

We conclude our study of the Last Judgment, which is also the final degree of Christ's glorification, with the last six points, namely,

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?

VIII. What are the objects of his judgment?

God has decreed and declared that this judgment shall occur. God cannot fail in the purpose for which He created his people, which is for them to eternally praise Him.

He decreed it that He may declare His great goodness and mercy towards the faithful, who in this life suffer various trials and afflictions, and that He may manifest his justice and truth in the punishment of the wicked who might here flourish and prosper. There is a necessity that it should at length be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, both in body and soul.

The objects of the final judgment are that God may cast away the wicked and deliver the church; that He may dwell in us and be all in all.

IX. When will it take place?

The future judgment will take place at the end of time, or at the end of the world. The duration of the world consists of three periods, namely, the period before the law, the period under the law, and, finally, that under Christ. This does not imply that the previous two periods were not under Christ as Christ has been Head of the Church since it was established when the Father wrote the names of the elect into the book of life before creation. Christ hid himself from the church

while it was without the law before Moses, then under the law as a period of tutorship, and only visibly came forward as the Messiah when the time was right and the church was fully prepared to receive Him.

The last period, which is under Christ visible, is called the end of the world, the end of days, the last time, the last hour, and is that portion of the world's history between the first and second coming of Christ. These references to this last period does not indicate how long it will be but rather that it is the last *hour*, or there will be no other appearance of the Messiah except to take the elect with Him to heaven, for we are in the last times, and daily we see the signs which were foretold in relation to the judgment.

1 John 2:18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

The year, the month, the day, the hour, in which the final judgment will take place is known by no one, not even the angels. Christ himself is ignorant of it as it respects his humanity, and his office as mediator, which does not require that He should declare to us the time of the judgment.

Mark 13:32 No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

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

Although we don't know exactly when it will occur, God wants us to be assured of the certainty that it will happen,

1. Because of His glory. We are able to refute all those who regard the doctrine of a future judgment as a mere fable, and who infer from the apparent confusion that exists in the world that God has no concern for it, or if He has, that He is unjust.

The world argues that it ought to be well with the righteous, but it is not, therefore God is either not able to provide material wellbeing to his people or He is not as good as his

promise, or that there is no providence or that it has failed us.

As we have seen earlier in this study, the unrighteous and the evil in this world are allowed by God to prosper in some instances and decline in others, all for the execution of His eternal plan and purpose with the elect. In some instances His people were the subjects of evil rulers to chastise and punish them, but at the final judgment, these evildoers will face the Lord in his glory and they will tremble. Then it will be well with the righteous.

2. Because of our comfort that we may be assured that hereafter we shall obtain a deliverance from the miseries of this life. Our lives here are miserable in spite of blessings of material wealth and comfort that might have been bestowed upon us considering that we are being withheld from an eternal life in the glorious midst of our heavenly Father, which we await patiently until it pleases the Lord to call us to our heavenly homes. If we suffer in this life we are only miserable to the extent that we are being withheld from being in the presence of the Lord.

3. Because of the fear we should have for God, and in the proper discharge of our duties, so that we may be able to stand safely and secure in Jesus Christ at the judgment.

Luke 21:34-36 Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; ³⁵for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.

2 Peter 3:10-12 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

¹¹Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹²as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

4. Because the wicked should have no excuse that they will perish because they have been so frequently admonished of the importance of being constantly prepared for the coming of the Son of man, so that they cannot say that they have been taken by surprise.

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

As we have mentioned before, that there will be a future judgment is certain; the precise time of it is unknown. (Mar 13:32)

It raises the question why would God not have us know when the judgment will occur, so, perhaps, that we could properly prepare for it.

The reasons why God will not reveal the time of the judgment are:

1. That He may exercise our faith, hope and patience, and that we may believe in Him, and persevere in the expectation of the fulfillment of his promise. Our trust in Him should be absolute and knowing the time of the judgment might cool our faith and relax our perseverance until the time draws near.

2. Our deliverance is already our inheritance and we have already passed over from death to life in faith, so our curiosity as to the time of the judgment should be nothing more than a passing curiosity – nothing more.

3. That he might keep us in His mercy and light, and in the observance of our Christian duties, so that we may not fall into a state of carnal security, but always be ready, living out our trust and worship in Him.

4. That the ungodly may not defer repentance. If they knew the hour, they may delay repenting from their ways and propose to seek God just in time for their salvation. Seeing that no one knows the hour, all need to maintain a watch and expect the Lord at any moment.

Matt 24:43, 44 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Matt 25:13 Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

XII. Why is it deferred?

The Lord defers his coming:

1. That He may exercise the godly in faith, hope, patience, and prayer.
2. That all the elect may be gathered into the church, for it is because of them and not because of the wicked that the world is permitted to stand. The irrational creation was made for the children of God. The wicked use them as thieves and robbers refusing to acknowledge and glorify God for the abundance and bounty to which they freely have access.

God will have his people brought in by ordinary means; He will have them hear his Word and through this be converted and born again, the accomplishment of which requires time. God shows his patience until the whole number of his people has been gathered into the church, then will the end come.

2Pe 3:9, 14, 15 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵and regard the patience of our Lord as

salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you...

3. That He may afford sufficient time for repentance, as in the days of Noah, and that this delay may render the wicked and disobedient without excuse.

Rom 9:22, 23 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? ²³What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—

Rom 1:28-2:8 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

^{2:1}Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷to

those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

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

The final judgment should be anxiously looked for, because there will then be a separation between the righteous and the wicked, which the godly earnestly desire, for they continually exclaim with Paul,

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Rom 7:24)

I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far (1 Phil 1:23)

The Holy Spirit works this desire in their hearts, so that they say with the Spirit and the bride, 'come, Lord Jesus.' The wicked, on the other hand, fear and tremble at the mention of this judgment. Fear is a certain sign of ungodliness, for how can anyone say 'come' if he is not a member of the church and has not the Spirit of Christ, who inspires this language in the godly?

Fear in the godly is a sign of a lack of knowledge and a study of the Word of God is urgently required so that the faith of such a person can be exercised and strengthened.

When we confess that we believe in Jesus Christ who shall come to judge the quick and the dead, what is it that we believe? It means, I believe,

1. That Christ shall certainly come and that at this second coming there will be a renewing of heaven and earth.
2. That the very same Christ who suffered, died, and rose again for us, shall return.
3. That He shall come visibly and gloriously to deliver His church of which I am a member.
4. That He shall come to cast the wicked into everlasting punishment.

A Study of Jesus Christ

From the foregoing we receive strong and solid comfort, for

- a) Seeing that heaven and earth shall be made new, we have this confidence that our condition will hereafter be different and better than it is now.
- b) Seeing that Christ shall come, we have the assurance that our judge will be gracious for it will be the very same Person who has merited for us our righteousness and who is our Brother, Redeemer and Defender.
- c) Seeing that He shall come gloriously, we believe that He will pass a righteous sentence and will have sufficient power to deliver us.
- d) Seeing that He shall come to liberate his Church, we look for Him there and with joy.
- e) Seeing that He shall come to cast the wicked into everlasting punishment, we patiently bear with their opposition and tyranny.
- f) Seeing that he will deliver the righteous and reject the wicked, He will also either deliver or reject us. Since our faith is based not upon our merits or deeds but upon the election of God the Father, the atonement of Christ the Son and the diligence of the Holy Spirit, there arises a necessity that we should flee from sin, repent, be thankful, and avoid carnal security so that our inclusion in the number of those whom he will deliver will be secure. We should see our deliverance not as an effect of our repentance but as an effect of the will of God.

Next week we will briefly look at good works, what they are and why we are compelled to perform them.