

Title: **“ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS”**

Text: John 5:22, 27-29

Subject: *The General Resurrection
 And General Judgment*

Date: Sunday Evening — January 25, 2009

Tape: John #40

Reading: *Revelation 20:1-15
 Merle Hart and James Jordan*

Introduction:

Let me pick up tonight right where I left off this morning and show something of what this Book has to say about that judgment the Father has committed to the Son “*because he is the Son of Man.*” This Book declares plainly and repeatedly that all shall be judged in the last day “**ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.**” Let me show you.

(John 5:22-29) "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son...(27) And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (28) Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, (29) And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Give a little thought to this question: “What do we deserve from God?” If God deals with us fairly, in justice, as he most surely will, what shall be our everlasting portion?

Of this you can be sure – Every one of us will receive from the Holy Lord God exactly what we deserve. **Because the righteous Lord loves righteousness, he always deals with all moral creatures upon the basis of strict righteousness, both in the execution of his wrath and in the exercise of his grace** (Psalm 11:7). The Judge of all the earth must and shall do right (Genesis 18:25).

If God sends you to hell, he will do so upon the grounds of absolute, unquestionable righteousness. If he is pleased to bring you into the everlasting bliss and glory of heaven, he will do so upon the grounds of absolute, unquestionable righteousness. The holy Lord God will never violate, or even bend his holy law. He will not compromise his justice. And

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when he gets done with us, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell will declare, “*Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments*” (Revelation 16:7).

(2 Corinthians 5:10-11) "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. (11) Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."

(Revelation 20:11-15) “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

In Romans 14:10 and in 2 Corinthians 5:10, this judgment seat before which we shall all soon stand is called “*the judgment seat of Christ.*” Here God the Holy Spirit describes that awesome, glorious throne of judgment before which we all must appear in the last day as, “**a great white throne**”, to set forth the power, holiness, and sovereignty of the One who sits upon it. It is called “**great**” because it is the throne of the omnipotent God. It is called “**white**” because it is pure, spotless, righteous and just. Nothing proceeds from this throne but justice and truth. It is called a “**throne**” because the Judge who sits upon it, before whom we all must stand, is the holy, sovereign Lord God.

Proposition: In the last day, when all that are in the grave have been resurrected, when time shall be no more, we all must appear before the august, great, white throne to be judged of God, to be judged according to the strict and exact righteousness and justice of the thrice holy God, and judged “*according to their works.*”

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Yet, while the Word of God constantly warns the wicked of the terror of divine judgment and the everlasting wrath of God, the Day of Judgment is never described as a terror to the believer, or even a thing to be dreaded by us. Rather, **for the believer the Day of Judgment is always set forth as a matter of anticipated joy and glory.**

On this earth God’s saints are constantly misjudged. His servants are maligned and slandered by reprobate men. But in that last great day, God almighty will vindicate his people and he will vindicate his servants (1 Corinthians 4:3-5).

(1 Corinthians 4:3-5) “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. (4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. (5) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

I am not dreading that day. I’m looking forward to it! And I do so with peace. If, as a believer, a sinner saved by God’s free and sovereign grace, through the sin-atonement blood and imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, you understand what the Bible says about that great day, you will look forward to it too. With those things in mind, let’s see what the Bible teaches about the great white throne judgment.

Divisions: I do not claim to be an expert on prophetic matters. But I do know that there are five things clearly revealed in the Word of God about things to come. I want to talk to you now about those five things.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again.
2. When Christ comes again there will be a great general resurrection of all who have lived upon the earth.
3. We must all be judged by God according to the record of our works.
4. Those who are found to be perfectly righteous before God shall enter into eternal life and everlasting glory with Christ.
5. All who are found to be guilty of sin shall be cast into the lake of fire, where they must suffer the unmitigated wrath of God forever.

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A GOSPEL REVELATION

First, here is a gospel revelation — The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. Do not concern yourself about the signs of the times and those things that men imagine are indications of the last days. There is very little, if anything, of spiritual value to be gained by studying all the books ever written on prophetic issues. They all have to be rewritten as soon as the predicted events have failed to come to pass. **We are never commanded to look for signs of our Lord’s coming.** We are commanded to be looking for him to come. Get this one blessed fact fixed in your mind — Jesus Christ, our Lord, our Savior, the Son of God, is coming again!

The Son of God is personally coming again to this earth.

(Acts 1:9-11) — “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

That very same God-man who was born at Bethlehem, who lived as our Representative, and died as our sin-atoning Substitute on the cross is coming to this earth again.

- He said, “*I will come again!*” (John 14:3).
- The Apostle Paul wrote, “*The Lord himself shall descend from heaven!*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- He said, “*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven!*” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

– (Job 19:25-27)

- He came once in weakness. He is coming again in power!
- He came once in humiliation. He is coming again in glory!

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- He came once to be despised. He is coming again to be admired!
- He came once to suffer. He is coming again to conquer!

The second coming of Christ will be sudden, unannounced, unexpected, and climatic. — “*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*” (I Thessalonians 5:2). — Our Lord said, “*I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee*” (Revelation 3:3). The Lord does not tell us to look for the tribulation, or the regathering of Israel, or the rebuilding of a Jewish temple. He tells us to look for him! If you look for signs, and times, and seasons, you will be shocked when Christ comes. The only thing mentioned in this book that will announce the Lord’s coming will be “*a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God*” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

NOTE: No man knows the day or hour of our Lord’s coming; and that is best (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). If we knew the day or hour, we would become irresponsible and negligent with regard to our daily duties. Do not seek to know when Christ is coming. Be content with his promise, and wait for his appearing.

Our Lord Jesus may appear at any moment. — “*Behold, he cometh!*” (Revelation 1:7) Look for him upon the tiptoe of faith and expectation. All will be taken by surprise except those who are expecting him to appear. Like those Thessalonians who believed God, we must constantly “*wait for his Son from heaven*” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Faith is ever “*looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ*” (Titus 2:13). **This much I know...**

- Christ is coming now!
- Soon he shall appear.
- When the Son of God appears he will bring with him a crown of righteousness, immortality and life for all who love him and look for his appearing.

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

— (2 Timothy 4:8)

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“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. – (James 1:12)

A GENERAL RESURRECTION

Secondly, when Christ comes, there will be a great, general resurrection of all who have ever lived upon the earth.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 20:13)

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

I do not offer any argument or proof for what I am preaching. I am simply declaring to you the plain facts, as they are revealed in Holy Scripture. Those who rebel against them, mock them, despise them, or ignore them do so to their own eternal ruin. But I assure you that the Son of God is coming again; and when he comes there will be a resurrection of the dead.

First, **all who have died in faith shall be raised from the grave**. All will be raised. But the saints of God will have distinct priority in the resurrection. “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” The bodies of God’s saints shall be raised from their graves and reunited with their souls.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the

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air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (18) Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

- All The Old Testament Saints!
- All The Martyrs!
- All Who Sleep in Jesus!

Then, immediately after the sleeping saints arise, all believers living upon the earth shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

(1 Corinthians 15:51-58) “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (56) The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. (57) But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

As our Lord descends in the brilliant glory of his second advent, we shall go out to meet him and return with him, as he comes with all his saints to burn up the earth, destroy the wicked, and make all things new.....What a day that will be!

Then, after the Son of God has gathered all the ransomed bodies of his elect from the earth, after he has destroyed all the wicked with the brightness of his coming, all the wicked shall be raised. Yes, there is a resurrection for the wicked too. But, for you who believe not, there is no music in the resurrection. The Lord himself shall issue a summons that you cannot resist. You will stand in terror before him whose grace you have despised, against whom you have sinned!

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Your body and soul now united in sin shall be united in horror! I have no word of comfort for you who will not bow to the claims of Christ. If you die without Christ, you die without hope and without peace! Your resurrection shall be a resurrection of damnation!

A GREAT RECKONING

Thirdly, immediately after the resurrection, we must all be judged by God according to the record of our works.

(2 Corinthians 5:10-11) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. (11) Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”

(Hebrews 9:27) “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”

(Revelation 20:12-13) “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

THE JUDGE — The Judge before whom we must stand is the God-man, whom we have crucified!

“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:” – (John 5:22)

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” – (Acts 17:31)

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“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” – (2 Corinthians 5:10)

THE BOOKS — We will be judged out of the books, according to the record of God’s strict justice. When the books are opened, what shocks of terror will seize the hearts and souls of those who have no righteousness and no atonement before the holy Lord God!

With the opening of the books, every crime, every offense, every sin you have ever committed, in mind, in heart, and in deed shall be exposed! This is what Daniel saw in his prophetic vision. — “*Judgment was set; and the books were opened*” (7:10)

I realize that this is figurative language. **God does not need books to remember man’s sins.** However, as *John Gill* wrote, “this judgment out of the books, and according to works, is designed to show with what accuracy and exactness, with what justice and equity, it will be executed, in allusion to statute-books in courts of judicature”.

In the Scriptures God is often represented as writing and keeping books. And according to these books we all shall be judged. **What are the books?**

1. The Book of Divine Omniscience (Malachi 3:5)
2. The Book of Divine Remembrance (Malachi 3:16)
3. The Book of Creation (Romans 1:18-20)
4. The Book of God’s Providence (Romans 2:4-5)
5. The Book of God’s Holy Law (Romans 2:12) — This book of the law has two tables. The first table contains all the sins of men against God (Exodus. 20:3-11). The second table contains all the sins of men against one another (Exodus 20:12-17).
6. The Book of the Gospel (Romans 2:16)
7. The Book of Conscience (Romans 2:15)

ANOTHER BOOK — But, blessed be God, there are some against whom no crimes, no sins, no offenses can be found, not even by the omniscient eye of God himself! — “*In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve*” (Jeremiah 50:20).

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Their names are found in another book, a book which God himself wrote and sealed before the worlds were made. **IT IS THE BOOK OF LIFE!**

1. In this book there is a record of Divine Election.
2. In this book there is the name of a Divine Surety.
3. In this book there is a record of Perfect Righteousness (Jeremiah. 23:6 cf 33:16).

(Jeremiah 23:6) “In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

(Jeremiah 33:16) “In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.”

4. In this book there is a record of Complete Satisfaction — Blood Atonement.
5. In this book there is the promise of Eternal Life.

The question is often raised, “**Will God judge his elect for their sins and failures, committed after they were saved, and expose them in the day of judgment?**” — The only reason that question is ever raised is because many try to retain the threat and fear of the Roman doctrine of purgatory, by which they hope to hold over God’s saints the whip and terror of the law.

Child of God, hear me well. **There is absolutely no sense in which you who trust the Lord Jesus Christ shall ever be made to pay for your sins!**

- Our sins were imputed to Christ and shall never be imputed to us again (Romans 4:8).
- Christ paid our debt to God’s law and justice; and God will never require us to pay.
- God who has blotted out our transgressions will never write them again.
- He who covered our sins will never uncover them!
- The perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us!
- On the day of judgment, God’s elect are never represented as having done any evil, but only good (Matt. 25:31-40).

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- The day of judgment will be a day of glory and bliss for Christ and his people, not a day of mourning and sorrow. — It will be a marriage supper! — Christ will glory in Church! — God will display the glory of his grace in us! — We will glory in our God!

A GLORIOUS REWARD

Fourthly, those who are found perfectly righteous, righteous according to the records of God himself, shall enter into eternal life and inherit everlasting glory with Christ. — They that have done good, nothing but good, perfect good, without any spot of sin, wrinkle of iniquity, or trace of transgression, shall enter into everlasting life. It is written — *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still”* (Revelation 22:11).

Who are these perfectly righteous ones?

- None by Nature and None by Works of Their Own!
- All God’s Elect!
- All the Redeemed!
- All the Called!
- All the Justified!
- All Who Trust the Lord Jesus Christ! — (Romans 8:1, 32-34)

(Romans 8:1) *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

(Romans 8:32-34) *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

Though there shall be degrees of punishment for the wicked in hell because there are degrees of wickedness, there shall be no degrees of reward and glory among the saints in heaven because there are no degrees of redemption and righteousness.

- Heaven was earned and purchased for all God’s elect by Christ.

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- We were predestined to obtained our inheritance from eternity (Ephesians 1:11).
- Christ has taken possession of heaven’s glory as our forerunner (Hebrews 6:20).
- We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17).
- Our Savior gave all the glory he earned as our Mediator to all his elect (John 17:5,20).
- In Christ every believer is worthy of heaven’s glory (Colossians 1:12).
- Glorification is but the consummation of salvation; and salvation is by grace alone!

That means that no part of heaven’s bliss and glory is the reward of our works, but all the reward of God’s free grace in Christ! All spiritual blessings are ours from eternity in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). And that with which God blessed us in Christ before the world began, he will not take from us when this world is no more (Romans 11:29).

“God will do all that's necessary to bring us to Heaven and when we get there He will say to us ‘well done good and faithful servant!’”

A GRAND RESTITUTION

Fifthly, I must warn you who are yet without Christ, if you will not trust Christ you must be forever damned! All who are found guilty of sin in that great and terrible Day of Judgment shall be cast into the lake of fire and there be made to suffer the unmitigated wrath of almighty god forever!

One by one the Lord God will call you before his throne and judge you. As he says to you, “*Depart ye cursed!*” He will say to his holy angels, “*Take him! Bind him! Cast him into outer darkness!*”

- There will be no mercy for you!
- There will be no pity for you!
- There will be no sorrow for you!
- There will be no hope for you!
- There will be no end for you!

To hell you deserve to go! To hell you must go! To hell you will go! Unless you flee to Christ and take refuge in him, in that great day the wrath of God shall seize you and destroy you forever! I beseech you now, by the mercies of God, be reconciled to God by trusting his darling Son! “*Knowing*

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therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men!” Come to Christ now!

ETERNITY IS BEFORE YOU!

- Behold his infinite love (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).
- Behold his finished atonement (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Behold his amazing, almighty, saving grace (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

(2 Corinthians 5:14-21) “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: (15) And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (16) Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more. (17) Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Application: In that great and terrible day I hope to be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness, but having his righteousness! How will it be for you in that day.

Illustration: *Rowland Hill’s Dream*

Amen.