GOD'S LOVE AND JUDGMENT

HIS PASSION FOR THE LOST AND HIS VICTORY OVER DEATH

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1. Introduction

A. Foundational Teaching

God's love and judgment belong together: His judgment expresses His holy character, His opposition to evil and His passion for the lost. It concerns His assessment of human conduct, His opposition to evil, His vindication of those who trust Him and the final outcome of human life. We cannot understand it adequately by treating God as an angry ruler whose character differs from the Father Jesus Christ revealed. Equally, we must not use His love to empty His warnings of their meaning.

Hebrews 6:1-2 (NKJV)

> Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

These foundations support Christian maturity. Eternal judgment is taught alongside repentance, faith and resurrection. It belongs within the proclamation of the gospel and the formation of disciples. Understanding God's judgment helps believers grow in assurance, holiness and responsibility.

B. God's Purpose and the Scope of This Lesson

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

God's purpose is to bring people into His family through Jesus Christ and make them holy in His presence. His correction of believers serves that purpose. Fatherly discipline, historical judgment and final condemnation nevertheless have distinct purposes and outcomes.

This lesson distinguishes Christ's first-century judgment on Jerusalem from His future final bodily coming. Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE belongs to the former. The final bodily resurrection and judgment associated with the Final Consummation remain in the future.

We will examine the Judge's character, the meaning of judgment and wrath, the believer's assurance, Christ's proclamation in Hades, and the seriousness of the second death. Throughout, we must understand God's justice and His passion for the lost in harmony with His loving character.

2. The Meaning of Judgment and Wrath

A. Judgment and Condemnation

The Greek noun krisis can refer to judgment, a judicial decision, or condemnation, depending on context. It is one of several related words used in the New Testament. Hebrews 6:2, for example, uses krima. The meaning of each term is established by its context.[1]

A judgment can expose wrongdoing, establish justice or vindicate someone who has been falsely accused. Condemnation is an adverse verdict. This distinction helps us understand how believers can be free from condemnation while remaining accountable to God for their conduct. Their assurance rests on Christ's promise of life.

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When studying a judgment passage, identify the people addressed, the conduct being examined, and the outcome described. Scripture speaks of the Father's discipline, judgments within history and the final judgment of humanity. These occasions differ in their setting and purpose. Reading each passage in context enables us to distinguish them.

B. The Wrath of God

The Greek noun orgē includes the sense of strong or vehement passion and is used in biblical contexts for anger, wrath and indignation.[2]

God's wrath expresses His passionate opposition to sin and His loving concern for those it destroys. He loves the lost and desires their repentance and restoration. His opposition to evil is consistent with that love: He confronts what corrupts His creation and holds people in bondage.

His passion for the lost and His opposition to the evil that destroys them belong together. We therefore understand His wrath alongside His patience, mercy and desire to bring people into life through Jesus Christ.

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3. Why Does God Express His Wrath

A. His Loving Character Requires It

1 John 4:16 (NKJV)

> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

God's wrath expresses His passion for His creation, including the lost. He wants people restored to a right relationship with Him. He sees what sin does to those He loves: it deceives, enslaves, corrupts and destroys. His love does not permit Him to remain indifferent to that destruction.

Throughout Scripture, God's patience gives people opportunity to turn from their destructive ways and receive life. His warnings expose the seriousness of sin and call people back to Him. His judgment demonstrates that He will not allow evil to destroy His creation indefinitely.

The Father's welcome of the returning son in Luke 15 reveals His heart towards the lost. He desires their return and rejoices in their restoration. This account reveals the loving character of the God Scripture describes as wrathful. His passion for the lost and His opposition to what destroys them belong together.

B. Judgment Preserves His Creation

The judgments upon the world in Noah's day and upon Sodom and Gomorrah expressed God's love for His creation. He saw sin's destructive consequences and acted against them. These judgments confronted wickedness and served His purpose of preserving His creation.

In Noah's day, violence and corruption had spread throughout the earth. God brought judgment through a flood that covered the whole earth, while preserving Noah, his household and the living creatures with them. Through this judgment and preservation, humanity continued. God acted against the corruption that threatened His creation and preserved its future.

These events reveal the seriousness of divine love. God's passion for the lost does not mean He approves of their wrongdoing or that judgment always restores those judged. He desires repentance, but He also ends destructive evil.

As we explained in our teaching on conditional immortality, final judgment does not preserve evil through everlasting torment. Those who finally reject His gift of life face the second death. God's judgment ends destructive evil.

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C. The Old Covenant Required Judgment for Disobedience

The Old Covenant included consequences for breaking its commandments. Its blessings and curses expressed the seriousness of Israel's covenant relationship with God. This covenant setting identifies the people addressed and the consequences of their disobedience.

Hebrews recalls God's judgment upon the wilderness generation:

Hebrews 3:11 (NKJV)

> So I swore in My wrath,
> 'They shall not enter My rest.' "

Their unbelief and disobedience had consequences. God's desire to bring His people into His provision did not make their response unimportant.

However, humanity's need for deliverance began before the Mosaic Covenant. Paul traces condemnation to Adam and contrasts it with the life Jesus Christ made available.

Romans 5:18 (NKJV)

> Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

The Old Covenant's curses belong to Israel's covenant setting, while the condemnation traced to Adam concerns humanity's wider need for salvation. Jesus Christ answers that need through His righteous act and His gift of life.

D. Christ Redeemed Us from the Curse of the Law

Galatians 3:13 (NKJV)

> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),

Our freedom from the law's curse rests upon Jesus Christ and His death for us. He bore the curse and redeemed us from it. Believers receive their standing before God through the New Covenant and no longer live under the Old Covenant's curse.

Hebrews 8:13 (NKJV)

> In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

We live under the New Covenant of grace. Our relationship with God is established through Jesus Christ, and His purpose is to bring us into the life of His family. His fatherly discipline continues to train and correct us. This discipline expresses His care for His children and is distinct from condemnation.

The final judgment before the great white throne remains in the future. God's present patience gives people an opportunity to repent and receive life. His passion for the lost, His correction of His children and His final judgment all proceed from the same holy and loving character.

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4. The Father Has Entrusted Judgment to the Son

A. The Son's Authority

John 5:22 (NKJV)

> For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,

John 5:26-27 (NKJV)

> For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

The Father had already entrusted judgment to Jesus during His earthly ministry. Jesus speaks as the Son who gives life and exercises the Father's judgment. His ascension and coronation establish His exalted reign; they do not mark the first time He possessed judicial authority.

John identifies Jesus as the Son of Man. His authority belongs to His unique relationship with the Father and His messianic identity. The One who offers life is also the One entrusted with judgment. We therefore understand His judicial authority alongside His saving mission and His revelation of the Father's character.

B. The Judge Who Knows Our Weakness

Hebrews 4:15 (NKJV)

> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus knows human weakness and temptation without sharing our sin. His earthly life and suffering reveal His faithful obedience to the Father. His compassion does not compromise His justice, and His justice does not erase His compassion. We can trust Him to judge with complete knowledge and without the distortions that affect human verdicts.

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

> I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

Paul's charge places Christian ministry under the authority of the Judge of the living and the dead. Those who teach and serve must answer to Christ for their conduct and their handling of His word.

Christ's authority extends over every occasion of divine judgment. His first-century judgment on Jerusalem and His future final bodily coming belong to distinct settings within His reign. The final accountability considered in this lesson belongs to the future Final Consummation.

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5. Who Is Accountable to God

A. Disobedience and Our Need for Mercy

Colossians 3:6 (NKJV)

> Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

The preceding verse identifies sinful practices, including sexual immorality, evil desire and covetousness. The warning concerns disobedience, not an ethnic category. Paul addresses believers who must put away their former conduct. Their new identity in Christ calls for a changed manner of life.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV)

> And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Paul includes himself and his fellow believers in the description of humanity's former condition. This prevents a self-righteous division between supposedly innocent Christians and everyone else. Our salvation displays God's mercy towards people who needed rescue.

In John 8:44, Jesus confronts particular opponents whose murderous intentions and resistance to truth reflect the devil's character. His words address people and their conduct. They do not identify all Jewish people as children of the devil, nor do they redefine those people as impersonal religious spirits. Jesus, His apostles and the earliest disciples were themselves Jewish.

B. Accountability With or Without the Law

Romans 2:12 (NKJV)

> 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.

Possession of the law does not confer immunity, and its absence does not remove all accountability. Paul develops this argument through the themes of impartiality, conscience and God's knowledge of human secrets. Neither ethnic identity nor religious privilege permits us to excuse wrongdoing. God judges truthfully and justly.

6. Believers Are Free from Condemnation

A. Life Received Through Faith

John 5:24 (NKJV)

> "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Jesus describes a present possession and a completed passage from death into life. Those who hear His word and believe the Father who sent Him have everlasting life. Their assurance rests on His promise. Eternal life begins in relationship with Christ.

This passage from spiritual death into life is the new birth, which we identify as the first resurrection. Believers receive life through Christ and are delivered from condemning judgment. Their new standing before God gives them confidence to live as His children.

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Present possession of eternal life does not mean that believers no longer experience bodily death. Spiritual life in Christ and the future resurrection of the body are distinct. Bodily death does not overturn Christ's promise: those who belong to Him await the resurrection and the fullness of life in His presence.

B. Accountability Before Christ

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

> 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.

Paul includes believers among those who must appear before Christ's judgment seat. Freedom from condemnation does not remove accountability. Our actions matter to God, and Christ evaluates what we have done.

Salvation is God's gift through grace. Good works do not purchase that gift; they express the life and obedience of those who have received it. Grace brings us into a relationship in which we seek to please the Lord and take responsibility for our conduct.

The judgment seat, therefore, gives Christian living seriousness without undermining assurance in Christ. We serve the One who has given us life, knowing that He judges truthfully and understands our motives, opportunities and actions.

C. The Father's Discipline

Hebrews 12:7 (NKJV)

> If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Discipline belongs within the Father's care for His children. Hebrews 12 explains its purpose in terms of holiness and righteousness. God corrects us because we belong to His family and He desires our growth.

Correction can be painful without implying rejection. Believers respond through repentance, trust and renewed obedience. The Father's love remains the foundation of His dealings with them, including when He exposes conduct that must change.

First Corinthians 11:32 distinguishes the Lord's discipline from the world's condemnation. His correction trains His people and turns them away from destructive conduct. Christian assurance therefore includes a willingness to receive correction. It strengthens our confidence in the Father while calling us to live responsibly before Him.

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7. Judgment Within History and at the Final Consummation

Scripture describes divine judgments within history and the final judgment of humanity. Each passage must be understood in its setting, identifying the people addressed, the conduct judged and the outcome.

Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE was a first-century judgment associated with Jesus' warnings about the city and the Temple. It concerned Jerusalem and the generation He addressed. It was not a timeless judgment upon the Jewish people, nor did it remove the future accountability of either Jews or Gentiles.

Christ's reign began at His ascension. The Millennium is a later phase of His already established reign. Within this framework, Jerusalem's destruction, the millennial phase, and the future Final Consummation are distinct.

The first resurrection is the new birth, through which believers pass from spiritual death into life in Christ. The future bodily resurrection belongs to the Final Consummation, together with Christ's final bodily coming, final judgment and the destruction of death. Jerusalem's destruction in 70 CE did not exhaust these future events.

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Before examining that final judgment, we turn to Christ's victory over death and His proclamation in Hades. His descent and preaching concern His death and resurrection. They reveal His authority reaching into the realm of the dead and prepare us to consider the raising of the saints who appeared in Jerusalem.

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8. Christ Descended to Hades and Preached There

A. He First Descended

Jesus entered the realm of the dead before His resurrection and ascension. His body lay in the tomb, but death did not defeat His work. He descended to Hades and preached there. Paul's teaching in Ephesians and Peter's testimony in Acts and his first epistle provide the biblical basis for this teaching.

Ephesians 4:9 (NKJV)

> (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Paul places Christ's descent before His ascension. In this lesson, the lower parts of the earth refers to His descent into Hades, the realm of the dead. The following verse identifies the One who descended as the same One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

In Acts 2:31, Peter explains that David spoke beforehand concerning Christ's resurrection: His soul was not left in Hades, and His flesh did not see corruption. Jesus truly entered death, but He was not abandoned there. His resurrection demonstrates that death could not hold Him.

Hades must be distinguished from the lake of fire and the final second death. Revelation 20:13-14 describes Hades surrendering its dead before Hades itself is cast into the lake of fire. When we speak of Jesus descending to hell here, we mean His descent to Hades.

B. He Preached to the Spirits in Prison

1 Peter 3:18-20 (NKJV)

> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison after His death. Read together, Ephesians 4:9, Acts 2:31, and this passage form the biblical basis for His descent and proclamation in Hades. The One who suffered for sins entered the realm of the dead and proclaimed there. His authority and victory extended beyond those living upon the earth.

Peter specifically identifies spirits associated with disobedience in Noah's days. These people had lived long before Christ's earthly ministry. Their earlier disobedience did not place them beyond the reach of His proclamation.

Christ's preaching in Hades belongs within His saving mission. Peter introduces the passage by explaining that Jesus suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. His proclamation among the dead expresses the purpose of the One who gave Himself for humanity.

C. The First Resurrection and Those Who Died Before Christ

Those who died before Christ's death and resurrection had not yet received the new birth made available through His completed work. Their earthly lives ended before He offered Himself for sins and rose victorious over death.

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First Peter 1:3 connects being born again with Jesus Christ's resurrection. The first resurrection is our passage from spiritual death into life in Christ through the new birth. It depends upon His saving work; people cannot accomplish it for themselves.

Before Christ died and rose, these people could not enter that resurrection life through faith in His already completed death and resurrection. God had shown grace before the cross, and people had responded to Him in faith. Nevertheless, the historical foundation of New Covenant resurrection life had not yet been accomplished.

Christ's preaching in Hades brought His saving proclamation to people whose earthly lives had ended before that work was completed. They were not simply people who had heard and rejected the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ. His proclamation reached them, consistent with His justice and His passion for the lost.

The opportunity to hear and the response to that proclamation are distinct. His preaching does not mean that everyone who heard Him was automatically saved. Life remains God's gift through Jesus Christ.

D. God's Patience and His Passion for the Lost

Peter's account recalls God's patience in Noah's days. The Divine long-suffering waited while Noah prepared the ark. We must understand God's judgment alongside His patience and concern for humanity.

The Christ who preached in Hades is the same Christ who suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. His opposition to disobedience and His desire to bring people into life proceed from His holy and loving character.

First Peter 4:6 further supports His saving proclamation among the dead. His passion for the lost extends into our understanding of His descent and preaching. Death did not place those who had lived before His earthly ministry beyond the reach of His proclamation.

E. The Graves Were Opened

Matthew 27:52-53 (NKJV)

> and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Matthew records a bodily resurrection of many saints in connection with Christ's death and resurrection. The graves were opened, and after Jesus' resurrection, these saints came out of their graves, entered Jerusalem and appeared to many people. Their appearance publicly demonstrated that Christ's victory had consequences for those who had already died.

We hold that Christ's preaching in Hades and the raising of these saints are linked. His descent, His proclamation to the dead and their emergence from the graves reveal His victory reaching into the realm of death. Those who had died before His saving work was accomplished were not excluded from its power.

This bodily resurrection is distinct from the first resurrection: being born again and passing from spiritual death into life in Christ. The new birth concerns receiving His life; Matthew describes bodies being raised and people appearing in Jerusalem. Christ's saving work connects these events. Matthew does not explicitly identify these saints as the particular spirits mentioned in 1 Peter 3.

Matthew describes many saints being raised, not every person who had died. Their resurrection does not replace the future general bodily resurrection and final judgment.

F. The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:22-23 (NKJV)

> So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

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Jesus' account of the rich man and Lazarus portrays the condition of the dead before His own death and resurrection. It contrasts Lazarus' comfort with the rich man's anguish. It also exposes the seriousness of ignoring God's revelation and neglecting the needy.

This account provides background for understanding Hades. Christ's later descent and proclamation are addressed through Ephesians, Acts and First Peter. Together, these passages contribute to our understanding of His victory over death.

The torment described in Hades does not establish an everlasting conscious existence as the final punishment. Hades is not the final state. It relinquishes its dead and is itself brought to an end. As established in our teaching on conditional immortality, everlasting life is God's gift through Jesus Christ, while those who finally reject that life face the second death.

Christ entered the realm of the dead, preached there and rose victorious. Our hope rests in the risen Lord, who has overcome death and gives life to those who belong to Him.

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9. Resurrection and Everlasting Contempt

Daniel 12:2 (NKJV)

> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,
> Some to everlasting life,
> Some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel presents resurrection with sharply contrasting outcomes: everlasting life, or shame and everlasting contempt. The passage does not describe both outcomes as everlasting life experienced in different conditions. The distinction between life and contempt is central to its meaning.

Contempt describes abhorrence or disgrace. An object of contempt does not need to remain consciously alive for that contempt to endure. The same Hebrew term appears in Isaiah 66:24, where it describes the abhorrence of dead bodies. This supports the distinction between enduring disgrace and endless conscious suffering.[3]

Shame and contempt are related but distinct. Shame concerns disgrace, while contempt expresses abhorrence. Their permanence underscores the seriousness and lasting impact of judgment; it does not, by itself, mean the condemned live forever. This agrees with conditional immortality: everlasting life is God's gift through Christ, while those who finally reject that life face destruction and the second death. Daniel's contrast contributes to that wider biblical argument.

Daniel 12:2 does not explicitly connect this awakening with Christ's proclamation to the spirits in prison. That connection must be distinguished from the link developed in Section 8 between His proclamation and the saints raised in Matthew 27.

Everlasting contempt must not be portrayed as an eternal spectacle in which the redeemed watch torment, burning bodies or ashes. The final state brings the removal of evil and death. God's people inherit life in His restored creation.

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10. The Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-15 (NKJV)

> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who 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, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

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A. The Judge and the Books

John describes the majesty of the One seated on the great white throne. Earth and heaven flee from His presence, and the dead stand before Him. Revelation 20:11 does not name the One on the throne directly. John 5:22 establishes that the Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son.

The opened books reveal judgment according to works. God knows each person's conduct. Neither social standing nor public reputation conceals anyone from His judgment: the small and the great stand before Him. The sea, Death and Hades surrender their dead, demonstrating that no place of death lies beyond His authority.

The Book of Life differs from the books that record deeds. These books have distinct roles within the judgment. The record of works establishes accountability, while the Book of Life identifies those who belong to God's life through Christ.

Judgment according to works does not turn salvation into something earned by human effort. Everlasting life remains God's gift through Jesus Christ. Grace and accountability go together: His gift of life does not make human conduct insignificant, and examining works does not cancel His promise to those who believe.

B. Those Cast into the Lake of Fire

Revelation 20:15 identifies those cast into the lake of fire as those whose names are not found in the Book of Life. Resurrection and condemnation are distinct. Being raised to stand before God does not, by itself, mean receiving the sentence of the lake of fire.

Death and Hades are also cast into the lake of fire. Hades, therefore, cannot be treated as another name for the lake: it releases its dead and then ends. The final judgment ends death's dominion.

John identifies the lake of fire as the second death. Those who finally remain outside God's gift of life face final destruction. Evil is not preserved in everlasting torment. Its removal belongs to the completion of Christ's victory and the fulfilment of God's purpose for His creation.

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11. Impartial Judgment and Human Responsibility

Romans 2:1 (NKJV)

> Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Paul confronts those who condemn others while practising the same wrongdoing. Recognising another person's sin does not make us innocent. God's judgment exposes hypocrisy and calls each person to account for their conduct. The following verses explain that God judges according to truth. His goodness, patience and longsuffering lead people towards repentance. His patience gives opportunity for change; it does not signify approval of wrongdoing.

This passage calls believers to examine their own lives. We cannot use another person's failings to excuse dishonesty, cruelty or disobedience in ourselves. Receiving God's mercy teaches us to acknowledge our need for forgiveness and extend mercy to others. God's impartiality also assures those who suffer injustice that He sees their suffering and knows the truth. They can entrust judgment to Him without taking personal vengeance or claiming authority to pronounce their persecutors' final destiny.

Trust in God's judgment supports both confidence and responsibility. We seek justice, resist evil and pray for the repentance of those who do wrong. Our hope rests in the Judge whose knowledge is complete, whose verdicts are righteous and whose patience expresses His desire to bring people into life.

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12. The Second Death

A. Final Destruction and the Gift of Life

Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

> But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

John identifies the lake of fire as the second death. This is the outcome of judgment for those who remain outside God's gift of life. The punishment is real, and its outcome is permanent.

Everlasting life is God's gift through Jesus Christ. It is not an indestructible possession that every human being naturally has. Conditional immortality expresses this dependence upon God: those who receive life in Christ live forever, while those who finally reject that life face destruction.

The second death is therefore more than the spiritual alienation people experience before conversion. Ephesians describes sinners as dead in trespasses and sins during their earthly lives. In Revelation's sequence, the second death follows bodily resurrection and judgment. It is their final destruction, not merely a continuation of their present alienation.

Eternal separation describes exclusion from God's life and kingdom, but the second death identifies the outcome of that exclusion. Those condemned do not receive everlasting life in another form. Evil ends rather than persists in an everlasting conscious existence in torment.

B. The Wider Biblical Witness and Our Confidence

The biblical teaching on final punishment must be considered as a whole. Matthew 25:46, Revelation 14:9-11, and Revelation 20:10 form part of that examination, alongside passages describing death, destruction, and the gift of everlasting life. AIM's lesson Why Hell Is Not Eternal Torment develops this wider argument.

The destruction of Death and Hades completes the overthrow of death's dominion. They surrender their dead and are themselves cast into the lake of fire. Death will no longer hold God's creation in bondage.

God's final judgment expresses the same holy and loving character revealed in Jesus Christ. His patience gives opportunity for repentance, His mercy offers life, and His justice ends destructive evil. His people can entrust their future to Him, knowing that His purpose culminates in life and a creation freed from death.

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13. Summary

God's judgment expresses His holy and loving character. His wrath reveals His passionate opposition to evil and His concern for the people it destroys. He desires the repentance and restoration of the lost, while refusing to allow evil to corrupt His creation indefinitely.

The Father has entrusted judgment to Jesus Christ. Believers have passed from spiritual death into life through the new birth, the first resurrection. They are free from condemnation, remain accountable for their conduct and receive the Father's discipline as His children.

Christ descended to Hades and preached to the dead. His saving proclamation reached those whose earthly lives had ended before His death and resurrection accomplished the foundation of New Covenant resurrection life. We hold that His proclamation and the bodily resurrection of the saints who appeared in Jerusalem are linked expressions of His victory over death.

Christ's reign began at His ascension, with the Millennium forming a subsequent phase of that reign. Jerusalem's judgment in 70 CE is distinct from the future Final Consummation. Christ's final bodily coming, the general bodily resurrection and the final judgment remain future.

At the great white throne, the dead are judged according to their works. Those not found in the Book of Life face the second death: final destruction, not an everlasting conscious existence in torment. Death and Hades are themselves brought to an end.

Everlasting life is God's gift through Jesus Christ. Our hope rests in the risen Lord, who has conquered death and gives everlasting life to those who believe in Him.

AI Assistance Disclosure

Most of the research and writing for this lesson was prayerfully undertaken by Dr Neville Westerbeek van Eerten. AI tools assisted with editorial review and checks of consistency, references and chronology. Some wording and illustrations were developed with AI assistance. The author reviewed the final material and retains responsibility for its interpretations, accuracy and conclusions.

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