

CHAPTER 33

OF THE LAST THINGS

The original title of this chapter was “Of the Last Judgment,” and most of the chapter deals with this subject.

Reality of the judgment

“1. God hath appointed a day (which word in Scripture in reference to the last things may represent a period of time including the thousand years following the visible, personal and pre-millennial return of Christ), wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only apostate angels shall be judged; but likewise all persons, that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.”

The eschatological “day” includes all the last-time events. It is spoken of often in the Bible as “the day of the Lord,” “the day of Christ,” “the last day,” or just “the day.” Bible-believers in the time of Christ believed in this final judgment (Acts 17:31).

Jesus will be the final judge (John 5:22, 27). When Christ returns, Christians will be judged at the judgment seat (*bema*) of Christ (Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10). Premillennialists believe there will be another judgment at the end of the millennium, usually called the judgment of the great white throne (Rev 20:11-15). It is perhaps significant that the description of the throne in Rev 20 does not include the rainbow, symbol of mercy (cf. Rev 4:3).

The Lord will judge the evil angels at that time (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). Also, all humans will be judged, both the saved and the lost; this judgment will be based on their works, and on whether they are redeemed by Jesus (Eccl 3:17; 11:9; 12:14; Matt 10:26; 12:36-37; 16:27; Acts 24:25; Rom 2:16; 14:10, 12; Rev 20:12, 15).

The punishments of the lost will depend on this judgment (cf. Matt 11:22; Luke 12:47-48; Rom 2:5-6). The rewards for the Christian will also be determined (1 Cor 3:13-15).

Purpose of the judgment

“2. The end of God’s appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord: but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

God’s mercy and justice are shown by the judgment, mercy for the saved and justice for the lost.

The blessedness of the saved shows God’s mercy (Matt 25:21, 31-34; Rom 9:23; 2 Thess 1:7). On the other hand, his justice is shown when the wicked are condemned for their sin (Matt 25:41, 46; Mark 9:48; Rom 2:5-6; 2 Thess 1:7-10).

This section denies the possibility of annihilationism for the lost.

God’s entire plan and purpose in the salvation of sinners and the judgment of the lost reveals his greatness (Rom 11:22-23, 33-36).

Practical use of the doctrine

“3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly to their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.”

The doctrine of the judgment should deter all men from sin (2 Cor 5:11; 2 Pet 3:11-14); especially should believers live holy lives and be consoled by this doctrine (2 Thess 1:5-7; cf. Rev 14:9-13).

The time of Christ’s second coming is kept secret, so that we would not rest in carnal security (Mark 13:35-37), but might always be watchful and prepared (Luke 12:35-36). We all do hope that his coming will be soon (Rev 22:20, the closing words of our Confession).