

We continue with Christ's last degree of glorification, which is the Final Judgment. First we looked at whether there will be a Final Judgment and then we inquired what kind of judgment this will be. Last week we dealt with the kind of judgment; the actual, judicial aspect of this judgment, which is the judgment of the wicked according to the law confirmed by the gospel and the righteous according to the gospel confirmed by the law.

The works that each one has done will be brought to light as proof, firstly, that the righteous has applied the merits of Christ to themselves according to the gospel, while, secondly, that the wicked rely on their own merits and will be judged according to the law.

Today we will look at ...

III. Who will the Judge be?

The judge will be Christ, the same person who is the Mediator. It will not be the Father because "... the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man." (John 5:22 – 27)

We should not imagine that the Father and the Holy Spirit will have no part in this judgment, but the judgment is only committed to Christ because He is the one who will appear and pronounce the sentence in his human nature.

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The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God and when the Son speaks, God speaks; when He judges, God judges, and that not only because He is himself God, but also because the Father speaks and judges through Him.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42)

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

This judgment belongs to the entire Godhead as it respects their consent and authority, but to Christ alone as it respects his office, the visible scene, the announcements and execution of the sentence. Christ will in a visible manner pass and execute sentence upon all. The church will also judge by giving its official sanction to the decision of the judge. It is for this reason that Christ says the apostles shall be seated upon twelve thrones, and that they shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel. We shall also approve and subscribe to the sentence which Christ will then pass.

So, when we ask, 'who will the judge be' we must conclude that Christ will be the judge, for the following reasons:

1. Christ is the only Person of the Godhead that has a visible human body and the judge requires to be a visible judge.
2. Because it is God's good pleasure that the same Mediator, who justified and saved the church, should also glorify it.

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"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a

loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matt 17:31)

And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. (John 5:27)

3. That we may have this comfort, that this judge, being our Redeemer, our brother and our Head, will be gracious to us, and will not condemn those whom He has purchased with his own blood. It is those whom He has regarded worthy to be called his brothers and members.

This comfort consists of two things,

Firstly, it lies in the person of the judge, who has declared for our consolation that

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life... (John 3:36)

and

...whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24)

Secondly, this comfort is to be found in the purpose for which He will come, which is to deliver His church, and to cast all his and our enemies into everlasting condemnation.

4. It is proper that the man Christ should be the judge on account of the justice of God, which demands that those who have reproached Christ and rejected His benefits, should see him whom they have pierced, and be the more confounded by being compelled to confront him whom they have so strongly opposed.

If Christ says that He came not to condemn the world, how shall He be the judge? Christ said this of His first coming, which was not to judge but save the world. In His second coming, however, He will be the judge of the quick and the dead.

IV. From where will He come?

Christ will come from heaven in a cloud. He will come from the same place to which the disciples saw him ascend. It is ...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (2 Thess 1:7)

"...In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matt 26:64)

"...Our citizenship is in heaven. ... We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ," (Phil 3:20)

Christ, according to these declarations of Scripture, will descend in a cloud from heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father, and not from the air, the sea or the earth. He will descend from heaven in a visible manner to this region of the atmosphere, just as He ascended into heaven.

"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

It is necessary that these things should be explained, so that the church may know where to look for her judge and redeemer. Christ made it known where He ascended to; He also made it known from where and how He will return that we may be assured that He has not laid aside the human nature which He assumed and that we may not be confused by false christs that wish to mislead even the elect, if that were possible.

V. In which manner will He come?

We can divide the manner in which He will come into three categories:

1. He will come truly, visibly and locally. It will not be virtual or apparent. He will descend in the same manner in which He went up into heaven, which, as we have shown,

was visible and local (Matt 24:30). They shall recognize him to be God from His visible majesty. "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him ..." (Zech 12:10)

2. He will come arrayed in the glory of His Father, and with divine majesty, with all the holy angels (Matt 16:27), with the voice and trumpet of the archangel, with divine power to raise the dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked, to deliver the godly, and to cast the ungodly into everlasting punishment. He will come with such glory which belongs to the true God alone, and glorious in view of the retinue of angels with which He will be attended.

3. He will come suddenly, when the wicked will not be looking for Him.

1Thess 5:3, 4: While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

VI. What will the subjects of his judgment be?

He shall judge all people, the living as well as the dead, the righteous as well as the wicked.

He shall also judge the bad angels. Men are called the living or dead in respect to the state which precedes the judgment. Those who are alive at the time of the Christ's return and judgment, are the living, while all the rest are included in the dead, who shall be raised, while the living shall be changed in an instant. This change shall be to them what death and resurrection has been for those who have died before Christ's return. So, we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

If we read "Whoever believes in him is not condemned..." (John 3:18) does it mean that some will not be judged?

No, all will be judged but those who believe will not come under the judgment of condemnation but under the

judgment of acquittal. The judgment will include the whole occasion of a judgment, where the books of the works will be opened, the unrighteous will be condemned and the righteous will be acquitted. The fallen angels will be judged in the public declaration and aggravation of the decision already passed upon them.

VII. What will the character of the sentence and the execution of this judgment be?

1. The dead shall be raised by the divine power and virtue of Christ, and by His human voice calling them forth.

John 5:28: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

The living shall be changed; their mortal bodies shall be made immortal.

2. Christ will gather all, both the righteous and the wicked, from the four corners of the earth, and cause them to stand before his judgment seat.

3. The world, the heavens and earth shall be dissolved by fire: there will be a change in the present state of things, but no annihilation.

4. There will be a separation between the righteous and the wicked, and a sentence passed upon each. The sentence which will be passed upon the wicked will be according to the law, yet in such a way as to be approved of by the gospel; while that which will be passed upon the righteous will be according to the gospel, yet so as to be sanctioned by the law.

The righteous will hear their sentence out of the Gospel, as they acquired the merits of Christ by faith, of which faith their works will testify.

Matt 25:34: Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your

inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

The wicked, on the other hand, will hear the terrible sentence of the law:

Matt 25:41: Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

5. There will then follow the perfect glorification of the righteous, and the casting of the wicked into everlasting torments. Christ will take the faithful to himself, for He said "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:3)

1Thess 4:17: After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

If the unbelieving are condemned already and the prince of this world is judged, will they be judged again in the final judgment?

Yes they will, and according to the following two respects:

1. According to the decree of God. It pleased God to reveal in his Word the extent of their condemnation.
2. According to their own consciences. Their consciences already judge them which judgment is the commencement of their condemnation.

In the final judgment their works and condemnation will be made public, for then there shall be

1. A manifestation of the judgment of God, that those who perish are justly punished.
2. The ungodly shall also suffer punishment and torments in the body which now lies in the grave.

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3. Their punishment will be greatly aggravated, and they will be put under such restraints that they shall no longer be able to injure the righteous, or to despise God and cast reproach upon His church. The great gulf fixed between them and us will effectually prevent them from ever doing us any harm.

Next week we will conclude the Last Judgment of Christ by studying the final six points:

VIII. What are the objects of his judgment?

IX. When will it take place?

X. What are the reasons why we should expect it?

XI. Why is the time of the final judgment unknown?

XII. Why is it deferred?

XIII. May we desire it and look forward to it?