

567 Five Judgments

Last week we concentrated on the wonderful passage in Colossians 1.12-23a in which we are told of the abundant blessings given from the Father and the Son to all who accept Christ Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of their lives. Most of these blessings are in place right now, with some more still to come, so we can indeed remain “grounded and settled” in the Lord in these troubled and troubling times.

In each Advent season we also remind ourselves of the various future divine judgments that are graciously revealed to us in God’s Word. The prospect of such judgments highlights why the Gospel is so vital, (eg., “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ...”, Hebrews 9.27-28a, KJV), yet strangely today they tend to receive less attention than they deserve.

In his book “Dispensational Truth”, first published in 1920 and re-issued in 2015 (*), the late Clarence Larkin, an American Baptist Pastor, draughtsman and gifted Bible teacher, wrote 34 chapters linked to 90 highly-detailed charts concerning “God’s Plan and Purpose for the Ages” (the sub-heading of his book). (Incidentally, the word “dispensational” unfairly receives a bad press in some Christian quarters. It simply refers to the obvious fact we see throughout Scripture that God deals with different people (such as the Jews, the Gentiles or the Church) in different ways during different “dispensations” (or “chapters” or “ages”) as He so chooses, for instance via different covenants, yet from start to finish and beyond, He holds all wonderfully together in Christ).

So as a sample let us now briefly cover Pastor Larkin’s concise biblical teaching concerning five divine judgments, each dealt with under the headings of Subjects, Time, Place, Basis of Judgment and Result:

Judgment One, DONE! - CHRIST-BELIEVERS regarding SIN: At Calvary’s cross / Christ’s finished work / Result: The death of Christ resulting in the justification of the Believer by faith (egs., John 5.24 / Romans 8.1-2;10.4 / Galatians 3.13-14 / I Peter 2.24-25). (Meanwhile we continue daily to confess our sinS, to avoid the Lord’s chastisement (egs., I Corinthians 11.31-32 / Hebrews 12.5-11 / I John 1.9;2.1-2)).

Judgment Two, FUTURE – CHRIST-BELIEVERS regarding their “Works”: After the believing Church has been “caught up” (I

Thessalonians 4.13-18) / The Judgment Seat of Christ / Our “works” / Result: Reward or Loss (egs., I Corinthians 3.11-15 / II Corinthians 5.10).

Judgment Three, FUTURE – THE JEWS: During the “Great Tribulation”, the “time of Jacob’s trouble”, the reign of “Antichrist” (Jeremiah 30.4-9 / Daniel 12.1) / Focussed on Jerusalem and Israel / For the Jews’ rejection of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (egs., I Samuel 8.7 / Luke 23.18-25 / Acts 7.51,54-60) / Result: Their acceptance of Christ as their Messiah, their conversion (egs., Zechariah 12.9-10; 14.3-4a / Isaiah 66.8 / Romans 11.25-32).

Judgment Four, FUTURE – THE GENTILE NATIONS: After Christ’s return at the end of the Tribulation / In “the valley of Jehoshaphat”, (the valley “of Jehovah’s judgment” (Joel 3.2,12)) / Regarding the nations’ treatment of the Jews, “Christ’s brethren”, during the Tribulation (Matthew 25.31-46) / Result: Some nations saved, others destroyed (see also Genesis 12.3).

Judgment Five, FUTURE – THE UNRIGHTEOUS DEAD: During the renovation of the earth by fire / Before “the great white throne” (II Peter 3.7 / Revelation 20.11-15) / Regarding their “works” / Result: “And whosoever was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20.15; 21.8). While this “lake of fire” is clearly symbolic, it indicates the existence of a real, future state of eternal, conscious, separation from the loving mercies of Almighty God held forth in Christ. No wonder that the Lord Jesus often speaks of “outer darkness”, where “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (egs., Matthew 8.12; 22.13;25.30).

Regarding “eternity”: because “eternity” by definition is “outside time”, which our present minds cannot really comprehend, we are far better to think of “eternity”, not as an unending timeline stretching to infinity, but rather as a simple, ever “Now”. The crucial point is that that eternal “Now” will be spent, by all who have ever lived, either consciously within God’s loving fellowship in Christ, or consciously apart from it: truly, “no man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John 14.6b / Luke 16.19-31).

Part of our Christian discipleship is earnestly to make these promised judgments known as opportunity arises. But, praise God, we then also make known the Father’s twin gifts of forgiveness of sin and eternal life, given to all who believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has freed us from God the Father’s ultimate judgment of Sin, by His suffering that dreadful

judgment in our place (Matthew 27.46 / Romans 6.23 / Hebrews 5.9;7.25).

The result, for all “in Christ” and for this Advent season and beyond, is worthily summed up in Hebrews 10.19-25.

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(* “Dispensational Truth” / Clarence Larkin: ISBN 978-1-60386-705-4)