

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, March 13, 2022

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

My friend Brent was preaching a few weeks ago, and he came out guns blazing about the hypocrites who fill the pulpits of today’s religious institutions. He said they have no credible answer to the howling mob of humans who cannot square up the lie that God loves everybody with the seemingly unending plague God has brought upon (or at least has not prevented for) the hundreds of thousands who have died. That was the context in which our elder brought forth this passage to demonstrate the very literal and oft-recorded intent of the Lord God to return in power and do a thing that will NEVER square with the lie that has been part of Satan’s schtick from the beginning; ***“ye shall not surely die.” (Genesis 2:17)***. That’s a good use of the passage.

What Brent was NOT necessarily intending, and what I was NOT expecting was that when he quoted that passage it resulted in a huge puzzle piece falling into place on an issue that has been floating in the intellectual ether in my head through the years of pouring over Bible passages and expositions related to the return of Christ. You see that the verse I quoted above says ***“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed”*** ... which is nearly identical in expression to the opening words of the Apocalypse; ***“The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1)***. Same word used – *apokalupsis* – same event being referenced.

The issue this draws forward is the judgment activity of Jesus Christ, as distinct from the great judgment of God Almighty that is universally – even with the unbelieving – understood to be the final resolution on the question of election and reprobation; heaven and hell; good and evil, as articulated in this passage:

“¶ 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. 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. 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. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:11-15)

The Lord willing, I will have opportunity to examine the work of God in the final passages of the Revelation in a future series of sermons; but for now this passage is presented in juxtaposition with today’s discussion. Today, and for at least one additional sermon, we are going to talk about the judgment seat of Christ our Redeemer, as holy writ presents it to our eyes and spirits for consideration. The expositor Arthur Pink, who lived in the late 19th through to the mid-20th centuries, was a fairly sober writer on matters of eschatology. He penned a solid piece on the subject called *The Redeemer’s Return* where he draws forth a goodly number of scriptures in developing the proposition that Christ’s Revelation is the singular most critical event that will ever come in the human experience.

One most intriguing point he makes is that between the times of John’s Revelation through around the 15th and 16th centuries, expositors give almost zero consideration to the passages of the Bible about Christ’s return. As though it was a matter that was simply not placed – in God’s intricate providence – into the hearts of Christians

to give it any sober examination. Further, that even after it began to be talked about with some interest, those discussions were general and little-defined. The result was that truly in-depth looks into what those prophecies were pointing to did not start occupying Christian authors until the generation or so prior to his own time on the earth. This fits with what we find when we search for expositions on the multitude of prophecies throughout the book; it seems to have been clear to many expositors that those prophecies are forward-looking, but little more work than that is done with them. Like when you travel on a highway to a large city. The skyline might become visible some many miles back, but you cannot distinguish between the shapes until you drive closer and eventually you are capable of the greatest detail when you come directly upon the buildings making up that grand skyline. I believe this is the way the knowledge of these great things come upon each successive generation as providence draws the closer to the time of the fulfillment when the greatest details of that heavenly city are put onto display for the amazed eyes and spirits of saints.

One area where the distinctions and details of various writings of prophets and apostles become magnified is in the area of these references to judgments. Pink has done some work on them, but not as detailed as one of his contemporaries, Clarence Larkin. Larkin died about a quarter century before Pink, and wrote much of his best stuff while Pink was still a young lad. Pink no doubt had access to those writings while he was treading out some of that same robust crop of corn. Larkin, as he tended to do, swings the pendulum of categorization to the extreme in his examination of different judgments. In his work *Dispensational Truth* he writes and charts his thoughts on the various judgments; and then repeats the narrative of the work in his shorter writing called *The Second Coming of Christ*. There are, he says, five distinct judgments articulated in Scripture:

1. Judgment of Believers as Sinners; accomplished in Christ's crucifixion in payment for the sins of His people
2. Judgment of Believers as His Servants; accomplished at the rapture, the works of Christ's saints are judged to determine which are good and which are bad
3. Judgment of the Jews; accomplished during the great tribulation period, the nation of Jews are purged of all but those who are converted and acknowledge Christ as their Messiah
4. Judgment of the Nations (Gentiles); accomplished at Armageddon, this judgment destroys many and enslaves others for their treatment of Christ's brethren, the Jews
5. Judgment of the Wicked; accomplished by God at the Great White Throne for their evil works recorded in the books

The purpose of *this* sermon is not to reiterate Larkin's or Pink's positions on these matters, as all of you here can put your hands on those books and consume those points, making careful treatment of the authorities presented. Rather, it was by these writings and by the writings of some other authors that I began to see the importance of distinguishing the judging work of Christ in His Revelation and Millennial Reign from the work of God in His eternal judgment throne. For I believe that if we understand this point of doctrine and eschatology, we will better understand the movement of events articulated by prophets and by Christ during the day of the Lord.

That Jesus Christ, as a distinct member of the Holy Trinity, carries out a judgment is thoroughly articulated in scripture. We know that it is given to Christ to rule all nations as the Anointed One, or the Messiah:

“Ask of me [i.e., God], and I shall give thee [i.e., Christ] the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” (Psalms 2:8-9)

It is also true that part of that giving of the earth to Christ is that He will preside over a great judgment of His redeemed as well as those who oppose Him in the earth. Paul expressly warns that the day comes when **“God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to [the] gospel” (Romans 2:16)**. So it is that we find many passages of Old and New Testament writers articulating this component of the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which we will now consider a few.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

This passage, a favorite among the righteous and often perversely taken by the false Christians, addresses both Christ’s first and second advents. It includes as integral to His second advent that his earthly throne will be established with the solemn assembly of judgment.

“¶ And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots [i.e., Christ]: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” (Isaiah 11:1-4)

This prophecy of Isaiah contains a great deal more than the verses I’ve quoted here, as it articulates many remarkable components related to the Revelation of Christ. Despite the tendency of older expositions to wrap around the fact that Christ was born of a woman, lived righteously, suffered, died, was buried, and was resurrected – all of which is true and good – the thrust of this whole prophecy is His second advent and His millennial reign in the earth. There and then, we must understand, is the focus of His judgments articulated in this passage. That is, when we consider the grand subject of Christ’s judgment event, it is direct association with His millennial reign. When we talk about Christ’s judgment throne, we must talk about it as integral to His setting up of His earthly kingdom.

Peter declares that a necessary part of the preaching of our gospel during the church dispensation is **“that it is he [Jesus Christ] which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.” (Acts 10:42)**. And when is it that He is to be in this act of judgment? The Apostle Paul says to his young friend Timothy that it is **“at his [Jesus Christ’s] appearing and his kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1)**. Again, the act of His judgment is associated directly with His millennial kingdom. Indeed, Christ articulated in parable that at His return He **“shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 13:41-42)** The kingdom of Christ cannot contain among His just ones those who are wicked so they must be severed at the end of this age (Matthew 13:48-50). Similarly, when Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, he declared how that Jesus Christ whom the Jewish mob killed was the fulfillment of the promise to David that all of His enemies would become His footstool – symbolizing a judicial act upon the conquering of an enemy. (Acts 2:25-36)

Perhaps the passage most expressive of this judgment executed by our Christ is found in His words on Mount Olivet when he speaks of His own triumphant return and judgment seat:

“¶ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: ... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matthew 25:31-34; 41, 46)

The time is clear, when Christ shall come in His glory with the holy angels ... or as the passage I opened with calls them **“mighty angels”**. The action is clear, a separation between the righteous and the unrighteous – between the sheep and the goats – the saved and the unsaved – those who are known and loved by Christ and those who are not. It could not be articulated in any plainer language. All nations – or more precisely the people of all nations – are gathered for this judgment event. Each is placed into the assigned group and judgment is declared. For one group, that judgment is an inheritance of the kingdom that was prepared for them from before the world began, and everlasting life. For the other, everlasting fire and punishment and separation from even the least of God’s blessed presence. And while this seems to articulate the matter in the clearest language that the human creature can prepare, there are still matters to examine in more detail about the nature and timing of this coming event. At least three of these will be what I intend to cover for today’s and (Lord willing) my next sermon:

1. Christ’s judgment as it pertains to the living and sleeping saints – both Gentile and Jew
2. Christ’s judgment as it pertains to the living wicked or reprobate
3. Where Christ’s judgment fits within the event sequencing in the Day of the Lord

Christ’s judgment of the righteous saints at His Revelation is earthly and heavenly ... and is final.

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present [i.e., alive at His Revelation] or absent [i.e., sleeping in Christ at His Revelation], we may be accepted of him. 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 5:8-10)

The first matter that should be nailed down is that the subject – the “receiver” or “entity of action” – in this verse is the believing saints. The context of the oracle in which these verses sit demands it. At least 14 distinct pronouns within the oracle force the conclusion that the only persons under discussion are the saints, so it would do violence to the English language to pretend that it is a universally applicable passage. The underscored language demonstrates the certainty that there is a distinct **“judgment seat of Christ”** and that all who are engaged in this event will **“receive”** – i.e., obtain, collect, secure, reap – **“the [consequence for] the things done in his body”**. The more discrete analysis respects what is meant by the language **“whether it be good or bad”**. What could it mean for the redeemed to receive a reward for doing **“bad”** at the judgment throne of Christ?

The expositors have strained to present a clear voice in this question. What is the nature of this appearance before the judgment seat of Christ? They will collect together many passages that make reference to this engagement that the saints have with Christ at His Revelation, which when taken together will cause the hearts of those who read or hear them in such sequencing to feel exquisite joy and elation. Then they will dash those

same spirits to the earth with a jangling note that transitions from free grace to some convoluted examination of works. Let's look at the passage that many have pulled forth for this examination:

“¶ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

The tone of this passage is very similar to that quoted above from 2 Corinthians 5. The language likewise compels the conclusion that it is talking about the saints, as it concludes with ***“he himself shall be saved”***. The only thing missing is the demand that it is expressly referencing the judgment seat of Christ, rather than ***“the day”*** which is said to ***“declare”*** the nature of the works. So the passage is fairly under consideration regarding the grand subject under discussion.

The only foundation for our salvation is the blood of Christ. I believe it is critical to remember this. Christ is expressly called the ***“chief corner stone”*** (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6) upon which all of our faith is built and upon whom those who are given to believe will never have reason to be ***“confounded”***, or ***“put to shame ... blush with shame ... [or] suffer a repulse”*** (Greek-English Dictionary) from the God of eternity. This foundation is that Christ who we are assured ***“knoweth them that are his”*** (2 Timothy 2:19), and upon whom the parable instructs that if we build our house it cannot be shaken (Luke 7:4).

Upon *that* foundation, the expositors say, saved men will build – some works of gold, some of silver, some of precious stones ... some of wood, some of hay, some of stubble. The “good works” of 1 Corinthians 5 would be those of gold, silver, and precious stones. The “bad works” are those of wood, hay, and stubble. They go on to declare that those elect men who do these “good works” will receive a reward. They receive that reward when ***“the day shall declare”*** the quality of that which has been built. That ***“day”***, they insist is the day of the Lord's second advent, and the ***“fire”*** that reveals whether the works are sustainable is the unflinching, fiery countenance of that returning Redeemer, Christ Jesus. The analysis requires then, that the ***“reward”*** received is in addition to that man's salvation, since the passage says that without these he will lose some thing or things or rewards, though he himself shall be saved.

From this analytical baseline, I have viewed some fantastical proposals about the events that flow out from the return of Christ in glory. Those of us who have grown to our older years in this church may recall how the expositor Seiss proclaims a “phased rapture”, where first go up the “eagle saints” and those who remain on the earth for a period of time will be purged ***“yet so as by fire”*** from their work that cannot abide; ***“wood, hay, stubble”***. Then they will be allowed to go up in a later phase of rapture. Others articulate how that God would have a kingdom set up in which there are ranks of saved men within the sphere of heaven, and those ranks are determined by their works on earth, though they still have a place in heaven. While I do not quarrel with the proposition that our future home will have a most clear and precise structure of inhabitants ... my spirit chokes at the notion that our works here will drive the governance of that kingdom. Consider how the Apostle Paul closes the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians. He could not be clearer in the intent of the promises related to Christ's Revelation.

“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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

Language that is so compelling about the reward awaiting the saints – alive or asleep – at the Revelation of our Redeemer, that one is near floating in the heavens in anticipation. Comfort indeed to consider such undeserved and endless delights. We’ll be forever with the Lord Himself in the heavenly sphere? No longer enslaved in our minds, bodies, or spirits with the grotesque nature of our Adamic sins? Unshackled from guilt or pain or distress of mind; only the continuous glories of our Savior to look upon, participate in ... ***“incorruptible, and undefiled, and [] fadeth not away” (1 Peter 1:4).*** Comfort indeed.

But then to face judgment for our works? Then to have that incorruptible state be corrupted again with our sins – in any degree whatsoever? That seems merely a rearrangement of the nonsensical Catholic doctrine of purgatory. The saints attain to heaven through grace, but are then ranked by the works done in the flesh? The Apostle Paul describes the state of the redeemed at Christ’s return in words that simply cannot sustain or countenance the logical import of this position:

“¶ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

Oh what a wonderful release from the bondage of our works! Yes those blessed souls put on ***“incorruption”***. Yes those happy saints put on ***“immortality”***, but a clever one might still forensically splice those hairs to distinguish between the conceptual incorruption and immortality by arguing degrees ... sufficiently immortal to sustain heaven; sufficiently incorruptible to be in the presence of God, but still suffering loss while in that blessed place. But the continuing language reveals the lie of such a position. Where is the sting of death? Where is the victory of the grave? In corruption! In sin! In the very definition of the works of this God cursed flesh! How can it have anything at all to do with that heavenly place? If it does, how can that place be logically called the very expression of perfection; and what imperfection could possibly exist in the presence of God? What shadowing of glory? What dimming of eternal light?

When our Savior was at the point of completing the payment for our sins, He declared ***“it is finished” (John 19:30)***. These words were spoken with special reference to the subject matter that drove His first advent ... to carrying out the contents of that covenanted act of paying for the sins of His people. Hence, we would be calling that blessed Christ a deceiver to pretend that there were works of this flesh that are uncovered in some slight degree by that blood that He spilled. If there are actions that are not glorifying God, those actions are by definition sin; but the whole body of sin is destroyed when we are crucified in Christ (Romans 6:6). If there are any works that adversely impact the full provision of gifts that flow from our Redeemer, then we have destroyed grace, for as the apostle plainly declares:

“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” (Romans 11:5-6)

Any time one of the elders of this church ... or truly anytime any human being presents to you an analysis of scripture about eschatology, I recommend that you strain to ensure that it comports with those blessed doctrines that serve as the basis of our most holy faith. Paul warns the Galatians against the notion that having begun this blessed course in the Spirit by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in granting us belief in His blood, that they would return to the beggarly elements of this flesh to be made perfect (Galatians 3:3). There is not a time articulated in scripture where this act of grace transitions, and we should never drop into that miasma so that our spirits are vexed with the notion that the blessings of our Christ's redemption will be stained with our corruption.

But while I insist that it is necessary to decry *this* treatment of those blessed verses about the judgment of Christ, it is likewise necessary to provide a clear understanding of what those passages intend. For we cannot conclude that some of this inspired Word of God has no value to us, as we know it is all written for our admonition; particularly if we consider ourselves to be among that number ***“upon whom the ends of the world are come”*** (1 Corinthians 10:11). In fact, though, a proper treatment of these passages will join with other of the prophetic words to thrill our hearts.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
(Ephesians 5:25-27)

There is a work integral to the transition of this dying world from the New Testament or church dispensation to that blessed dispensation of the millennial and earthly reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. When all of the heaven-disturbing and earth-rending events of the seals, the trumpets and the vials have unfolded there is brought before the creation a glorious event: The marriage of the Lamb.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19:6-8)

Here, I submit, is the focus of this judgment at Christ's throne as it pertains to the saints. Let me offer my explanation. The second advent of Jesus Christ is the event that transitions the creation from the New Testament Church dispensation to that of Christ's thousand-year reign as King of the earth. So the focus moves from worship of Him in faith to worship of Him in sight. Those in the earth will be under his peaceful monarchy while those saints in heaven give Him praise and participate in His rule over the nations (Revelation 2:27; 20:4). A component of that rule, as it pertains to Christ's beloved saints, is the perfection of the church in preparation for His marriage and the great supper, which is an event that includes the great slaughter of His enemies at Armageddon. To be clear, I am not referencing that perfection – or spiritual maturity – which saints in every generation are to pursue vigorously throughout their time in this life (2 Peter 1:5-7). I'm talking about actual perfection before the God of heaven as a bride for His Son, Christ Jesus. The types throughout scripture are too plain. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the Church is the bride. She is not made ready until she is ***“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white [i.e.] the righteousness of saints”***. And what is the righteousness of the saints?

“God [hath] chosen, yea, [] things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” (1 Corinthians 1:28-30)

Christ Jesus is our one and only righteousness. We are required to conclude that the garment the bride is given is the pure righteousness of Christ bestowed upon the church in preparation for the wedding. Here we are covered with His blood and therefore require the continual intercession of the great High Priest ***“after the order of Melchisedec”*** (Hebrews 6:20), but there we are covered head to toe with the righteousness of our Redeemer without ***“spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”***. So what we must see is the process whereby we are transitioned from the grace of Christ’s blood sacrifice to the glory of His righteousness.

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:20-21)

There is a transition of this mortal and wicked and sinful flesh, yes. Our bodies are vile and putrid and covered in filthy rags, which are the works of our hands. Little that we do here is worthy to be called anything but ***“wood, hay, stubble”***. It is in the nature of our vile bodies, our corruptible bodies, to sin. If it were not so, there would not be ***“war in [our] members”*** (James 4:1) fighting with our heaven-facing spirits. We previously identified how that transition is ***“in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump”***. In the time it takes for an involuntary and imperceptible movement of a human nerve, the bodies of the saints will transition from grace to glory ... corruptible to incorruptible ... mortal to immortal. No time to suffer, no time to fear the pains of death or transition. Done.

We know, as we have indicated above, that the transition of the saints – whether from the grave or from mortal life – occurs after Christ comes through the clouds at the seventh trumpet. So, the conclusion is compelled that this judgment of Christ occurs after the transition of the saints. The imposition of the sentence occurs after the transition of the saints.

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations” (Matthew 25:31-32)

It is when Christ comes in His glory that we are changed, so it has to be after this that the judgment is set and executed, for both the righteous and the wicked. For both those in earth and those in heaven. At present is the discussion of those who are in heaven, or who shall ***“meet the Lord in the air”*** (1 Thessalonians 4:17). At present the question we are looking at is how that group of persons face the judgment with respect to their works that are ***“wood, hay, stubble”***. I make this clarification because there are saints who will still have judgment in the earth – the Jewish remnant – but those will be discussed in a bit. For now, I want to close the loop on the discussion of those who are asleep in Christ and those who ***“are alive and remain”*** at the time of Christ’s second advent. Specifically, as it pertains to the application of the passage from 1 Corinthians 3:11-15ⁱ, cited above. Specifically, how does that passage relate to the judgment of Christ at His second advent.

Two options that I can readily see, that have support in scripture and are not, therefore, conjecture and human wisdom. First, it can be argued that the description given in 1 Corinthians has to do specifically with those saints who will remain on the earth during the period of acute tribulation between the advent of Christ and Armageddon; three and one-half years. Those souls are not being taken into the air with Christ, but rather are to remain in the earth as it transitions to the millennial reign and then through the millennial reign of Christ. Christ separates them unto Himself as his earth-bound sheep while the unwashed nations are the goats. Under this analysis, those who remain are purged of their works that qualify as ***“wood, hay, stubble”*** until they are fully prepared to live eternally in perfection with God in the new heaven and earth. These are the Jews ... and the argument is weak. We have clear authority for the proposition that they remain with Christ, seen in the

vision of John standing on Mt. Zion with their Redeemer (Revelation 14:1) and singing praises to Him for His deliverance as their Messiah. We also have indicators of their need to be purged during that excruciating period of affliction while Christ drives the angry wicked into Armageddon (Revelation 16:15). However, the passage in 1 Corinthians is clearly talking to the New Testament Church, which is not shown in scripture to be remaining on the earth after His second advent.

The other option is to understand the nature of Christ's working in His beloved. In the church militant state of things, there is a clear doctrinal truth that gives us peace and comfort in all of our self-created afflictions and trials.

“¶ For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” (1 John 3:20-22)

Gill lays out this clear statement and I believe it to be precise and relevant to this discussion: *“[I]f the hearts of believers accuse, reprove, and condemn for sin through unbelief, or want of clear view of pardon and righteousness by Christ, God is greater, as in power, so in knowledge, than the hearts of men; and he knows the thoughts he has towards them, which are of peace, and not of evil; the covenant he has made with his Son, of which he is ever mindful; and what his Son has done, that he has made full satisfaction for sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness: so that let sin, or Satan, or the world, or the law, or their own hearts condemn them, there is no condemnation of any avail unto them.”*

When we face the outward enemies of our souls and bodies, when we face the inward threats to our peace and our zeal toward God, it is because we have a great weight of our own guilt. We know so perfectly well what of our works are ***“wood, hay, stubble”*** though we desire them to be always and only ***“gold, silver, precious stones”*** in glory and honor to our King. It is not in us to generate those good things, because ***“out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19-20)***. We have no hope of generating good from these evil hearts, so there is no hope if we are dependent upon ourselves to build anything upon that blessed foundation that has any value at all for this life or that life which is to come.

But God is greater than our hearts. That is true in this life, infusing in us that sweet savor of obedience that causes us to be acceptable in our works and words through the gifts of grace coming from our Christ. We are only able ***“to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5)***. That is also true when our Christ comes through the clouds to redeem the purchased possession. When our doings are weighed by our Redeemer, He filters out those works of ***“wood, hay, stubble”***, and leaves for consideration the works of ***“gold, silver, precious stones”***. He transitions our vile bodies to be as clean and pure and filled with gold and silver and precious stones as ***“his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”***. Those weak and sinful and bad human works are taken away ... suffer loss ... or as Strong's indicates *“experience detriment”*. Indeed, even upon this earth, we ***“count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom [we] have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that [we] may win Christ”***. (Philippians 3:8)

My friends, for the sake of those who are asleep in Christ and those who are alive at that stupendous event of Christ's piercing the skies and initiating the taking of His earthly kingdom, Christ's judgment disposes of every hint of sin, clothing us with the glorious garment of His righteousness and then granting those joyful saints the reward that awaits those who have overcome through the blood of His sacrifice. There is no risk of diminishing

glories or reminder of our wicked state when we enter that kingdom because ***“we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”*** (1 John 3:2)

There are some words to be said about the living Jewish saints who we are told unmistakably will remain on the earth to live and reign with Christ through His millennial kingdom. But that will be taken up in my next sermon regarding this grand event of Christ’s judgment seat. We will also consider the judgment of the wicked and then look steadfastly at how this grand event helps us to see a bit more clearly the event sequencing within Christ’s Revelation. I will leave you now with the words from the prophet Daniel in one of his visions about this coming time:

“And he [Antichrist] shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” (Daniel 7:25-27)

I love you all. Amen.

¹ The passage referenced: ***“¶ For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*** (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)