

First in Line

Last week we discussed the concept of being last in line with respect to how it applies to our attitudes and actions towards others, rather than the order or time we come to live God's Way of life. **Matthew 20:26-28**- "However, it shall not be this way among you; but whoever would become great among you, let him be your servant; And whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave; Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life *as a* ransom for many." Our conduct toward others must reflect one of edifying and putting others ahead of ourselves. We are to serve one another, edify one another.

Romans 14:19- "So then, we should pursue the things of peace and the things that edify one another." **Mark 9:35**- "And after sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and *servant of all*."

The rewards are eternal for living God's Way of life, keeping His true Sabbath and Holy Days. Beginning with repentance and baptism we are beginning the adoption process to becoming family members in His Family. God has set us up at our own appointed times and position in His line. **1 Corinthians 15:23**- "But each in his own order: Christ *the* Firstfruit; then, those who are Christ's at His coming."

With these thoughts in mind, God positions us in a first-place spot unique in itself.

We as members of His Church and the Body of Christ get to stand judgment first!

Judgment is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary as "a legal decision, order or sentence given by a judge." In eternal judgment, God decides a person's reward or punishment for all eternity.

1 Peter 4:17-18- "For the time *has come for* judgment to ***begin*** with the household of God; and if it first *begins* with us, what *will be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if the righteous are saved with much difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and *the sinner*?" As we are in the weeks preceding the Passover, this time of reflection becomes even more critical. I'd like to point out the words from verse 18, "the righteous are saved with much difficulty." Think about that for just a moment. God is very specific in His Word and His instructions for us to follow, just as He tells us too.

I know I frequently use this example, but remember Moses striking the rock instead of speaking to it as instructed? After all he did in leading the Nation of Israel out of Egypt, he was not permitted to lead them into the promised land (**Numbers 20:7-12**). And what of poor Uzzah, who was struck dead by God for trying to steady the Ark of the Covenant (**2 Samuel 6:1-7, 1 Chronicles 13:9-12**)? The Bible has numerous stories of those who did things their own way as opposed to following God's explicit instructions. God will do what He deems necessary for us to understand His Way. I will always be amazed at the pastors out there who

openly admit, “oh we choose to worship the Lord on Sunday.” I’m sure that’ll work out just fine...just like all the man-made traditions instead of God’s Holy Days (**Matthew 15:6, Mark 7:5, 8-9, 13**).

But we need not fear this judgment in sheer terror. We know God is no respecter of persons. **1 Peter 1:17**- “And if you call upon the Father, Who judges according to each man’s work without respect of persons, pass the time of your *life’s* journey in *the fear of God*;” (**2 Chronicles 19:7, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, James 2:1,9**).

We already possess a reverent fear of God and keeping His Commandments which gives us wisdom and understanding. **Proverbs 2:5**- “Then you shall understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.” **Proverbs 9:10**- “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.” There are dozens of scriptures throughout God’s Word speaking on the fear of The Lord (**Psalm 33:8, 111:10, Proverbs 14:27, 15:33, 22:4, Isaiah 8:13, 11:2, Hosea 3:5**) just to name a few. We can even read of the effect on those who reject the fear of God, **Proverbs 1:7**- “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*”

As we have been presented God's Truth, we have been baptized and accepted His Way of life, we cannot become complacent in our walk with Him. We must continue in the faith and abide with Christ and He in us. **John 15:4-11**- "Dwell in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast them into a fire, and they are burned. If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; live in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and that your joy may be full." (**Psalm 15:1-2, 91:1**). If we do not abide and continue to grow and bear good spiritual fruit, we can all fall short and get into trouble. We cannot turn back. "But Jesus said to him, "No one who sets his hand to the plow, and looks back at the things behind, is fit for the kingdom of God."- **Luke 9:62**.

We cannot assume that as so many Protestant Churches believe that “once saved always saved.” Their lack of understanding and obedience to God’s specific instructions in His Word deceives them into believing this lie. They believe once they accept Jesus into their hearts, say the sinner’s prayer, God writes their names in the Lambs Book of Life. Sorry folks, God has an eraser on His pen. Andrea and I have witnessed this first hand in the Pentecostal Church we used to attend. It was always a body count for how many were “born again” each week. Not one ever walked through a wall on their way out of the sanctuary. Besides, nobody is floating off to Heaven anyway. Christ is coming back for His True Church.

Again, through God’s Word, we have been given ample instructions and warnings on how we are to conduct ourselves and how we are to grow and produce good spiritual fruit. But we must read it for ourselves and do what He says to do! **2**

Corinthians 5:10- “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive according to the things *done* in *his* body—what he has practiced, whether good or evil.”

God's judgment is flawlessly fair. In this life, some of us have had better opportunities to develop God's character. Others may have a greater intelligence or natural abilities. Again, God knows our hearts and is no respecter of persons. God will apply the principle of "to whom much is given, much is required" with perfect

fairness (**Luke 12:48**). Teachers of God's way will be held to an even higher standard. **James 3:1**- “My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive more severe judgment;” God says that individuals will have to account for all of their works, including our secret sins. Even the words we have spoken will be judged.

Ephesians 4:17- “So then, I declare and testify this in *the* Lord that you are no longer to walk even as the rest *of the* Gentiles are walking, in *the* vanity of their minds,”

Ephesians 4:29- “Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear.” (**1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:16**).

1 Thessalonians 5:22-23- “Abstain from every form of wickedness. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your entire spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We are reminded to, “So speak and so do as those *who will be* judged by the law of liberty.” **James 2:12**.

God the Father has appointed Jesus Christ to judge all humanity. Only Jesus Christ has ever lived a perfect life. The Lord knows what it is like to be a human being

and what difficulties His people have while living in this present, sinful world.

Hebrews 2:14-18- “Therefore, since the children are partakers of flesh and blood, in like manner He also took part in the same, in order that through death He might annul him who has the power of death—that is, the devil; And *that* He might deliver those who were subject to bondage all through their lives by *their* fear of death. For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham. For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted *in like manner*, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Thus, Jesus is exceedingly qualified to be the Judge of all mankind.

He will judge everyone by the standard of His Word. The Bible contains God's laws, His standard of righteousness by which everyone will be judged.

Under the guidance and authority of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the resurrected saints of the First Resurrection will help to judge the world.

Just as we are being judged now, we will judge those who live and die throughout the Millennium. We will also judge the angels who rebelled against God under Lucifer. **1 Corinthians 6:2-3-** “Don’t you know that the saints shall judge

the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy of the most trivial of judgments? Don't you know that we shall judge angels? How much more then *the* things of this life?"

The truth of God must take root in our hearts. It must be refined and amplified over our lifetime. We must bear good spiritual fruit as a result of our continued growth. Most people who hear God's truth, do not bear fruit and produce good character and works. So many are called, but few are chosen (**Matthew 22:14**).

"For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart. And there is not a created thing that is not manifest in His sight; but all things *are* naked and laid bare before the eyes of Him to Whom we must give account."- **Hebrews 4:12-13**.

"Because it is written," 'For *as* I live,' says *the* Lord, 'every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' "So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore, we should no longer judge one another, but judge this instead: Do not put an occasion of stumbling or a cause of offense before your brother." **Romans 14:11-12**.

We need not be overly concerned with the judgment if we heed His warnings and we are walking in faith and obedience according to His Word. “Therefore, behold *the* graciousness and the severity of God: upon those who fell, severity; and upon you, graciousness, if you continue in His graciousness; otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, shall be grafted in because God is able to graft them in again.”- **Romans 11:22-23**.

We have God’s Word on the rewards that lie ahead and the destruction that awaits those who fail to obey. “The one who overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But *the* cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is *the* second death.”- **Revelation 21:7-8**.

As we head towards Passover, remember, all of God’s promises and rewards to us are by His grace. We cannot earn or negotiate for them and they are not something given for saying a sinner’s prayer or buying Miracle Spring Water. We need not keep records of our achievements for the Kingdom regarding our service to God and others. Our Sovereign Creator is well aware of our hearts, our motives and what we have done on this Earth. Whether last in line or first in judgment, in the end, we will all be judged by Jesus Christ’s perfect standards. By loving God first, we are obligated to entrust all that we are and will ever be to God’s Divine

inspection, making absolutely sure we are good and faithful stewards with the gifts

He entrusts to our care. Amen.

BL-03-26-22