

## Chapter 1 "Christians" in Hell

Blasphemy? Heresy? No, as difficult as it may be to believe, this reality must be accepted and understood by every real Christian who would be an effective and faithful ambassador for his Lord, Jesus Christ.

God's Word assures the convicted sinner "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). Yet, He warned His disciples (and us) that there is going to be a large group of people who will stand before Him on the Day of Judgment who will have said these words, claimed Him as their Lord, but will still be "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), and, consequently, will be condemned to eternal damnation. Listen to the Lord's own words as He describes this group in two different passages from the gospel of Matthew, the gospel of the King.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left...Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Matthew 25:31-33; 41-46

"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 ye: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:21-23

Let's consider the scene the Lord describes in these two passages.

The judgment described by the Lord is that judgment that will take place at the end of the great Tribulation Period when the Lord will return in glory. It is described in detail in Revelation 19:11-20:6, and was foretold by the Lord in Matthew 24:27-31 (below) and other complementary passages in the gospels:

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be...Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Think of this. The world has suffered through seven (7) years of the worst tribulation ever known to man. Untold millions of people have died as the result of war, famine, pestilences, violence, and religious persecution. At the midpoint of this period of divinely predestined and administered tribulation, two witnesses were sent from heaven to preach the gospel of salvation by faith alone and warn men of the coming judgment of God. After 3 ½ years of faithful witnessing, these were brutally slain upon the order of the one-world leader who is indwelt by Satan, and their dead bodies were left to rot in the streets of Jerusalem to emphasize that the Beast had no reverence for God, His messengers, or His people, and would violently put down any and all opposition from any man and from any quarter. However, despite the Beast’s bravado and carnal pride, after three days God called from heaven, “Come up hither,” and the two messengers who the Beast thought he had silenced rose from the dead and ascended up to heaven in a cloud while all the world watched. (Rev 11:3-12)

Following this miraculous resurrection, God intensified His judgment on sinful man. Finally, the event God’s people had looked forward to for thousands of years took place.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19:11-16

Given the awesome glory and power of what has transpired, you would expect absolute reverence to be manifested at this time. “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11). You

might suppose that those standing before the Lord would hold out some faint, though vain, hope that a show of humility at this time might possibly result in some degree of mercy.

Yet, according to the Lord's own teachings, there will be a group at the judgment that follows His glorious return, a very large group (Matthew 7:13), who are so hardened in their sins, so deceived by their own self-righteousness, that when their time to stand before the Lord comes, they have the audacity to speak out against the Righteous Judge, presumptuously challenging His verdicts and questioning His wisdom and justice! At a time when man's fear of and reverence for God should silence all of his carnal, foolish, and worthless reasoning, these religious unbelievers are so bold in their self-deceit that they oppose the righteous judgment of Divinity!

Attempting to justify themselves they cry

"Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?"

The Lord's answer is simple and direct:

"Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me."

What a different spirit is this than that which characterizes those who truly know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The true children of His kingdom are humbled in His presence, as was Ezekiel when called before His holy throne.

"As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face...." Ezekiel 1:28

In contrast, this group, in the presence of the One who alone is to be exalted, exalt themselves! Rather than falling on their face in abject humility before Holiness, these question the Lord's description of their fruitlessness, then pridefully recount their personal religious experiences and humanistic works in one last, vain attempt to set aside His omniscient judgment of their manifold sins.

"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?"

How they perfectly prove that "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty..." (Proverbs 18:12a). But despite their protests and boastings, each one is held accountable for his own sins...every sin...by the Omnipotent Judge against whom they were committed. Each unbeliever stands spiritually naked before Omniscience, stripped of all self-righteousness. The Judge examines everything in the light of His own infinite righteousness. Every sinful thought and intent of the heart is fully exposed and examined. Sin once thought to be hidden, is now made public. Even "idle" thoughts that were

considered to be of no consequence at the time they were formed are judged (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28; 12:36, 37; Luke 12:2, 3; Hebrews 4:12, 13).

No work of man satisfies Him. He declares all of man's righteousness to be "filthy rags" in comparison to His infinite holiness and just demands (Isaiah 64:6), and declares His final and perfect judgment: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:11).

Despite their desperate pleas and self-justification, the Lord's holy conclusion is blunt and final, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23) Their judgment is announced and executed immediately: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" (Matthew 25:41) No excuses or rationalizations are accepted; no "scapegoats" allowed; no mercy shown. As were the Beast and False Prophet before them (Revelation 19:20) they are cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented for all of eternity. The day they thought would be their coronation is, in fact, the day of their eternal damnation. They are the self-deceived individuals to whom Woe is ascribed in the prophecy of this judgment in Amos 5:18-20:

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end *is* it for you? the day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. *Shall* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

A.B. Bruce, in his book *The Training of the Twelve*, pg 109, comments on these in giving admonitions to those who are heavily involved in evangelistic works. He warns against several dangers, including pride from personal "success," the demeaning of others who are not so engaged, or not as "successful," etc. He ends his admonition as follows:

"Once more, they may fall into carnal security respecting their own spiritual state, deeming it impossible that any thing can go wrong with those who are so devoted, and whom God has so greatly owned. An obvious, as well as dangerous, mistake; for doubtless Judas took part in this Galilean mission, and, for aught we know to the contrary, was as successful as his fellow-disciples in casting out devils. Graceless men may for a season be employed as agents in promoting the work of grace in the hearts of others. Usefulness does not necessarily imply goodness, according to the teaching of Christ Himself. 'Many,' He declares in the Sermon on the Mount, 'will say unto me on that day, LORD, LORD, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many wonderful works?' And mark the answer which He says He will give such. It is not: I call in question the correctness of your statement – that is tacitly admitted; it is, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (Matthew 7:23)."

Friends, the Lord Jesus Christ is God. He only speaks the truth. There is "no guile" in anything He ever says (1 Peter 2:22). That this solemn picture of the future is accurate is beyond doubt. This reality should greatly sober our thinking and influence our witnessing as we share with others the glorious salvation offered by God's grace through

faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. And it should provoke all who claim the name of Christ to personally consider some very serious questions:

1. How could intelligent, well-meaning people be so utterly deceived?

Answer: Their faith was very real to them. They truly believed what they had been taught. Unfortunately, what they had been taught, believed, and, ultimately, trusted in for their salvation was wrong! They never realized that their faith was misplaced and, consequently, unable to save them.

2. How could anyone live his life as a Christian without even an inkling of thought that his eternal destiny was not heaven, but hell?

Answer: Because the heart of man is desperately wicked, especially deceitful to the one in whom it dwells. (Jeremiah 17:9)

3. What powerful influence could be so forceful and all-consuming as to make these religious-but-lost, individuals continue their rebellion against the wisdom and dictates of our holy God, even when standing before His Throne of Judgment?

Answer: Man-centered religion. They had been ensnared by the “smooth things” that men had taught them, and had trusted in the man-centered and self-serving religion of their day. They had failed to reverence God’s holy Word. They placed the authority of God’s eternal truth below the “thoughts” of their own deceitful hearts and their own personal and emotional religious experiences. In other words, they had trusted in their “feelings,” and the teachings of their time that exalted man and man’s reason. They had put their hope in “Self,” rather than the Lord Jesus Christ alone. They had ignored, dismissed, demeaned, or neglected the holy and eternal truths of the “sound doctrine” of “all the counsel of God,” the Bible, rightly divided. (Isaiah 30:10; Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:1-4)

4. Will I be among this group?

Answer: Only you and the Lord can determine this.