

# - JUDGMENT -

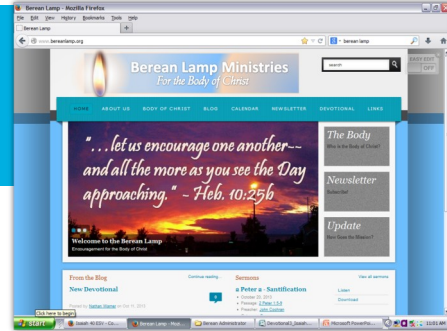
*"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."  
(Hebrews 9:27b)*



**Berean Lamp Ministries**  
*For the Body of Christ*

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## The Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)



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1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

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## No Fear of Judgment

By Scott Moller

Many Believers live in fear of God's judgment. But God's Word tells us that we should not fear if we are in Christ: *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love"* (1 John 4:14-18, NIV).

Some people believe this means we have a license to sin. Paul corrects them: *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer"* (Romans 6:1-2). We are not to live in sin as Believers, for *"if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is*

*left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God"* (Hebrews 10:26-27). Rather than live in sin deliberately, a Believer is to confess their sins, for *"if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). *"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet He did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"* (Hebrews 4:14-16). *"So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised. For, 'In just a little while, He Who is coming will come and will not delay.' And, 'But My righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.' But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved"* (Hebrews 10:35-39).

*"THERE is no FEAR in LOVE. But perfect LOVE drives out FEAR."* (1 John 4:18a)



By Maria Madsen

## Is “Judgment” a Bad Word?

By Nathan Warner

*“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”*

(Acts 17:30-31, NASB)

*“Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.”* (Psalm 96:12-13)

Did you read that? Even the fields and the trees will sing for joy at Christ’s return to judge the world! God’s judgment is supposed to be a joyful thing! Why then is the idea of Judgment often seen as an unpleasant thing among Christians? There are many who don’t think we should talk about God’s judgment because they think it scares people and turns them off the Gospel. “God is love,” they say, “and He is forgiving.” This is true, but He also created Hell for His judgment of un-believers. How do we reconcile God as loving with His judgment that sends people to Hell?

### What is God’s Judgment Anyway?

Before we get started, let’s define what God’s judgment is. Simply put, God’s judgment of the world will begin when Jesus returns to *“execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”* (Jude 1:15), *“and we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things”* (Romans 2:2), for *“the Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather*

*out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matthew 13:41-42). *“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment”* (John 5:28-29).

### God’s Judgment Bothers Some Believers

Sometimes Believers struggle with the idea of God’s judgment. Perhaps they stumble with sin and are afraid of God’s wrath, not understanding that they should have no fear of judgment if they do not live in sin willfully and if they confess their sins to Him, maturing through God’s process of Sanctification: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

On the other hand, perhaps they struggle with God’s judgment because their experiences with human judgment (through their parents, for example) may have seemed unexpected, arbitrary, or capricious, and they project these fears on God, worrying that His judgment may also be unpredictable.

Or perhaps they struggle with God’s judgment because their life-experiences can make God’s nature seem arbitrary and whimsical. It can be kind of difficult to look forward to an irreversible act of God that damns millions to eternal suffering and torment when you struggle with how arbitrary and unpredictable you feel God’s actions or inactions are in your life.

### The Modern Church Has a Problem with God’s Judgment

Regardless of the reason, not many Christians feel “exultant” when they think about the judgment of God. It’s one of the last things anyone wants to talk about – the elephant in the room that Believers may feel awkward about when entertaining guests or talking to

their non-believing friends. Many pastors and teachers think Hell threatens the “marketability” of the Gospel. It makes Christianity hard to compete in the world “market” of ideas. They say things like, “If we avoided all the ‘ugly’ and ‘scary’ parts of the Gospel, so many more people would come to know Christ! We need to focus on God’s love and forgiveness and just do away with all this fire and brimstone talk – it just doesn’t sell!”

This has caused the Church to de-emphasize God’s judgment of the sinful world in favor of God’s love. After all, everyone likes to hear they are loved, right? While God’s love for sinful man and His forgiveness of our sin through repentance and coming to know Christ is the beautiful promise of the Gospel, that doesn’t lessen the reality of God’s judgment upon the wicked and unrepentant people in the world. Aside from ungodly motives (raising money, increasing church attendance, and elevating our popularity), why might we have issues with God’s judgment?

### Is God’s Judgment Like Man’s Justice?

Our experience with human judgment shows that many things can push and pull it in

unexpected and unrighteous directions. We see many miscarriages of justice, bureaucratic paper shuffles, and arbitrary decisions. Sometimes this happens by accident; after all, men cannot see into the motives and the heart and so make mistakes in their judgment. Sometimes it happens by design.

Many times in life, we are taken advantage of by powerful people who said they were there to help us, and we trusted them, but our trust was betrayed, for *“the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted”* (Habakkuk 1:4). People make us good promises, but their final actions aren’t always faithful to us. Even then, we may not be able to discern their hearts, because they always have a “good” reason for their actions.

Even if we believe God’s justice is different from man’s justice, we may still struggle at times with anxiety that it too will be unpredictable and fickle. Thus, the thought of God’s judgment coming upon people isn’t always a “joyful” thought because our understanding has been skewed by our experience of the world’s judgment. Will God also be arbitrary?





### Is the End Going to Be as Traumatic as My Life Has Been?

Sometimes stuff happens in our lives that can make us fear God. Look at Job's words: *"Behold, I cry, 'Violence!' but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice"* (Job 19:7). *"Have I not wept for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? When I expected good, then evil came; when I waited for light, then darkness came. I am seething within and cannot relax; Days of affliction confront me. I go about mourning without comfort"* (Job 30:25-28a). In other words, "Haven't I obeyed Your Word? Haven't I followed Your ways? Why have You not protected me?" Job called upon the name of the Lord every day, but instead of help, his life was being burned from the top down, and it seemed to him like God stood by and watched the injustice of it all like a spectator. It's hard to trust God when you expected help, but instead you were hurt—how can you trust that the judgment of God will not also be like this?

Have you ever felt this way? Maybe He didn't protect you from an injury or an illness when you felt like you had given your life into His protection (think of Paul with the thorn in his flesh). Maybe you lost everything that you felt you had entrusted to Him for safe-keeping (think of Job). Is God unfaithful?

### But What is Our Real Issue with God's Judgment?

Behind any apprehension we have with God's judgment is the truth that we actually have apprehension with God Himself. At the core of the issue, we don't trust His nature and we don't have faith in His character. If we did, we would have faith in His judgment because we know it is part of His character, a character that He spelled out for us in His Word, a character that is loving, kind, holy, and pure. The Scriptures tell us that God is Just, God is Love, God is Holy: *"As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the LORD is tried; He is a*

*shield to all who take refuge in Him"* (Psalm 18:30). *"For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him"* (Isaiah 30:18b).

The problem with internalizing these truths is that satan often twists our experience of human judgment, just as he also twists the heart-breaking, traumatic, and horrific experiences we go through in life to try and reflect a different nature in God. He wants us to join in on accusing God of being unfaithful and untrustworthy. The difficulties of life sometimes lead us to question God's nature: "How can God, Who says He loves me, allow me to be hurt so badly? Is He Who He says He is?"

### God Says, "I AM WHO I AM"

The real question we must answer is, "Do I know God?" When people can't reconcile Who God says He is with what God does or what God says He will do, they are faced with a decision: trust Him or don't trust Him. God has said, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14) – either you believe Him or you don't, for He has made it clear in His Word what His nature is. There is no middle ground for us to feel wishy-washy about Him in the waves of life.

The whole issue comes down to your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Do you love Him? Do you trust Him? Or do you harbor anger, bitterness, and fear? We need to come to terms with this before we can correctly approach the topic of God's Judgment of the world. Because if we don't trust His nature, we will always be afraid His Judgment may be unfair, arbitrary, or harsh.

Unfortunately, at this juncture, many turn to false doctrines. Instead of believing God's Word, they invent fictions to reconcile their understanding of Who God is with how they think things should be (everyone goes to Heaven, Hell is temporary, Hell doesn't exist, etc). But in doing this, they are actually judging God's Word unfaithful and slandering His character, not heeding the Scriptures, which say, *"Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and you*

be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6, ESV).

### No One Accidentally Goes to Hell

If we trust God is Who He says He is, then we know His creation of Hell is not harsh or cruel. If you believe God, you know that the verdict men receive before Him on Judgment Day will not be a mistake. There will be no miscarriage of justice, no bureaucratic paper shuffling, no arbitrary categories penciled in, and no hung juries. When men receive eternal damnation from God, they will actually, truly deserve it, without any room for forgiveness in their lives, because there is no room for repentance in their hearts, for Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life"* (John 5:24). It is an unfortunate thing that some Believers feel people are going to Hell almost accidentally, as if God's witness in their life failed them. Many Believers harbor guilt because they

don't feel they are "doing enough" to witness or evangelize. They believe that they literally have blood on their hands because God expects them to get the message of salvation to people or they will go to Hell. While we should always be encouraging one another in the Great Commission to witness and evangelize (Matthew 28:16-20), the truth is that no one is going to Hell because of what we do or don't do. There will be no scene in Heaven where God says, "Well, Frank, if it was up to me, I'd have saved you, but Tim over there was the witness I had in your life, and he wasn't bold enough to knock on your door, so now I have to send you to Hell." This kind of thinking is an assault on the sovereign nature of God.

God is faithful and just to reach with His saving hand to any heart that can be persuaded to trust Him. He abandons no one who can be saved. It is not in His nature: *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His"* (2 Chronicles 16:9b, NASB). *"Good and upright is the LORD;*

*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Hebrews 1:3*

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By Ginny Larsen

*Therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies*" (Psalm 25:8-10), while *"the Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). David declared, *"My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will whet His sword; He has bent and readied His bow; He has prepared for him His deadly weapons, making His arrows fiery shafts. Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends"* (Psalm 7:10-16, ESV).

Those who go to Hell will have been given a very real opportunity to repent from their wicked ways—no one will be able to claim God is guilty of an oversight, accident, miscarriage, or whim, and if they are sentenced to eternal damnation, it will truly be justice from a loving, merciful, faithful, and righteous God, as Paul explained to the Christians in Rome: *"The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world?"* (Romans 3:5b-6, NASB).

### God Judges the Very Heart of Man

God is not unrighteous in His wrath, not even by accident. God sees the heart that accepts Him, just as He knows the heart that rejects Him? Scripture says, *"The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12). God is not blind. He sees every facet of our being. Just as there is no "righteous" mask that can fool Him into thinking someone evil is good, no

"filthy" garb can mislead Him into thinking the humble are wicked. God is not tricked, as David warned his son, Solomon: *"If you say, 'See, we did not know this,' does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?"* (Proverbs 24:12)

God sees everything and weighs the hearts of men, and He will *"render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men"* (2 Chronicles 6:30b). God will not judge mankind by the letter of His Law but by the Spirit of His Law. Salvation is a matter of the heart, and everyone who goes to Hell will have gone there because there was no room for Jesus to rule in their hearts; *"therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God"* (1 Corinthians 4:5).

### Let Us Rejoice in God's Judgment!

God's judgment is a good thing, because HE IS GOOD. God is faithful to the upright in heart for His judgment will fall upon the wicked only. The wickedness of the world should grieve our hearts, just as the hardness of men's hearts grieves God because it prevents them from repenting of their evil. We must witness Christ to the world, wishing that none should perish, just like our Heavenly Father. But, just as the trees, fields, and everything in them exult at God's judgment, we also should sing for joy over Christ's coming judgment of the world. For we are not God's salvation to mankind, Jesus is—He alone will judge the whole entire earth in righteousness, because only He knows the true nature of men's hearts.

In light of this, *"trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:5-6). May we trust His judgment! Even so, Amen.



## Escaping the Coming Judgment

By Jane Titrud

The Bible speaks of a “day of judgment,” which will come upon the earth for the destruction of ungodly men. At this time, God will literally destroy the physical heavens and earth by fire and intense heat: *“The present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7, NASB). *“The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up”* (2 Peter 3:10).

Rebellious unbelievers will likewise stand before God on the “last day” and be judged for their evil deeds (Revelation 20:11-15). This is the will of the Father. Jesus said, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak”* (John 12:48-49).

Of course, Jesus also said that *“God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him”* (John 3:17; see also John 12:47). Yet, this does not contradict the reality of coming judgment. The two messages go together.

We know that the Apostle Paul understood the fundamental connection between the Gospel and the message of coming judgment. This was an important part of what he preached to the Gentiles on Mars’ Hill in Athens:

*“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31).

Realizing that God will eventually and cer-

tainly judge this world explains the need for the Gospel in the first place. Man has to have a remedy for the penalty and power of sin. Otherwise, he would be hopelessly and eternally lost. God is a holy God Who simply cannot tolerate sin. In His mercy, He provided a way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. And, this is the only way to avoid judgment.

Some 2,000 years after the Gospel was originally preached, however, most people now seem to scoff at the idea of coming judgment as well as any need for a message of salvation by grace through faith. Even in the Church, people are falling more and more for the lie that God is a God of love and mercy—not judgment.

Much of the current situation no doubt has to do with the workings of satan. He is the *“father of lies”* (John 8:44), and the more numerous and varied his lies are, the more effective they tend to be. Thus, it should come as no surprise that a variety of false teachings undermining the message of coming judgment are not only aimed at the world but also at the Church.

Consider, for example, secular theories about the origin of the universe. Darwin’s theory of evolution has been widely accepted, even by many in the Church. That is even though Darwinian evolution requires an interpretation of the fossil record in terms of slow and gradual change over millions of years. Since neither the Biblical record of special creation nor the worldwide flood at the time of Noah supports this theory, the Book of Genesis ends up being rejected as unscientific. In practice, secular, naturalistic science thus becomes the measure of truth rather than the Word of God. And, with that change goes the biblical documentation of God’s power and ability to both create and destroy the universe—in other words, the concept of His right and ability to judge His creation.

It is interesting to note, however, that the Bible predicted this turn of events hundreds of years before the advent of Darwin and his theory of evolution. It even characterized the present situation beforehand as being part of the last days: *“Know this first of all, that in the*

*last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:3-7). The point here is that everything actually has *not* continued on the way it was from the beginning, and it will not. God judged the world before by causing a massive worldwide flood, and He will judge it again by fire.*

On an entirely different note, consider those who promote stories about people dying and returning to this life after being in Heaven as a supposedly valid way of supporting the Bible's teaching on eternal life. Such stories mention nothing about the issue of sin and coming judgment. It is as if Heaven is the destination of everyone regardless of one's relationship to Jesus Christ. This is not the Gospel. Neither does it lead to the kind of faith necessary to avoid God's coming judgment. At best, this is a distraction from the truth. If a person cannot believe the testimony of Jesus Christ Who died and rose again, Who was with the Father and went back to the Father in perfect obedience to His will, how can one feel justified in putting his or her faith in a mere sinner (we are all sinners) who claims to have gone to Heaven and returned to this life apart from any reference to sin?

Redefining what the Bible labels as sinful practices in terms of human rights, alternate life styles, or as addictions and diseases are other modern affronts to the Biblical message of coming judgment. In 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul lists a number of people who will not inherit the kingdom of God: "*Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,*

*nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The issue here is clearly unrighteousness or sin, and what the Bible says about this is not open to discussion. The practice of such things will lead to judgment. Yet, this message does not stand alone. The very next verse says: "*Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Notice that this is written in the past tense. In other words, some of those who first received this letter actually had experienced deliverance from such things just by accepting the truth of the Gospel—and so can anyone today who believes the same truth. Ultimately, therefore, this is not a message of condemnation but one of hope for deliverance and salvation.

Additional examples of deceptive teachings could be mentioned as well. But, the important thing to bear in mind remains the same. That is, there is only one way to overcome the penalty and power of sin and to avoid the coming judgment of God, and that is by believing the truth of the Biblical Gospel. Every temptation to accept any message to the contrary must therefore be avoided if one is to keep from falling for the lies of satan.





## Judgment – Is it for the Believer?

By Ginny Larsen

*“For the time has come for the judgment to begin from the house of God. And if it first begins from us, what will be the end of those disobeying the gospel of God? And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator.” (1 Peter 4:17-19, NKJV)*

I always looked at the “at” the house of God and thought this was judgment *by* God being talked about. It is not. It is simply speaking of the persecution and hardship of living the Christian life in this world and what all Christians have endured for all time, since the beginning of Christianity, at the hands of wicked men in this world, such as Christ Himself did.

**McDonald's notes:** During this age, the church is undergoing judgment by the unbelieving world. Believers are experiencing their sufferings now, just as Jesus did when He was on earth. If that is so, what will be the fate of those who do not obey the gospel of God? If Christians suffer now for doing good, what will the unsaved suffer in eternity for all their ungodly deeds? The same argument is contained in this verse, quoted from Proverbs 11:31; *‘If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner.’* The righteous person is scarcely saved or **saved with difficulty**. From the divine standpoint his salvation was purchased at enormous cost. From the human standpoint, men are told, *‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate’* (Luke 12:24). Believers are taught that *‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God’* (Acts 14:22). With all the dangers and temptations that beset a Christian, it is only a miracle of divine grace that preserves him for the heavenly kingdom—William McDonald, *The*

### Believer's Bible Commentary)

It struck me that in the Modern King James version the word was *from* the house of God rather than *at* the house of God. So I looked up the word in Strong's and found it interesting that it is the word for “departure.” This puts a little different light on the verse:

**Strong's G575 apo:** A primary particle; “off”, that is, *away* (from something near), in various senses (of place, time, or relation; literally or figuratively): - (X here-) after, ago, at, because of, before, by (the space of), for (-th), from, in, (out) of, off, (up-) on (-ce), since, with. In composition (as a prefix) it usually denotes *separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal*, etc.

**Thayer Definition: G575 apo1)** of separation, 1a) of local separation, after verbs of motion from a place, i.e. of departing, of fleeing; 1b) of separation of a part from the whole; 1b1) where of a whole some part is taken; 1c) of any kind of separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed; 1d) of a state of separation, that is of distance; 1d1) physical, of distance of place; 1d2) temporal, of distance of time; 2) of origin; 2a) of the place whence anything is, comes, befalls, is taken; 2b) of origin of a cause.

If judgment begins from the house of God, it is a point of origin for God's judgment on the world. There are so many arguments today that Christians must go through the Tribulation to be “purified” or “cleansed” because we are not yet “without spot or wrinkle.” People who believe this often use 1 Peter 4 to teach that the Church has to go through a “judging” process and partake of the Tribulation. I don't find this mentality in the Bible at all. I know suffering does have a purifying effect on our faith in that it causes us to look at things above and not things on earth. In this way, suffering can cause us to draw closer in dependence on our Lord, and our faith in Him is made stronger as we learn to lean on Him and draw from Him.


But this is not the same thing as saying we are not “fit” for the Kingdom until we go through this purifying judgment from God. What then of those who died in Christ without ever going through persecution and tribulation? What about the many who never reach that state of spotless perfection? Do any of us? It is this “purgatory-like” thinking about the Church that needs to be corrected, because it is not much different than the Catholic church teaching that we need purgatory to complete the work of Christ! Do we need to be perfected somehow in our lives here below before Christ can accept us into Heaven? Or is our salvation through faith in the blood of Jesus alone sufficient to cleanse, purify, and save us for all eternity? Here are some of my notes on this study:

*“The husbands, be loving your own wives, just as also Christ loved the Assembly and gave Himself [or, handed Himself over] on her behalf, so that He should sanctify her, **having cleansed** [or, purged] [her] with the bathing of the water by [the] word, [compare with John 15:3 below] so that He should present her to Himself, the glorious [or, splendid] Assem-*

*bly, not having spot [or, blemish] nor wrinkle, nor any of such things, but so that she should be holy and unblemished”* (Ephesians 5:25-27, Analytical Literal Translation). **“Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you”** (John 15:3, ESV).

We are cleansed only by the blood of Jesus by believing His Word, and it is that alone which is our righteousness and makes us presentable and Holy, without spot, blemish, or wrinkle. The moment we believe in Jesus and He gives us His Spirit, we are cleansed, and we are presentable to Him. He sees no more spot or blemish in us.

Christ gave Himself so that **HE** should sanctify her, so that **HE** should cleanse her, so that **HE** should present her to Himself, **NOT HAVING** spot or blemish or wrinkle – it is because of what **HE** has done, not what she has done. It is **HE** Who makes her holy and unblemished. It is not after she goes through some sort of trial or suffering that she is made this, but it is through what Christ alone has



*“The STEADFAST love of the LORD NEVER ceases; His MERCIES never come to an END; they are NEW every morning; GREAT is your FAITHFULNESS.”* (Lamentations 3:22-23)



done. He is soon to come for this Church that He has made ready through His blood and who have put their hope and faith in Him alone by believing His Word. We are to comfort ourselves as we walk through this dark path below, full of sufferings caused by evil, full of unreasonable, wicked men who come against His purposes, full of unspeakable darkness, by reminding ourselves He is coming for us. How hard it is to be comforted or look to a “blessed hope,” so called, if we are told we must suffer in order to be made spotless and that God is judging His Church and purifying it, and we must pass through our time of “purgatory” in this earth, so to speak, by going through the Tribulation. The argument is, “Christians all over the world are suffering and for ages have suffered so why do we think we won’t have to go through the Tribulation and suffer also?” The answer is because we are only perfected in Him, through His blood, and this world here has already been the Christian’s “tribulation” since Christ left the earth, not as a “purgatory” for us, but as our sharing in His sufferings which He told us we would. Also, the tribulation period is called the “time of Jacob’s trouble,” and is a time of testing specifically for Israel, as well as God’s judgment on the Gentile world that has rejected Christ.

Paul says, *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake”* (Philippians 1:29). He also tells us as He has made us His children He has also made us *“heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:17-18).

It is assumed that those in Christ will suffer. Our inheritance in Christ is not conditional on our suffering but our being “in Him.” The Lord knew that all those who are in Him will suffer with Him, as they walk through this world. There are many tribulations in this life we go through in our walk and many battles we fight in the spirit. His sufferings are ours now. We are to “keep the Word of His pa-

tience” until He comes for us: *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens, says these things: I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have **kept My Word** and have not denied My name...Because you have **kept the Word of My patience**, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the habitable world, to try those who dwell upon the earth”* (Revelation 3:7-8;10).

This is His last days faithful Church, who are walking in this world’s sufferings by faith alone and keeping His Word. Notice this Church is not given any other admonishments or rebukes. And this Church is promised that they will be delivered “out of” the “hour of temptation which will come upon the habitable world”... the “earth dwellers,” which is a term for the ungodly who make this earth their habitation and do not look to Heaven. The Church has shared in the Lord’s sufferings on this earth. They will be delivered from the world’s tribulation and judgment that is about to come upon them. If you are not sure you will be delivered from this judgment, you can know, simply by putting your faith in that incredible sacrifice He gave to “whosoever will believe” (adhere to, cling to, rely on, trust in) Him and what He did to pay the penalty for your sin, justify you before His perfect righteousness and Holy throne of judgment, and accept you into His kingdom, giving you His Spirit to then indwell you, cleansing you, and giving you a new heart, or a new nature, that will serve Him. In order to receive this you must know that you are a sinner and that there is no other justification that is acceptable to Him, that your sin is repulsive to a perfect, holy, righteous God, and that you cannot dwell in His Heaven with that sin. That sin separates you from Him for eternity, unless the penalty is paid, which could only be paid by God Himself, Who became flesh, Who lived among us, Who gave Himself on the cross, though sinless, to take upon Himself our sin, and jus-

tify us and bring us “into Christ,” in union with Him now so that in Him we are seen before God as righteous. If you see your sin, and if you are convicted of its evil, and want to turn your heart to Him to be cleansed and made new by His Spirit coming to live in you, all you need to do is ask, believe it, and receive by faith all He has done. There is nothing more. He will cleanse you, give you a new heart, guide you in His Word as you give yourself to reading it, teach you to know Him, and show you the new life He has for you to walk in. In order for that new life to grow, find other Bible believing Christians to meet with, read your Bible daily, pray, and talk to Him often as your Heavenly Father. He says that all who believe in Him He will “*come in to them and sup with them and they with Him.*” He will reveal Himself to you in a personal way to walk with you through this life of trial and suffering. And He will keep your heart close to Him to give you the grace you need daily to live it. He will reveal His will to you so that you know how to

walk pleasing to Him.

The Christian will one day face the “judgment seat of Christ”: “*But why do you judge your brother? Or also why do you despise your brother? For all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.’ So then each one of us will give account concerning himself to God*” (Romans 14:10-12). “*So speak and do as those who shall be judged by the **law of liberty***” (James 2:12). James says we will be judged by the “Law of Liberty.” Paul says in Romans, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:1-3). “*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he condemning? It is Christ who has died, but rather also who is raised, who is*



*“Why DO the NATIONS rage and the PEOPLES plot in VAIN?” (Psalm 2:1)*



also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33-34).

We are not judged or condemned for our sin – it has completely been taken care of in Christ! Yet our works will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ, and there will be either reward or great loss according to what we did under that "law of liberty," with the great incredible grace that God has given us: "*But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's **work** shall be **made manifest**: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's **work** shall abide which he built thereon, 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 through fire*" (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

There is **chastisement** for the Christian but not *judgment* in this world. Chastisement has to do with "training" or "correction," as a father for his beloved child, and judgment has to

do with reward or paying a penalty. Christ has already paid the penalty of our sin.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and **cometh not into judgment**, but hath passed out of death into life"* (John 5:24, KJV).

*"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons, My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, Nor faint when thou art reprov'd of Him; For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, that we*



*"Then DEATH and HADES were thrown into the LAKE of FIRE. This is the SECOND death, the LAKE of FIRE."*

*(Revelation 20:14)*

**Grand Prismatic Spring,**  
Yellowstone National Park

*may be partakers of His holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:5-11).

**Gill's Commentary:** “my son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord”; by which is meant, not vindictive punishment; this would not be speaking to them, nor dealing with them as children, and would be contrary to the love of God towards them; besides, chastisement in this sense has been upon Christ for them, and it would be unjust to lay it on them again; but a fatherly correction is designed, and which is given in love by God, as a Father, and for the instruction of His children, as the word used signifies: and it is called not the chastening of men, but of the Lord; every chastening, or afflictive providence, is appointed by God, and is looked upon by believers, when grace is in exercise, as coming from Him; and it is directed, and governed, and limited by Him, and is overruled by Him for His own glory, and their good: and this is not to be despised, as something nauseous and loathsome, or as not useful and unprofitable, or as insignificant and unworthy of notice, but should be esteemed for the good ends, which are sometimes answered, by it.

So when you look at the things happening in this world, the evil that is seeming to take over, growing at a rapid pace, prospering, and overwhelming you, you can know you have a blessed assurance that “*if God be for us [and He is], who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31b) He is there with you, and your reward is greater than anything you could compare it to here below. Nothing can take it from you and nothing can separate you from Him! Know that God is not against you to judge you in this world, nor does He delight in your suffering, as some seem to think. He hates suffering; He came to defeat it. He allows it only for a time until sin has reached its fullness. His allowing it is because of His patience (which

we are to also keep and walk in as Revelation 3:10 says), sharing in His suffering for a time, because of His love, because He is full of grace and does not wish any to perish but that all would come to repentance. Not all will, but God's desire is for life. He knows those who are His and will come to Him and patiently waits for them: “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). “*Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator*” (1 Peter 4:19).

We have much to encourage our hearts through our time of suffering now, but they cannot be encouraged if we are walking here in fear and a wrong relationship with the Lord. We must see Him rightly and all He has provided for us now. We must walk in what He has given us: “*every spiritual blessing in the Heavenlies in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 1:3), and “*all we need to live godly in Christ Jesus*” (1 Peter 1:3), for He promises nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35-39); and that all things in this life that happen to us are for our good and conforming us to His image (8:28-31); and that we have an inheritance undefiled, kept in Heaven for us, that no one can take away, that we are kept for through it all (1 Peter 1:3-6). We need not walk in fear but love. His perfect love for us casts out all fear as we know that we have no fear of judgment since He has taken our judgment upon Himself.

“*Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us: hereby we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent*

*the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, even so are we in this world. **There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because He first loved us***” (1 John 4:9-19).

**The Believer's Bible Commentary, by William MacDonald on 1 John 4:17:** Love has been perfected among us in this. It is not our love that is made perfect, but God's love is made perfect with us. John is now taking us on to that future time when we will stand before the Lord. Will it be with **boldness** and confidence or will it be with cringing terror? The answer is that it will be with **boldness**, or confidence, because perfect love has settled the sin question once and for all. The reason for our confidence in that coming day is given in the words “**because as He is, so are we in this world.**” The Lord Jesus is now in heaven, with judgment completely behind Him. He came into the world once and suffered the punishment which our sins deserved. But He has finished the work of redemption and now will never have to take up the sin question again. As He is, so are we in this world. That is, our sins were judged at the cross of Calvary, and we can confidently sing:

Death and judgment are behind me,  
Grace and glory lie before;  
All the billows rolled o'er Jesus,  
There they spent their utmost power.  
- Mrs. J. A. Trench

Just as judgment is passed for Him, so we are beyond the reach of condemnation.

**1 John 4:18:** Because we have come to

know God's love, we have **no fear** of perishing. **There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.** It is **perfect love** that **casts out** our **fear**. I am assured of the Lord's love first of all, because He sent His Son to die for me. Secondly, I know He loves me because He indwells me at the present moment. Thirdly, I can look to the future with confidence and without fear. Truly, **fear involves torment, and he who fears is not made perfect in love.** God's love has not been allowed to operate in the lives of those who are afraid of Him. They have never come to Him in repentance and received the forgiveness of sins.

**1 John 4:19: We love Him because He first loved us.** The only reason **we love** at all is **because He first loved us**. The Ten commandments require that a man should love his God and neighbor, but the law could not produce this love. How then could God obtain this love which His righteousness required? He solved the problem by sending His Son to die for us. Such wonderful love draws out our hearts to Him in return. We say, “You have bled and died for me; from now on I will live for You.”

May these things encourage and strengthen your heart as you wait for Him by faith! He has promised He will come! He will do all things just as He said He would. He will fulfill His promises to you as a Believer and His judgment to the world as He said. He will come for His Church just as He said, “*Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*” (John 14:1-3, NASB). He has promised, and so it shall be! Look up! Your redemption draweth nigh!



## Destroying from the Inside Out

By Maggie Moller

Let me ask you a question: how many of you can think of a time when you were hurt by another person's judgment of you? This is an easy question to answer. I am sure most of us can quickly come up with more than one example of times where we have experienced this kind of hurt in our lives. Let me ask you another question: how many times have you been guilty of being the one passing the judgment? Now, this is a harder question to answer. Most of us don't want to admit to ever having being found on this side of the equation. But now is the time to be completely honest with ourselves. Not one of us can say we have never been guilty of passing judgment, whether verbal or in our hearts, upon a fellow brother or sister in Christ. I know I can say this is an area where I have experienced hurt in my life, but I would not be truthful if I were not also to say I can think of many instances where I have un-

kindly judged the actions of others.

Now, before I go any further I want to clarify the type of judgment to which I am referring. The judgment I am discussing in the context of this article is judgment of actions related to non-biblical issues. For example, topics the Bible does not specifically refer to such as college education, women working outside the home, and watching TV, just to name a few. In my understanding, such things are merely matters of conscience. Who are we to say whether or not a matter of our conscience must be that of another's? Yet, we all are guilty of judging others according to our standards and convictions. As a Body of Christ, this should not be so! Paul addresses this topic in 1 Corinthians 10:29b-31 where he says, *"For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part...with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God"* (NIV).

As Believers, we are called upon by God to encourage one another on a daily basis. Paul

*"THEREFORE let us STOP passing JUDGMENT on one another. INSTEAD, make up your MIND not to put any STUMBLING block or OBSTACLE in your brother's WAY."*

*(Romans 14:13)*



By Natalie Warner

tells us this in Hebrews 3:13: *"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."* When we judge one another we are not encouraging; we are in fact tearing each other down. This is in effect destroying our Christian effectiveness from right within our own members. We are charged by the Lord to love one another. How can we fully be demonstrating the love of God to each other if we are passing judgment on life callings that differ from our own? John writes in 1 John, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God"* (1 John 4:7).

When we take judgment into our own hands we are in fact taking on a role that God says is His. In Ecclesiastes 12:14, King Solomon writes, *"For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."* Solomon is known to be the wisest man to ever walk this earth: I think we should take his words to heart and remember in Whose Hands judgment belongs. We cannot know the motives of fellow Believers for their actions. If we judge based on our limited knowledge, we may be guilty of judging them regarding something God has told them to do. The early Church must have also struggled with this topic since Paul addresses it in many of his letters. He says in Romans 14:13, *"Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."*

Despite my change in style this month, God still brought a hymn to heart. One of my favorite choruses we sing is "The Servant Song." It is a simple little hymn, but each time we sing it I am greatly moved. For me, this hymn fully captures what it truly means to be the Body of Christ. We are a family. And being a family means that although we are all different, we uphold one another despite our various life paths. God has called us each to a unique ministry. We all need to feel supported when following our path, especially by our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. Take a moment

and reflect on the lyrics to "The Servant Song" by Richard Gillard:

Brother, let me be your servant  
Let me be as Christ to you  
Pray that I may have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too

We are pilgrims on a journey  
We are brothers on the road  
We are here to help each other  
Walk the mile and bear the load

I will hold the Christlight for you  
In the night-time of your fear  
I will hold my hand out to you  
Speak the peace you long to hear

I will weep when you are weeping  
When you laugh I'll laugh with you  
I will share your joy and sorrow  
Till we've seen this journey through

When we sing to God in heaven  
We shall find such harmony  
Born of all we've known together  
Of Christ's love and agony

Brother, let me be your servant  
Let me be as Christ to you  
Pray that I may have the grace  
To let you be my servant, too

I would like to extend a challenge to each one of us, myself included. Find at least one way each day for the next 21 days to encourage someone in our Body. It is often said that it takes 21 days to form a habit. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we cultivated habits of encouragement among our family of Believers? Think of how much more effective we could be in furthering God's Kingdom if we focused on building each other up instead of tearing down? Ask the Lord to reveal to you anyone you may have hurt by prior judgment and for the humility to approach them for forgiveness. Don't let the past define you; each day is a new opportunity to cultivate Christ-like attitudes. Choose to make today a new day!



## November/December Newsletter Theme— CHRIST'S RETURN

**Submission Deadline: November 29**

**Publish Date: December 8**

### Christ's Return...

- When will it happen?
- Is there more than one return of Christ?
- What does it look like?
- What does it mean for the Believer?
- What will it mean for the un-believer?

### Verses on CHRIST'S RETURN (from the NASB version)

**Revelation 22:12** — *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."*

**Hebrews 9:28** — *"So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."*

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** — *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."*

**Revelation 19:11-16** — *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'"*

**Matthew 24:44** — *"For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."*

**Further Out—Jan/Feb 2016: THE WORD OF GOD**