Romans 8:1 where it says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."* In error, they infer that the Greek word translated here for condemnation (katakrima) means judgment. However, that Greek word does not carry the idea of judgment. Rather it is "the sentence pronounced, the condemnation" with a suggestion of punishment following" (Vines Complete Expository Dictionary). To infer "condemnation" in this verse means judgment is to be deceptive.

Scriptures are quite clear that everyone will give an account for themselves on the Judgment Day (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:11-12; Heb. 9:27). All it takes to lose our soul is to commit one unrepentant sin (Jas. 2:10). Is it not possible for Christians to die in their sins? Peter warned the brethren "to make your call and election sure" (2 Pet. 1:10). That

implies that brethren can fail to make their call and election sure! Brethren do err (Jas. 1:18). We can't say brethren who err never were Christians to start with because these passages call them brethren; a term that denotes Christians. Nor can we say that their sins remove them from the Church. Christ is the only one who can add us to the Church (Acts 2:47). Sins separate us from God, hopefully only for a time, but sins do not remove Christians from the Kingdom. Removal from the Kingdom takes place for those who deserve it at the Judgment Day (Matt. 13:41). Notice again that Christ will *"gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness."* Obviously, erring brethren must be in the Kingdom in order for the Lord to remove them from the Kingdom.

There are three parables that further illustrate that Christians will be removed from the Kingdom on the Judgment day.

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt. 22:2-14), the church is likened to a wedding feast. Both good and bad people composed the attendees. Yet, the King only removed the man who was unprepared (i.e. without garments) and cast him into outer darkness.

The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) illustrates a servant of the Lord who sinned by omission. We find him giving an account of himself before he is removed into outer darkness.

In the Parable of the Dragnet (Matt. 13:47-50) the church is likened to this dragnet. Good and bad people are gathered into it. *"At the end of the age,"* they are separated.

Remember, Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'"* (Matt. 7:21-23; NKJV)! The interesting thing about this glimpse into the Judgment Day is the fact that those who are protesting their verdict are Christians that don't have a clue until this moment that they are wicked. The "many" in this predicament confess Christ as Lord. They could prophesy, cast out demons and perform miraculous deeds. For a first century Christian to do those things, they had to be a member of the Lord's Church that was given said gifts by an apostle. Obviously, they erred along life's road. Yet, they were unaware of their final fate.

Where would these erring brethren be in Hades? If they were in torment they would already know their fate just like the rich man (Lk. 16:19-31). Since they died in the first century, the only possible location they could be in is Paradise. Just because Christians find themselves in Paradise is not a guarantee they will go to Heaven. The thief on the cross is another perfect example (Lk. 23:43). Just because the thief went to Paradise does not imply his eternal destiny. Theft was a sin under the Old Law. The thief on the cross will have to account for his conduct just like anyone else on the Judgment Day.

In the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), most of the laborers

thought it wasn't fair to give those who worked less the same reward. Some in the Church think it is unfair that erring brethren should await the Judgment in comfort if their final reward is Hell. The upset laborers told the landowner, "*you made them equal to us who have borne the heat of the day.*" The landowner responded, "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?*" We need to stop and think who we are that would think God must conform His will in any respect to our preconceived notions. The only reason we would object to Paradise not being exclusive to Heaven bound Saints is because we see the Lord's mercy toward those who will eventually lose their soul as somehow wrong. God's ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8).

God has not lied to anyone concerning Paradise. There is no scripture that connects Paradise as the exclusive waiting place for the saved. We are the ones who reason that if Torment is for the lost then Paradise is for the saved. But that is our assumption based on logic; not truth. Isn't it better to accept God's word as truth? "*Let God be true, but every man a liar*" (Rom. 3:4).

We have learned that everyone must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive our just reward or punishment. On the Judgment Day, Christ will separate the good from the bad out of His Kingdom. All this will occur at the end of the age... not at death. A Judgment Day is coming for God's people!

## God Answers Our Prayers

By Steve A. Hamilton

Much of the time we recognize when God answers our prayers. Yet, there are times when God answers our prayers in such a subtle way that we overlook the blessing God has granted. An excellent example of this was the answered prayers on behalf of young Caleb Steinback. The 3 year old was ill and tested to have a high platelet count in his blood and a low amount of hemoglobin. The doctors scheduled additional testing the following Monday. In the mean time prayers were offered at many congregations the Sunday before his additional tests that he might be healed of whatever ailed him. The Monday tests revealed his blood to be normal.

The doctor had a hard time trying to explain why he ordered additional tests when the subsequent results showed no abnormalities in Caleb's blood. Three excuses were offered. It was suggested that the doctor misread the initial results. Yet, the initial results still showed unusual levels in his blood. It was suggested that the father misunderstood the doctor's explanation of his son's condition. Yet, the doctor still ordered the additional tests. It was also suggested that Caleb had an unknown infection that his body was fighting. Yet, by Monday he had totally recovered. The human side of us would like to think that there was a logical explanation for the confusion. Regardless of where the confusion took place we tell ourselves that we are thankful that it was just some kind of misunderstanding or miscommunication.

But was that the reason? Or is it more likely that God answered our prayers in such a subtle way that we are left looking elsewhere? We know God answers prayers. ***“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened”*** (Matt.7:7-8). In fact, God is most willing to exceed our requests. God ***“who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen”*** (Eph. 3:20-21). So is it unreasonable to think that the initial test results were accurate; that the doctor appropriately ordered the additional blood tests and that the additional tests were accurate despite the doctor’s reasoning that something was at fault. Our faith should tell us that nothing was at fault. Caleb is a healthy young boy because God answered and exceeded our prayers!

We should pray that God isn’t insulted by our lack of faith when we overlook the blessings of answered prayers. ***“For with God nothing will be impossible”*** (Luke 1:37).

## The Signs of an Apostle

By Terry Wane Benton

The apostles of Jesus were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus (Acts 1:13f). They had to have personally seen Jesus alive from the dead. Nobody today meets that criterion. But those Jesus chose to be sent out by Him as His personal eyewitnesses were also equipped by the Holy Spirit with miraculous power. Again, no one has these signs and power today. Paul had all the “signs” of an apostle (II Corinthians 12:13f). Not only could such eyewitnesses testify of what they saw, but could verify that God was confirming their testimony with miracles (Hebrews 2:1-4).

One “sign” of an apostle of Jesus was the power to lay their hands on others and impart Holy Spirit power to others. Peter and John displayed this “sign” in Samaria (Acts 8:13-19). Paul displayed this “sign” of an apostle in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6). There are none who can and are doing this today! That is because the original eyewitness apostles were not for just first-century disciples, but would deliver *“all truth”* (John 16:13), the faith *“once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3-4). The original hand-selected-by-Jesus apostles are the ones we stand on for truth and judgment for all time. They left the complete testimony in the 27 books of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. We stand on that foundation (Ephesians 2:18ff).

All others who claim equal authority with those eyewitnesses are but false apostles with lying and deceptive spirits with no better-verifying credentials than Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8 ). If modern men cannot demonstrate (I Corinthians 2:2) the signs of an apostle, we have no obligation to respect anything they say (Galatians 1:6-10). Beware of false teachers!