

# Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

July 2001

“Unto the church... in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2) The West Virginia camp meeting is just around the corner. It will be held on July 17-21, and I am looking forward to meeting you there. For detailed directions and the schedule, please see last month’s issue, or for more information, call us at (304) 732-9204. Video number 4 in the series, “The Good News About God,” entitled “The Death of Christ,” is now ready for distribution. Video number 3 in this series is almost ready. By the time you receive this paper we should have that ready as well. I strongly encourage you to get the complete series in audio cassette or video format. I am sure you will be blessed by them.

## ***The Big Picture***

by Lynnford Beachy

This month we are going to look at a few concepts that may be new to many of you, but I believe they will be beneficial and enlightening. This article will consider three basic principles. They are:

- Can we be forgiven of future sins before they are committed and repented of?
- Was everything finished at the cross?
- The pre-advent investigative judgment

Please especially notice the section dealing with the pre-advent investigative judgment.

### ***Can We Be Forgiven of Future Sins Before They Are Committed and Repented of?***

The Bible makes it plain that if we confess our sins, God forgives us of sins that we have committed in the past. But does the Bible anywhere indicate that we can be forgiven of sins in the future—sins we have not yet committed? In other words, if I confess all my past sins today, will God also forgive me today for sins that I may commit tomorrow or the next day? Can I ask God to forgive me for a sin that I am about to commit? This certainly sounds strange when we think about it, but it is being taught. Is this what the Bible teaches?

The Old Testament sanctuary service was given as an illustration of how God deals with sin. In the book of Numbers we read, “*And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul*

*that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.*” (Numbers 15:27, 28) In the earthly sanctuary service a person was not forgiven until he confessed his sin and brought a sin offering to the sanctuary. In reference to this God said, “*the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.*” (Leviticus 4:26)

For these faithful believers their sins were only forgiven after they repented of them and manifested their faith in the sacrifice of Christ by bringing an offering for their sin. Although Christ’s sacrifice was “*once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10), the repentant sinner was required to confess his sin, and manifest his faith in the sacrifice of Christ by bringing a sin offering for each of his subsequent sins. If he sinned one day he was to bring a sin offering and confess his sins. If he sinned the next day he was to repeat the process in order to be forgiven. There was no provision made for the repentant sinner to confess his sins one time, and be released from all his future sins. Furthermore, his confessions were for specific sins (Leviticus 5:5) and it would be impossible to be specific in confession for sins

### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**

**Questions and Answers . . . . . page 13**

by Lynnford Beachy

**The Unconquerable Life. . . . . page 14**

by E. J. Waggoner

**Letters from our Readers. . . . . page 15**

that have not yet been committed—unless they had been planned beforehand.

Certain Christian writers in the past have commented on this subject. I do not cite these authors as proof of a point, but rather as evidence that other Christians share the same conclusion on this subject. One such author, Stanley Derickson, a Baptist theologian wrote, “The blood of Christ is not applied to the sin until after the forgiveness is sought. This is only logical. If it were applied automatically, we would have no need to go before the Lord with our confessions.” (*Notes on Theology*, page 874, Copyright 1992)

If God were to forgive me today of every sin I might commit in the future, there would be no need for me to confess any sin that I might commit in the future. Yet John wrote, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:9) Forgiveness of our sins is conditional on whether we confess them or not. If we confess them, He has promised to forgive them.

In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus gave us an example of how to pray. Jesus instructed us to ask the Father to, “*forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*” (Matthew 6:12) We are to ask God to forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. My friends, that is very serious. That means if I do not forgive others then God will not forgive me. This is precisely what Jesus said right after He gave us the Lord’s Prayer. He said, “*if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*” (Matthew 6:14, 15) This should make us seriously consider in what way we forgive others.

Jesus said to His twelve disciples, “*And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*” (Mark 11:25, 26) Notice that Jesus is speaking to Christians—Christians who have already begun their walk with God. Christ’s words here could not be true if God forgave us of all of our future sins at the time of our first confession of sins, for at any time, even after we have confessed our sins of the past, we could cherish bitterness toward someone and refuse to forgive that person. Jesus said if we do this God will not forgive us of our sins. But if God had already forgiven us of all future sins, how could it be true that He would refrain from forgiving us of our sins?

### **Once Saved, Always Saved?**

If we believe God forgives us of all future sins at the point of conversion, the logical conclusion must be that once a person is saved he will always be saved and cannot

lose that salvation no matter what happens. However, the sad history of Saul is an example proving that this is not true. Saul was truly converted. The Bible says that the Lord “*gave him another heart,*” and he was “*turned into another man.*” (1 Samuel 10:6, 9) Yet the Bible records that after a life that included rejecting God, “*Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it.*” (1 Chronicles 10:13)

Again, I would like to cite a few Christian authors on this subject. One Bible commentary states, “A Christian looks upon Christ as one who has taken away his past sin (1 Peter 2:24), and who **will forgive** his present sin (1 John 1:9).” (J. W. McGarvey, LL.D., and Philip Y. Pendleton, A.B., *The Four Fold Gospel Commentary* on John 1:29, emphasis supplied) *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary* on Malachi 1:6 states, “We may rely on God’s mercy for pardon as to the past, but not for indulgence to sin in [the] future.” If God has already forgiven me of all my future sins as well as my past, then it would not matter what lifestyle I would choose to live. If this were true, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, would all be acceptable. But Paul said, “*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” (Galatians 5:19-21)

When we come to Christ, He tells us, “*sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.*” (John 5:14) Jesus says to you and me today, “*go, and sin no more.*” (John 8:11) John wrote, “*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*” (1 John 2:1) Paul wrote, “*Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.*” (1 Corinthians 7:19) These commands would be meaningless to the Christian if all his future wickedness was already forgiven and could not be held against him.

### **God’s Forgiveness of All Sins**

Some use the following verses as proof of their assertion that future, as well as past, sins are forgiven at the time of initial repentance: “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth **all** thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.*” (Psalms 103:2, 3) Some assume that the word “all” in this verse must include future as well as past sins. However, even a casual examination of the word “all” in the Bible will reveal that this is not necessarily the case. For example, notice how “all” is used in reference to the plague of locusts in Egypt: “*He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, And did eat up **all** the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.*” (Psalms 105:34, 35)

Certainly nobody would assume that the locusts and caterpillars ate, not only all the herbs that existed at that time, but also all the herbs that ever would exist in the land of Egypt in the future. It would not have been possible at one time for the locusts to eat all the herbs that ever would exist in the future.

God desires to forgive us of all our sins, that is for sure. When we confess our sins God forgives us of all of our sins and we can stand before God as though we had never sinned. The issue of whether God forgives us of future sins is not new to the 21st century, it has been seen before. Notice what Thomas Watson wrote in 1692 addressing God's complete forgiveness of our sins:

"When God pardons a sinner, he forgives all sins. 'I will pardon all their iniquities.' Jeremiah 33:8. 'Having forgiven you all trespasses.' Colossians 2:13. The mercy-seat, which was a type of forgiveness, covered the whole ark, to show that God covers all our transgressions. He does not leave one sin upon the score; he does not take his pen and for fourscore sins write down fifty, but blots out all sin. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' Psalm 103:3. When I say, God forgives all sins, I understand it of sins past, for sins to come are not forgiven till they are repented of. Indeed God has decreed to pardon them; and when he forgives one sin, he will in time forgive all; but sins future are not actually pardoned till they are repented of. *It is absurd to think sin should be forgiven before it is committed.*

"If all sins past and to come are at once forgiven, then what need to pray for the pardon of sin? It is a vain thing to pray for the pardon of that which is already forgiven. The opinion that sins to come, as well as past, are forgiven, takes away and makes void Christ's intercession. He is an advocate to intercede for daily sins. 1 John 2:1. *But if sin be forgiven before it be committed, what need is there of his daily intercession? What need have I of an advocate, if sin be pardoned before it be committed?* So that, though God forgives all sins past to a believer, yet sins to come are not forgiven till repentance be renewed." (Thomas Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, page 278, first published in 1692, emphasis supplied.)

This brings up an excellent point. If a man's future sins were forgiven at the time of his first confession of sins, then there would be no need for Christ to intercede for them. Let us take a few moments to examine some very interesting points that Paul made in his epistles regarding our need for Christ's intercession.

### ***Was Everything Finished at the Cross?***

Paul wrote concerning Christ that He "*was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*"

(Romans 4:25) This is very interesting. It says that Christ died for our sins and was raised again for our justification. The Greek word that was translated "justification" means to declare righteous or to render innocent. (See *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*.) To be justified is to be pardoned or forgiven of sins in the past. A man who has been justified stands before God as if he had never sinned.

Paul is saying here that Christ died for our sins and He was raised again so that we could be forgiven of our sins. That is very interesting, and it brings up a question: If Christ had died, and was not raised from the dead, could we be forgiven of our sins? If not, why? Why was it necessary for Christ to be raised from the dead in order for us to be forgiven? I understand that Christ's resurrection was important as an assurance that God will one day resurrect those who are asleep in Christ, but Paul was talking about something more here. Paul said that our forgiveness of sins is dependent upon Christ's resurrection.

Notice what Paul says in the following verses: "*Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*" (1 Corinthians 15:12-14) These are strong words that are diametrically opposed to most evangelical thinking concerning the plan of salvation. Paul said that if Christ was not raised from the dead our faith would be in vain—it would be worthless. But Paul doesn't stop here. He goes on, "*Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*" (1 Corinthians 15:15-17)

Paul said that if Christ was not raised from the dead not only is our faith in vain, but we are yet in our sins. Paul said that if Christ was not raised from the dead there would be no way that we could be forgiven of our sins. Why is this true? Didn't everything happen at the cross? What more needed to happen after the death of Christ?

Let me clarify a point: Christ was the ultimate sacrifice. The sacrifice on Calvary was a complete and perfect sacrifice—Christ, the sinless one, dying for the sinner. The death of Christ is an absolute necessity in the plan of God to redeem mankind. However, the Bible teaches that there is more to the plan of salvation than just the death of Christ. This is not to in any way minimize that death. It is as essential to the plan of salvation as the heart is to the body. However, the heart alone, without support from other organs, is unable to give the body life.



## **A Work Done After the Death of the Sacrifice**

If, in the earthly sanctuary service, the sinner brought the sacrifice and merely killed it, would that be of any benefit to the sinner? Certainly not! The sin that had been symbolically transferred to the sacrifice by confession had to be transferred, by the priest, to the sanctuary before the sinner could be forgiven. In like manner, we must have the ministration of our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary so that we can be forgiven. We need the ministration of Christ on our behalf as much as we needed the death of Christ for our sins. One without the other would be of no avail. *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”* (1 Timothy 2:5) *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing **he ever liveth to make intercession for them.**”* (Hebrews 7:25)

His death on the cross was vitally important, for without that He would have nothing to offer on our behalf. Paul wrote, *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore **it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.**”* (Hebrews 8:1-3) At Christ’s resurrection He, for the first time, entered upon His work as our High Priest: a minister of the sanctuary in heaven. He could not have been our high priest until after He had something to offer—after His death on the cross.

The earthly high priest was ordained “to offer gifts and sacrifices.” To whom did he offer the gifts and sacrifices? To God! Christ has been ordained as our High Priest, and He must have something to offer—the merits of His perfect and complete sacrifice. Paul wrote, *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”* (Ephesians 1:7) Paul said that we have forgiveness of sins through His blood. Yet we just read how Paul said that if Christ had only died then we could not be forgiven of our sins. The only way we could have forgiveness of our sins “through his blood” is by Christ offering the merits of his perfect sacrifice—His blood—as our High Priest.

## **The Work of Our High Priest Today**

This all seems new to many people because they have never given much thought regarding the necessity of Christ being our High Priest, *“a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”*

Notice what Paul said in the following verse: *“Wherefore in all things it **behoved** him [Christ] to be made like*

*unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, **to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.**”* (Hebrews 2:17) This verse sheds much light on this subject. It says that Christ had to become a man before He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest. The Greek word that was translated “behoved” means to be under obligation. (See *Strong’s Greek Lexicon*.) Before Christ could be our High Priest He had to become a man and die for our sins so that He would have something to offer as a minister in the heavenly sanctuary.

Notice what Paul said Christ would do after He became our High Priest. He said that Christ had to be a High Priest *“to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”* Christ is our High Priest today, making reconciliation for our sins. Paul did not say He *made* reconciliation [past tense] for the sins of the people but that He *is making* reconciliation [present tense] for the sins of the people. The Greek term *το ιλασκεσθαι* that was translated “make reconciliation” is in the present tense in Greek. This agrees with Paul’s words in the book of Hebrews where he said Christ *“ever liveth to make intercession”* for us. (Hebrews 7:25) Praise the Lord that He has not only provided His Son as our perfect sacrifice, but also appointed Him to be our High Priest to minister for us, making reconciliation for our sins today. There is a work going on right now in heaven that we must not overlook.

## **The Pre-advent Investigative Judgment**

First of all, we need to define some terms as they will be used in this study. The term “pre-advent” simply means: “before the second coming of Christ.” The term “investigative judgment” means: “a judgment scene in which facts related to the lives of mankind are examined in a public manner by all the inhabitants of heaven.” The pre-advent investigative judgment is not a judgment where punishment or rewards are given, but rather where facts are examined and decisions are made regarding whether a person will be saved or lost.

The words “judgment,” “judge,” “judged,” etc. are used in the Bible to indicate any of three phases of judgment. They are:

- ① **Investigative phase** where evidence is examined, followed by the giving of the verdict of either “guilty” or “not guilty”
- ② **Judicial phase** where the evidence is reviewed and the type and degree of punishment or reward is decided
- ③ **Executive phase** where the penalty or reward decided in the judicial phase is carried out

In some cases in the Bible the words “judgment,” “judge,” or “judged” signify the investigative phase. (Daniel 7:9, 10) In other cases they signify the judicial phase. (Revelation 20:4; 11:18; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3) And in still other cases they signify the executive phase. (Revelation 20:11, 12) To give a verdict and administer the verdict without first examining the evidence would be unfair. Nicodemus reminded the Jewish leaders of this fact when he asked, “*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*” (John 7:51) Even in earthly governments, justice demands that an investigation of the facts precede a verdict.

### **Eternal Judgment**

The judgment we should be most concerned about is the judgment that determines our eternal destiny. Paul wrote, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*” (2 Corinthians 5:10) Paul makes it clear here that the judgment seat of Christ is not only for administering punishment to the wicked, but also rewards to the righteous.

Paul wrote to his fellow Christians, “*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*” (Romans 14:10) Paul himself expected to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But what purpose would there be for Christians to stand before the judgment seat of Christ?

Jesus said, “*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*” (Matthew 12:36) According to Christ Himself, we will have to give an account of every idle word that we speak.

Solomon wrote, “*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*” (Ecclesiastes 11:9) The things that we do each day are not forgotten, but they are recorded, and will stand as a testimony, either for or against us, in the day of judgment.

Solomon also wrote, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14) So it is clear that every idle word, and every action, whether it is good or bad, will be considered in the judgment. All the facts will be examined. The investigation of the facts will precede the verdict.

The judgment of God will not only be for the wicked, but for the righteous also. The wise man said, “*I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.*” (Ecclesiastes 3:17)

Malachi wrote, “*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*” (Malachi 3:16) There is a book of remembrance written, and here it is expressly said to be written about the righteous. Who do you suppose is recording this information?

In the book of Proverbs we read, “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*” (Proverbs 15:3) With even a casual study of the term “*the eyes of the LORD*” you will find that this is referring to the angels. The angels are even recording our thoughts. Solomon wrote, “*Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*” (Ecclesiastes 10:20) The Hebrew word עוף that was translated “bird” here, literally means, “flying creature.” (Brown — Driver — Brigg’s Hebrew Lexicon) These are angels who are making a very precise record of our thoughts, words, and actions. (Just to clarify, angels cannot read our mind unless God reveals it to them as He did for certain men in the Bible like Elisha, Peter, our Lord Jesus Christ, etc. (See 1 Kings 8:39; 2 Kings 5:25, 26; Acts 5:3.) [For a more thorough study on this subject, please request the April 1999 issue of *Present Truth* and read the article on page 4 entitled, “The Ministry of the Angels.”])

Now, what is the purpose for these things being recorded in books? Are they recorded in order for God to be able to remember all these things? Certainly not! God already knows perfectly well all things that ever were, and that ever will be. There can only be one purpose for these books to be recorded, and that is for some future examination by someone other than God.

In order for God to be understood to be just in His judgment, there must be a public investigation of the facts before He gives a verdict. Now, it is obvious that any investigation of facts is not for the benefit of God, for at any given time He knows how many hairs are on the head of everyone in the world. He already knows everything there is to know about us. So why would there be an investigation of facts?

As we have already seen, the examination of facts must precede the verdict and the administering of the verdict. We have also seen that everyone will be judged; not only the wicked, but God’s professed people also. In fact, according to the Bible, the judgment of the professed people of God precedes the judgment of the wicked. “*For the*

*time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1 Peter 4:17, 18)

So judgment, that determines whether a person will be saved or lost, begins with those who profess to be God's people, which only makes sense, because those who are found worthy will be resurrected 1000 years before the wicked.

### ***The Judgment of the Wicked***

Let us take a few minutes and see what the Bible has to say about the judgment of the wicked. Paul wrote, *"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?"* (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3) Here the Scriptures state that the saints—God's people—will judge the world, and we will also judge angels. Now what kind of judging will we be doing? Which phase of the judgment will we be involved in?

Remember, there are three phases of the judgment. They are:

- ① ***Investigative phase where evidence is examined, followed by the giving of the verdict of either "guilty" or "not guilty"***
- ② ***Judicial phase where the evidence is reviewed and the type and degree of punishment or reward is decided***
- ③ ***Executive phase where the penalty or reward decided in the judicial phase is carried out***

It is clear that we will not be making decisions, or giving verdicts, regarding whether a person will be saved or lost, for that decision will have already been made by God. Neither will we be administering the penalty, for the Bible plainly states that this will be done by God and His Son. (John 5:22; Revelation 20:9) The only phase of the judgment we could possibly be involved in is the second phase, which deals with the reviewing of facts and the determination of the severity of the penalty.

When will the righteous be investigating the facts relating to the wicked and the fallen angels? It is certain that we are not doing it while we are alive on this earth, and it is also certain that we will not be doing it while we are dead, for *"the dead know not any thing."* (Ecclesiastes 9:5) The only possible time for this judgment would be after the resurrection of the righteous, and before the wicked are punished. The Bible tells us clearly when this investigation will take place.

God gave John a vision of which he said, *"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."* (Revelation 20:4-6)

Here the Bible is talking about the only time period possible where saints could judge the wicked and the fallen angels, and the Bible says, *"judgment was given unto"* the saints. During the 1000 years the saints will be examining the facts relating to the lives of the wicked and the fallen angels. We also learn from these verses that the wicked dead will not live again until after the 1000 years are over. The destruction of the wicked will not be carried out until after the saints get the opportunity to examine the facts relating to the lives of the wicked and the fallen angels.

But why is it important to God to give the saints this opportunity to examine the records of all those people who will be eternally lost? How will the saints be benefitted by having this opportunity? How will God's kingdom be benefitted by God giving this opportunity to the saints?

### ***Why Saints Are Involved***

Think about what it will be like when we are resurrected. It is evident that not all those who think they are serving God will make it into heaven. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Matthew 7:21-23)

If I make it into heaven, and find that my spouse, or my child, or my pastor, is not there, I am going to want to know why. If God destroys someone whom I think should have been in heaven, without allowing me to clearly understand why, then I am going to question God's fairness and righteousness in making that decision. I am going to wonder whether His decision was right or not.

Now there may be some who would say that I would have no right to question God's decision and that I should just trust that He made the right choice and leave it at that. First of all, this is a major decision; one which will involve many tears. Keep in mind that all tears are not wiped away



until after the thousand years are expired. *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”* (Revelation 21:4)

Second, God does not only do what is right, He makes it clear to others that what He has done, and is doing, is right.

David said to God, *“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”* (Psalms 51:4) God wants to make it absolutely clear to the entire universe that when He makes a judgment it is right. God wants everyone to be able to say, *“Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.”* (Revelation 16:5) Even the wicked, who will finally be destroyed, will confess that Jesus is Lord. (Philippians 2:10, 11)

So whether or not I am content to remain ignorant regarding why my loved ones may not be in heaven, God is interested in making clear to me why He has not allowed them entrance into heaven. That is the whole purpose for the thousand-year gap between the resurrection of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked. God has set aside this time in order for all of His saints to gain a clear understanding of why He has decided to forbid certain people from entering heaven.

This is absolutely necessary in order to remove forever any doubt regarding the fairness and righteousness of God in dealing with sin. This is the only way that God can ensure that sin will never rise the second time. We read, *“What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.”* (Nahum 1:9) All doubts concerning God’s dealings with sin and sinners must be removed in the minds of everyone in the universe in order to keep sin from ever rising again.

### ***The Judgment of the Righteous***

With this in mind, let us consider the judgment of the righteous. We have seen that it is necessary, and it is God’s plan, to have a public examination of the evidence regarding the lives of the wicked and the fallen angels before He administers the punishment. We have also seen that this investigation of evidence is not for God’s enlightenment, but for the enlightenment of the inhabitants of heaven. But what about the righteous? Is there, like with the wicked, any need for an investigation of the evidence regarding their lives before the verdict is publically made known, and the rewards are given?

The Bible makes it clear that at the second coming of Christ, the saints will be rewarded with immortal, glorified bodies and the joys of the Lord. Just prior to the second coming of Christ, the following proclamation will go

forth: Jesus will say, *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* (Revelation 22:11, 12)

Jesus said that when He comes the second time His reward will be with Him. And again we read, *“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.”* (Isaiah 40:9, 10)

And again, *“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.”* (Isaiah 62:10-12)

When Christ returns the second time, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and the righteous living will be caught up together with them. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17)

The investigative and the judicial phases of the judgment of the righteous will have already taken place by the time the Lord comes the second time. Every case will have been decided whether for life or death. As we have seen already, God has planned that His people will investigate the facts relating to the lives of the wicked and the fallen angels before He administers the punishment. It is clear that the verdict of whether a person will be saved or lost will have already been given at this point, for all of those who will be saved will have already been given immortality. The saints will not have veto power over God’s decision of who will be saved or not. The thousand years are set aside to remove all question in anyone’s mind regarding God’s fairness and righteousness in deciding who was forbidden entrance into heaven.

### ***Who Will Be Able to Enter Heaven***

However, there is another question that we have not considered yet. The thousand-year judgment deals with

the question of God's fairness and righteousness in His decision of who He has *forbidden* to enter heaven. It has nothing to do with the question of His fairness and righteousness in His decision of who He *allows* to enter heaven. It could not deal with that question, because all those who will enter heaven will have already done so before the thousand years begin.

Not only that, but the Bible says that the sins of the righteous will not be mentioned unto them again (Ezekiel 33:15, 16), so it would not be possible or necessary for the righteous to be examining the facts relating to the lives of the righteous. Any such examination at this time would be pointless.

However, is there a need before the second coming of Christ for there to be a public examination of the facts relating to the lives of Christians before the verdict and the giving of rewards? First of all, if there is a need for it, the saints themselves could not take part in it the same way they will take part in the investigative judgment of the wicked, because they will either be in the grave or alive on earth awaiting Christ's second coming. Again, any public investigation of facts could not be for the enlightenment of God, for He already knows all things. The only ones who could be enlightened by a public investigation of the lives of the righteous before the second coming of Christ would be the unfallen inhabitants of the universe.

But would the angels be interested in a public investigation of the facts relating to the lives of the righteous before the second coming? The Bible indicates that the angels are intensely interested in the events relating to this world. Peter wrote, *"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**"* (1 Peter 1:10-12)

So it is evident that the angels are very interested in the affairs of men. And certainly they have the right to be; one-third of their companions, all of whom had been perfect, noble angels who had never sinned, joined Satan in His rebellion. People like you and me, who have never enjoyed the experience of perfect holiness, could potentially be much more likely to rebel than they were. God's holy angels have an intense interest in knowing what type of individuals will be their companions for the ages of eternity.

They are also interested in knowing how God is dealing with the sin problem, and whether He is being fair and

righteous in His decisions. Not only that, but, as we have seen, God is very interested in making it clear to the angels that what He is doing is right. It was an angel who said, *"Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus."* (Revelation 16:5) God wants to make certain that the angels know that He is right in His decisions, especially in such a major decision as who will become their companions for countless billions of years.

### An Illustration

Let's use an illustration to make this point clear. Suppose you were the president of an exclusive, private club, consisting only of righteous, perfect persons who had never done wrong. Would it be fair or right for you, being the president, to allow others, all of whom had been rapists, murderers, thieves, liars, etc., to join that club without allowing all of the members of that club to examine the evidence of whether or not those persons had changed their lives? Would you not be committing an injustice toward the current members of your club to allow people in, who have very questionable backgrounds, without allowing your current members to have a knowledge of why you are allowing them in?

Please consider the following point carefully. The Bible indicates that God has given His angels charge over us to keep us safe. (Psalm 91:11, 12) He also has commissioned His angels to take accurate records of our lives. Do you think my personal guardian angel (Matthew 18:10) is aware of my spiritual condition? Does he know whether I am in a saved condition or in a lost condition? Remember, we were created a little lower than the angels. They have very sharp minds, and I am sure they have fantastic memories. I am quite certain that my personal guardian angel knows all the pertinent facts regarding my life. I am also certain that after my death he will have no need for any future investigation of the record of my life to know whether he would want me to be his neighbor for billions of years or not, and to know whether God was just and fair in His decision to take me to heaven or not. I believe I can safely say that He would be completely satisfied with whatever God's decision is, regarding whether I will go to heaven or not, because he knows the facts.

However, what about your life, or a man in China? Does my personal guardian angel know for certain whether he would want to have you, or someone he knows very little about, as a neighbor for billions of years? Could he be 100% satisfied, without any question whatsoever, with God's decision of whether to bring you to heaven or not if he was not allowed to examine the records regarding your life? It is true that he could choose to trust that God's decision is right, and leave it at that, but he would have no



way of knowing for sure that God was right without having the opportunity to examine the evidence for himself.

As we have seen earlier, God not only does what is right, He makes it clear to all those involved that what He does is right. This is necessary in order to ensure that sin will not rise up the second time. Even if there are angels who do not see the need for these questions regarding God's character to be clarified, God saw the need, and He is meeting that need. Whether or not the angels would be content to remain ignorant regarding the facts that led up to God's decisions in the judgment, God will not be satisfied until every shadow of doubt regarding His dealings with sin are removed forever. Remember that all of the redeemed of this earth have been rebels against God, while all of God's holy angels in heaven are there because they were faithful to God. God's angels have an interest, and the right, to know why God is allowing people who had been rebellious, to become their companions for eternity. Therefore, God will make it clear to all the current inhabitants of heaven why He has chosen to allow each new resident of heaven to enter into His kingdom. This is imperative in order for God's government to be forever secure from any further questions regarding God's fairness, love, and righteousness.

After sin arose in the heart of Lucifer (the previous name of Satan), God's character was brought into question. Since then, it has been Satan's goal to distort God's character. Lucifer portrayed God as being unjust, unkind, and unfair. He convinced one-third of the angels to join him in his rebellion against God. After Lucifer began making his views about God known, questions regarding God's character arose for the first time. All of these questions must be removed in the minds of the angels, and any new inhabitants of heaven, before God's universe will be secure against sin rising the second time.

### **The Biblical Evidence**

The Bible gives us plain evidence that there is an investigative judgment of the righteous before the second coming of Christ.

The Bible says, *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27) The judgment takes place after death, but does it take place immediately after death, or is there some time that elapses between the time of death and the judgment? Notice that this verse does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. It just says that at some point after death there will be a judgment. We have read earlier in this study that *"judgment must begin at the house of God."* (1 Peter 4:17) So the professed people of God are going to be judged first, but this could not be so if, upon the point of death, every man is judged, for many wicked people have died before righteous people. So Hebrews 9:27 could not mean

that upon the point of death every person goes to judgment.

### **The Great White Throne Judgment**

The book of Revelation describes two separate judgment scenes where books are said to be opened. The most familiar scene is what is known as *"the great white throne judgment"* spoken of in Revelation chapter 20. Here it says, *"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."* (Revelation 20:11-13)

This vision pictures the executive phase of the judgment of the dead. These dead are obviously the wicked dead, for the righteous have already been in heaven for 1000 years, and there is no further need for them to be brought into judgment. Furthermore, God has promised to the righteous, *"None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him."* (Ezekiel 33:16) The righteous will have already been declared righteous and given glorified bodies to live forever. Concerning the dead who stand before the great white throne judgment, John Gill wrote, *"these are the rest of the dead, the wicked, who lived not again until the thousand years were ended."* (*John Gill's Expositor* on Revelation 20:12)

Prior to this great white throne judgment, it will have already been determined that all the wicked dead will be destroyed, and during the 1000 years the righteous will take part in the judicial phase of their judgment, which determines the severity of their punishment, for there are varying degrees of punishment. Jesus said, *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."* (Luke 12:47, 48) The only thing that remains is the executive phase of the judgment where the final wages of sin are administered.

The great white throne judgment of Revelation 20 has nothing to do with judging the righteous, for they will have already been judged. Please keep in mind, that although God will judge the righteous and the wicked, they do not have to be present during the first two phases of their own judgment. The righteous will be on the earth, either dead or alive, awaiting Christ's second coming while the first two phases of their judgment take place. The wicked will be on

the earth, either dead or alive, awaiting Christ's second coming, during the first phase of their judgment, and they will all be dead during the second phase of their judgment, which takes place during the thousand years. So neither the righteous nor the wicked will be present during the first two phases of their judgment. The record of all their deeds will be sufficient to stand as evidence for or against them in their absence, and Christ will stand for His people as their Advocate in the heavenly courts, so there is no need for either group to be present themselves.

### Another Judgment

However, there is another judgment scene depicted in Revelation, where it clearly indicates that it deals with the righteous, and also that it takes place before the second coming of Christ. This judgment scene is recorded in Revelation chapters 4-8. Let's notice a few things about this judgment scene:

John wrote, *"I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne [Greek: θρονος – thronos] were four and twenty seats [thronos]: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."* (Revelation 4:2-4)

Notice how John describes this vision. He saw a throne being set up and it was surrounded by 24 thrones. A glorious Being sat down on the central throne. As we can see from the following chapter, God the Father is the One who sat down on this throne.

The books of Daniel and Revelation parallel each other in many cases, and this is an example of where they parallel each other. Daniel saw a vision which he described in almost the same language as did John. He wrote, *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."* (Daniel 7:9) Unfortunately, the translators of the King James Version poorly translated the Aramaic word רַמָּה (remah) in this verse as "cast down." The translators of the Revised Standard Version translated it as "placed," which is more fitting with the context, and agrees with the English translation of the Greek Septuagint, which reads, *"I beheld until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days sat."*

So here we see the same scene taking place. Daniel described the one who sat down on the throne as being very glorious to behold. This is undoubtedly God the Father, who is referred to as "the Ancient of days."

In Daniel 7:10 there is another parallel to the scene described in Revelation 4-8. Daniel wrote, *"A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."* (Daniel 7:10) Notice the number given here. It is the same number that is given in Revelation 5.

*"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands."* (Revelation 5:11) Daniel says that at this time the judgment was set and the books were opened. There is no mention of the wicked dead standing before Him as we have read concerning the great white throne judgment which takes place after the 1000 years.

### The Little Horn

Right after the Father takes His seat on the throne we read, *"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time."* (Daniel 7:11, 12)

These verses are somewhat of an interim between verses 10 and 13. Daniel's attention was drawn away from the Father back to the little horn who was speaking great words against the Most High. Daniel said that he beheld until the beast was slain. The slaying of the beast that Daniel is obviously referring to here is the same slaying that Paul wrote about in his second epistle to the Thessalonians. He wrote, *"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."* (2 Thessalonians 2:8) This takes place at the second coming of Christ.

### The Son Enters the Scene

In Daniel 7:13, 14 we learn that after the Father takes His seat on the throne, with thousands of angels standing before Him, then the Son of God comes before Him to receive a kingdom. We read, *"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."* (Daniel 7:13, 14)

Some people falsely conclude that these verses refer to the second coming of Christ. However, if we will notice a few things, we will see plainly that this could not be the case. First, the Bible tells us that when Christ comes the

second time He will come with *"all the holy angels."* (Matthew 25:31) If this is true, then Daniel's vision in chapter 7 verse 13 could not be the second coming of Christ, for Daniel saw Him come to a place where all the angels were already surrounding the Father's throne.

When He comes before His Father, Christ receives a kingdom. This must take place before He reigns as King. When Christ returns the second time He comes, not as our High Priest, but as *"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."* (Revelation 19:16) The second coming of Christ is the time when Christ begins to reign, for the saints live and reign with Him during the thousand years, which begin with the second coming of Christ. (Revelation 20:4) Christ must receive His kingdom before His second coming. (Luke 19:11, 12)

The parallel in Revelation shows that the Son receives power and glory, just as we have seen here in Daniel. The angels around the throne in Revelation 5 say, *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* (Revelation 5:12) Christ receives all these things when He comes before His Father to be coronated King.

Remember also, that the Father takes His seat first, with the vast multitude of angels surrounding Him, then Christ comes, and nothing is mentioned about others coming with Him. Yet, when Christ comes to the great white throne judgment scene *all* His saints are with Him. *"To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."* (1 Thessalonians 3:13; See also Zechariah 14:5; Jude 1:14)

From the verses we have read we can see that the judgment scene that takes place in Daniel 7, corresponds to the one mentioned in Revelation 4-8, and that it precedes the second coming of Christ. Therefore, it must take place in heaven, rather than upon this earth.

### **The Fifth Seal**

However, there is yet another piece of evidence that will prove this beyond a shadow of a doubt. In Revelation chapter 4, the Father takes His seat upon a throne that has been set up, and the vast multitude of heavenly angels surround the throne. Then in chapter 5, John saw that the Father had a book in His hand (verse 1), and the only One who could open it was Christ. John saw Christ come up to the Father and take the book out of the Father's hand. (Verse 7) Then Christ began to open the seals on the book. When He opened the fifth seal we find something very interesting.

John wrote, *"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy*

*and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."* (Revelation 6:9-11)

John saw souls of righteous people who were crying out for vengeance upon those who had killed them. In verse 11 the souls are said to be resting, or sleeping, which proves that they are not alive. These souls were not living, conscious beings who were literally speaking, but their blood cried out for justice, as the blood of Abel cried out to God for justice. (Genesis 4:10) They are told to rest until their brethren would be killed in like manner. This must be before the second coming of Christ, for after Christ comes, all the righteous dead will have been raised to immortality, and the living saints will have been given immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53) Never again will any of God's saints be killed. It is abundantly clear that the judgment scene taking place in Revelation 4-8, which corresponds with the one in Daniel 7, has to take place before the second coming of Christ.

Notice also that when Christ opens the fifth seal white robes are given to the dead saints. What are the white robes? In Revelation 19:8 we are told that white linen clothing *"is the righteousness of saints."* So here white robes are given to dead people to signify that they have been accounted righteous, or worthy to enter into heaven. The giving of white robes to dead saints must be a result of a judgment in their favor.

### **The Context of Daniel 7**

Also, as we go back to Daniel 7 and examine the context, we notice that every time the judgment is mentioned it precedes the second coming of Christ. In verses 21, 22 we read, *"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."* Notice the order here. The little horn prevailed against the saints, then the Ancient of days came to take His seat, then judgment was given in favor of the saints, then the saints possessed the kingdom. Remember that the saints begin their reign at the second coming of Christ. (Revelation 20:4)

Going down to verse 25 we read, *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."* Here we have the three-and-half-year time period that is used elsewhere in the Bible (Revelation 12:6, 14; 13:5) to signify the 1260-year



period of papal supremacy during the Dark Ages, when the Papacy made war against the saints. This time period began with the uprooting of the three horns (Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths), the third being accomplished in 538 A.D. This time period ended with Napoleon's general, Berthier, taking the pope captive in 1798 A.D.

Continuing now in Daniel chapter 7, with verse 26, we read, "*But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.*" Notice that the judgment sits before the papal dominion is taken away, and before the end.

Then in verse 27 we read, "*And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*" So you can see the order in these verses. First the Papacy speaks great words against the Most High (verse 25), and prospers until 1798, then the judgment sits, then the papal dominion is taken away, then "*the end*" comes, then the saints begin to reign with Christ. So we can see clearly that the investigative judgment of the righteous begins after 1798 and before the second coming of Christ.

### **The Bigger Picture**

Clearly, there is an investigative judgment for the righteous that takes place before the second coming of Christ. As we have seen earlier, this investigative judgment is imperative in order to ensure that sin will not rise the second time among the unfallen inhabitants of heaven. This will be accomplished by removing all doubt in their minds regarding God's fairness, justice, and righteousness in His decisions concerning who will be *permitted* to enter heaven. We have also seen that there must be an investigative judgment of the wicked, to ensure that sin will not rise the second time among the redeemed of this earth. This is done by removing all doubt regarding God's fairness, justice, and righteousness in His decisions concerning who is *forbidden* to enter heaven.

You see, there is a bigger picture involved. God is extremely interested in the salvation of every person in this world. However, He has a greater purpose in mind as well, and that is the eternal well-being of heaven. He wants to make absolutely sure that sin will not rise the second time. He is not going to do this by removing our freedom of choice to do wrong, but by removing every possibility for anyone ever to question whether He is fair, loving, and righteous. After sin is finally destroyed, never again will God's integrity be questioned. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for God to allow all of His decisions regarding who He allows into heaven, and who He chooses to destroy, to be examined and scrutinized by the on-looking universe.

Now this brings up another question. All decisions will be made regarding who will be saved, and who will be lost before the second coming of Christ, and the saints could not be involved as witnesses in the investigative judgment of the righteous. Now, if it is necessary for all the angels to investigate the facts relating to the lives of the righteous before they enter heaven, in order to secure God's government against any further rebellion, why is it not necessary for the saints to be present during this investigative judgment?

Again, let's go back to the illustration we used earlier. Suppose you were the president of an exclusive, private club, consisting only of righteous, perfect persons who had never done wrong. Would it be fair or right for you, being the president, to allow others, all of whom had been rapists, murderers, thieves, liars, etc., to join that club without allowing every one of the members of that club to examine the evidence of whether or not those persons had changed their lives?

In this scenario, would it be proper or right to have those potential members (all of whom had been wicked persons) to be present while the current members are reviewing their cases? Certainly not! And there would be no need for them to be present during such an investigation. Besides that, even if they were present, being in the degraded state that sin has left them in, they could not possibly render a complete, just, and fair analysis of the situation. Their main concern after they got in would be why others had been left out, and this question could be clarified after they had gained entrance.

### **Public Opinion**

God is very particular and very thorough in the way He deals with sin and sinners. God is extremely interested in the opinions of the inhabitants of heaven. He wants to make sure that they know that what He is doing is right.

We can clearly see that it is extremely important, and necessary to the success of God's government throughout the eternal ages in the future, for God to have a public investigative judgment of the righteous before the second coming of Christ, where His decisions can be scrutinized by the angels.

Let's think about it for a moment. Does God carry on His government without taking into consideration the opinions of the angels? Does God expect them to blindly trust that He is right without allowing them to investigate His judgments for themselves? If so, then there is no reason why Satan is still alive today. God could have called the angels together and said something like this, "We all know that Lucifer has decided to question my authority, and I know what will result if I allow him to continue living. I know the end from the beginning, and I know that if I allow

(Continued on page 16)



# Questions and Answers

by Lynnford Beachy



## Question:

"I am wondering what interpretation you have on the scriptures where Jesus calls himself the 'I am,' 'ego eimi' in Greek, in Mark 14:62; John 8:28 and John 8:58, a total of three places."

Norway

## Answer:

Let's read the verses in question. Jesus said, *"I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* (Mark 14:62) *"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."* (John 8:28) And the most commonly used on this subject is: *"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."* (John 8:58)

Many trinitarians use this as conclusive evidence that Christ is the Most High God because He used the term "I AM" in reference to Himself. Is this the case? The Bible says that Jesus is *"the Son of the Highest."* (Luke 1:32) The devils are even aware of this fact. One day a possessed man came up to Jesus and said, *"Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?"* (Mark 5:7) Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, not the Most High God Himself.

Let's look at Exodus, the only place that the term "I AM" is used in the Old Testament. Moses saw a strange phenomenon as he beheld a bush burning but not being consumed. The Bible says, *"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him [Moses] in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."* (Exodus 3:2) Who was it that appeared to Moses? *"The angel of the LORD."* Who is that? As Moses drew near to the bush the angel of the Lord said, *"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* (Exodus 3:5). This is quite reminiscent. We read of a similar occurrence with Joshua when he was about to surround Jericho.

*"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he*

*said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."* (Joshua 5:13-15)

Here the Captain of the LORD's host appeared to Joshua and told him to loose the shoes from off his feet, because the ground where he was standing was holy. We know this was not an ordinary angel, because an angel would not accept worship. John began to worship an angel and the angel said, *"See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* (Revelation 19:10) We know that the Captain of the Lord's host who appeared to Joshua was not God the Father, for *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."* (John 1:18) The only One left that this could possibly be is Christ.

Christ appeared to Joshua and told him to take the shoes off of his feet, for the ground whereon he stood was holy. Christ is often referred to as *"the angel of the Lord."* God told Moses, *"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in Him."* (Exodus 23:20, 21) We also read, *"And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them."* (Exodus 14:9) Christ was the one who went before the children of Israel. Paul wrote about Israel that they *"did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."* (1 Corinthians 10:4)

So we see that the only time the term "I AM" is used in the Old Testament, it refers to Christ. How then can one say that because He used the same term in the New Testament that He all of a sudden was claiming to be the Most High God? I hope this helps answer your questions.



# The Unconquerable Life

by E. J. Waggoner

*"In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehended it not." (John 1:4, 5 R.V.)* The marginal rendering, "overcame," gives us the exact meaning of the text and conveys a message of great comfort to the believer. Let us see what it is.

Christ is the light of the world. (See John 8:12.) But His light is His life, as the text quoted states. He says, *"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." The whole world was in the darkness of sin. This darkness was due to lack of knowledge of God as the apostle Paul says that the Gentiles are "darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardening of their heart."* (Ephesians 4:18, R.V.)

Satan, the ruler of the darkness of this world, had done his utmost to deceive men as to the true character of God. He had made the world believe that God was like men—cruel, vindictive and passionate. Even the Jews, the people whom God had chosen to be the bearers of His light to the world, had departed from God and while professedly separate from the heathen, were enveloped in heathen darkness. Then Christ came, and *"The people which sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them did light spring up."* (Matthew 4:16, R.V.) His name was Emanuel, God with us. "God was in Christ." God refuted the falsehoods of Satan, not by loud arguments, but simply by living His life among men so that all might see it. He demonstrated the power of the life of God and the possibility of its being manifested in men.

The life which Christ lived was untainted by sin. Satan exerted all his powerful arts, yet he could not affect that spotless life. Its light always shone with unwavering brilliancy. Because Satan could not produce the least shadow of sin in the life, he could not bring it within his power, that of the grave. No one could take Christ's life from Him; He voluntarily laid it down. And for the same reason, when He had laid it down, Satan could not prevent Him from taking it up again. Said He, *"I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."* (John 10:17, 18) To the same intent are the words of the apostle Peter concerning CHRIST: *"Whom God hath raised up having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."* (Acts 2:24) Thus was demonstrated the right of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made a high priest *"after the power of an endless life."* (Hebrews 7:16)

This endless, spotless life Christ gives to all who believe on Him. *"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that*

*He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."* (John 17:2, 3) Christ dwells in the hearts of all those who believe on Him. *"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20. See also Ephesians 3:16, 17)

Christ, the Light of the world, dwelling in the hearts of His followers, constitutes them the light of the world. Their light comes not from themselves but from Christ, who dwells in them. Their life is not from themselves, but it is the life of Christ manifest in their mortal flesh. (See 2 Corinthians 4:11.) This is what it is to live "a Christian life."

The living light comes from God in a never-failing stream. The psalmist exclaims: *"For with thee is the foundation of life; in thy light shall we see light."* (Psalm 36:9) *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."* (Revelation 22:1) *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."* (Revelation 22:17)

*"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:53, 54) This life of Christ we eat and drink by feasting upon his word, for He added, *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."* (Verse 63) Christ dwells in His inspired word, and through it we get His life. This life is given freely to all who will receive it, as we read above; and again we read that Jesus stood and cried, saying, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."* (John 7:37)

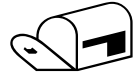
This life is the Christian's light, and it is that which makes him a light to others. It is his life; and the blessed comfort to him is that no matter how great the darkness through which he has to pass, no darkness has power to put out that light. That light of life is his as long as he exercises faith, and the darkness cannot affect it. Let all, therefore, who profess the name of the Lord have the confidence that can say, *"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."* (Micah 7:8)

(This article was first printed in the October 15, 1892 issue of the *Bible Echo*. It is also found on pages 72-74 of the book *Lessons on Faith*, by A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. Editor)





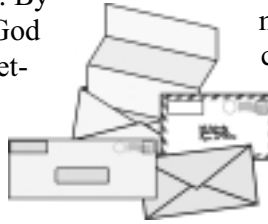
## Letters from our Readers



"I receive a tremendous blessing from your newsletters. Please keep up the good work!" *South Australia*

"Thank you for an interesting newsletter. I have come to know lately that the trinity is false, and it all seems very true and fits well in with the Bible." *Norway*

"I am very grateful to write to you this letter. By the way, how are you? I hope by the grace of God you are fine. The reason why I am writing this letter is that, realizing that I am a sinner and believing that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary because of my sin, from this moment on, I am fully depending upon Him to take me to heaven, so please send me free literature so that I can set on the devil as I set out to live the Christian life. May God bless you and your company." *Ghana*



"Would you please take me off of your mailing list. I am so stacked up with things to read on my desk, I am buried. I feel overwhelmed thinking I must get through these stacks, so I'm canceling the newsletters for awhile. Thank you." *Arizona*

"A free book on last day events, or Bible studies and gospel material for free distribution. May you kindly send me the above-mentioned gospel material for missionary purposes as soon as possible. Consider adding this ministry to your mailing list and I shall be very pleased over that—the wonderful privilege of receiving gospel literature regularly. May the Lord Jesus ever be with you as you serve Him faithfully." *Nigeria*

"Peace of our Lord be unto you. I sent a form for the cellular products for the sickness of my wife. Any help accorded will be highly appreciated. My family is in a poor condition due to the sickness of my dear wife, but here treatment and drugs are very expensive so we live by grace. God bless you... No, I cannot attend [the camp meeting]. I could attend a camp meeting if I could be helped to get a traveling document and air tickets together with my family." *Uganda*

"Here enclosed are the lessons that I am returning. Thank you for sharing with me these Bible study lessons.... I would like to do any of the lessons you can send me and I do thank you for your time and help, and please be sure to keep me on your prayer list. I am having some troubles here at the time, but the Lord knows best for His children." *Florida*

"Thank you for taking the time to personally answer my letter. First of all, I'd like to express my gratitude to you and the Smyrna Gospel Ministries for your dedication

to serving our Father and Messiah in 'truth.' I also thank God for you and the ministries. Once God started opening my eyes and heart to His truth I became perplexed because I didn't know of any church that actually lived by God's Word. I asked Him if I were the only person in the world who knew about the things God was teaching me... The Smyrna Gospel Ministries, along with a couple others, was an answer to my prayers for true brothers in the faith. That is why I thank my Heavenly Father for you... I pray that God bless you and the ministry abundantly and I also pray that God provide me with the opportunity to attend one of your camp meetings."

*Florida*

"Thank you for being so helpful each time I call, and thank you for sending books, Bible study materials, tracts, etc., even when I do not have an immediate donation to send you. And after learning that my two children and I live only on Social Security Disability Income, thank you for offering your Christian materials to us without expecting any donation at all from us.

"But we know that God promises to provide all of our needs; and God keeps every promise. God has provided \$25 for me to send to you, that you may continue in His service of providing much needed Christian material to other precious souls who may not be able to donate.

"May God continue to bless you, lead, guide and direct you, watch over and protect you in all ways." *Missouri*

"I and my family are very interested to study the Bible and to know God personally. However, we cannot study because we have no Bibles, books and hymnals to make our worship interesting and enjoyable. Only you can make a big difference in our lives if you kindly send us some books, hymnals and Bibles. We will highly appreciate your help and kindness towards us." *Papua New Guinea*

"I received your *Present Truth* newsletter for the months of April and May. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!! I ask for your prayers and all your support. Please pray for me to have a better job and no more embarrassment come to my life. GOD BLESS YOU ALL!!!!"

*Philippines*

"We received your e-mail dated 22nd May 2001. We appreciated your comments. We will be pleased when Brother Lynnford Beachy answers the questions raised. Your doctrine about Trinity is quite new to us. Therefore we need time to learn and study these new issues of grave importance." *Zambia*

*(The Big Picture, continued from page 12)*


him to live any longer he will cause a lot of heartache, bloodshed, pain, and suffering. I know you don't know the future, but I do. Just trust me on this decision. To save us all a lot of problems, I am going to destroy Lucifer right now."

If God was not concerned with making His judgments extremely plain and open for scrutiny, then the best thing for Him to have done would have been to destroy Lucifer when he first rebelled. However, God is concerned with the opinions of His creatures. If He had destroyed Lucifer way back then, all the universe would serve God out of fear instead of out of love. They also would have wondered if what God had told them would happen in the future was correct. There would always be a question regarding God's government, and sin would likely rise the second time.

### ***The Greater Purpose***

God's greater purpose is to have a universe free from sin, and also free from all possibility for sin arising the second time. If God had not provided the angels with the opportunity to take part as witnesses in the investigative judgment of the righteous, then God might as well have destroyed Lucifer when he first rebelled. In other words, if God was going to allow Lucifer to live all this time, so that

his course could be manifested clearly, thus vindicating God's decision to destroy Lucifer, why would He, all of a sudden, do this great injustice to the angels by not allowing them to see clearly why He has chosen to bring certain ones (all of whom had been vile persons) into heaven to be their companions for all eternity. This would still have left questions in the minds of the angels regarding God's government, and would have given an entering wedge for sin to rise the second time.

Thank God that He is concerned with making His judgments extremely plain and open for scrutiny. Thank God that we can look forward to a universe where every inhabitant will be able to say with certainty, "*Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*" (Revelation 16:5) 

**Present Truth** is published monthly by *Truth Seekers Ministries*, which is a division of *Smyrna Gospel Ministries*. It is sent free upon request. **Duplication of these papers is not only permitted but strongly encouraged.** *Present Truth* is available online at <http://www.present-truth.net>.

**Editor:** Lynnford Beachy, HC 64 Box 128-B, Welch, West Virginia 24801, phone: (304) 732-9204, fax: (304) 732-7322, e-mail: [berean@present-truth.net](mailto:berean@present-truth.net).

*Present Truth*

HC 64 Box 128-B  
Welch, West Virginia 24801  
U.S.A.

Address Service Requested

**Bulk Rate  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Welch WV  
Permit No. 35**