

Much Obligated

For the past two weeks, we discussed waiting in line. Whether it was last in line, putting others ahead of ourselves, or being first in line to stand judgment in the House of God. I thought about last week's topic and just why should we be first in being judged? Isn't the world full of sinners much more deserving of judgment than members of God's House? Well, that's wrong thinking right off the bat. That would be thinking like the Pharisee in **Luke 18:10-14**: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself in this manner: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers—or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week, and I give a tithe of everything that I gain.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat himself on the chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled; and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted." If it hasn't begun to become completely clear after reading the previous Forerunner article, let's expand a little on why we should be first to be judged.

God has His specific reasons for looking at His Own before the rest of humanity. The self-examination must begin with us. We can scarcely begin to judge another without looking at ourselves first. “And why do you look at the sliver that is in your brother’s eye, but you do not perceive the beam that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, allow me to cast out the sliver that is in your eye,’ but you do not see the beam that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First cast out the beam from your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to cast out the sliver that is in your brother’s eye.”- **Luke 6:41-42 (Matthew 7:3-5)**.

We have discussed many times in the past that the journey we are on can be likened to an interview process for a future position in God’s Kingdom. We have been called out and set apart for His specific purpose. **Deuteronomy 7:6-7**- “For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you *were* the fewest of all people.”

1 Corinthians 1:26-28- “For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are powerful, not many who are high-born *among you*. Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world, so that He might put to shame those who are wise; and God has chosen the

weak things of the world so that He might put to shame the strong things. And the low-born of the world, and the despised has God chosen—even the things that are counted as nothing—in order that He might bring to nothing the things that are;”

“But you are a chosen stock, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession *of God*, that you might proclaim His *excellent* virtues, Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”- **1 Peter 2:9**. This calling has placed us in a position of willing obligation. We are “obliged” in our hearts to a pledge of obedience to God’s Way of life. To have such an honor bestowed upon us is beyond words. So few acknowledge and accept God’s calling. They simply read it like a party invitation and discard it with the other junk mail.

The word oblige isn’t heard as much these days as so many people have a sense of entitlement and feel no obligation to anyone or anything, much less to their Creator. I always remember the old westerns with John Wayne and him tipping his hat saying, “much obliged.” You could feel the meaning just by the way he said it. The Free Online Dictionary defines “oblige” as: to compel or require (someone) to do something, as by circumstance or legality, to make indebted or grateful or to do a service or favor for. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have

everlasting life.”- **John 3:16**. I cannot think of anything greater than this Gift from God The Father that would motivate us to a sense of obligation to obey His Word. We have been redeemed from sin and death by the precious shed blood of Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:23**). He has also given us His Holy Spirit. “Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that *is* of God, so that we might know the things graciously given to us by God;”- **1 Corinthians 2:12**. (**Acts 1:8**).

Ephesians 1:7-10- “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, *even* the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, Which He has made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence; Having made known to us the mystery of His own will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself; That in *the divine* plan for the fulfilling of *the* times, He might bring all things together in Christ, both the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth;”

Colossians 1:14- “In Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins;”

1 Peter 1:18-19- “Knowing that you were not redeemed by corruptible things, by silver or gold, from your futile way of living, inherited *by tradition* from your forefathers; But by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;”

God has given us so many blessings (in addition to His only Son) that I won't be able to cover them all in one lesson. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ; According as He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be holy and blameless before Him in love; Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His own will,"- **Ephesians 1:3-5**.

Aside from the breath of life from **Genesis 2:7 (Job 33:4)**, we have been entrusted with His Truth, His Plan of salvation for mankind and His Promise of eternal life through His son. We know that the Sabbath is His true and correct day of rest and being at one with Him from the time of creation. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And by *the beginning of* the seventh day God finished His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."- **Genesis 2:1-3**. It was established at creation and given to Moses as the Fourth Commandment in **Exodus 20:8**. We know that Jesus Christ Himself kept the true Sabbath (**Matthew 12:1, Luke 6:9, 13:14, 14:3, John 5:16, 9:14**).

We know that the Holy Days are His plan for mankind and they are His and not some Jewish traditions. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘*Concerning* the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, even these are My appointed feasts.”- **Leviticus 23:1-2**. We know that Jesus and His disciples kept them as well (**Matthew 26:17, 19, John 2:13, 7:37, 11:56, 12:1, 13:1, 29, 18:28**).

With the revelation of His Truth and His plan for mankind, we know we do not “go to Heaven” when we die. **Genesis 3:19**- “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.” **Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**- “For the living know that they shall die; but the dead do not know anything, nor do they have any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is long ago perished; nor do they any longer have a portion forever in all that is done under the sun.” And in Jesus’ own words, “(And no one has ascended into heaven, except He Who came down from heaven, even the Son of man, Who is in heaven.)- **John 3:13**. By the same thread, we do not go to hell and are tormented by demons either. Hell is translated as grave.

It is an easier sell to the “church goers” of the 30,000 plus denominations out there to float off to heaven than to read God’s Word and know His true plan. **Hosea 4:6**- “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected

knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.” **Matthew 13:16-17**- “But blessed *are* your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see what you see, and have not seen; and to hear what you hear, and have not heard.” There are many people who genuinely love God and love Jesus with all their hearts. But not keeping His Word the way He says to keep it, makes them miss the mark.

Romans 10:1-3- “Brethren, the earnest desire of my heart and my supplication to God for Israel is for salvation. For I testify of them that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of the righteousness *that* comes from God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

We “sleep” (death) until we are resurrected. **Ezekiel 37:12-14**- “Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD when I have opened your graves, O My people, and have brought you up out of your graves. And I shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your

own land. And you shall know that I the LORD have spoken it and have done it,” says the LORD.” **(Ezekiel 37:1-10).**

“Do not wonder at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those who have practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil unto a resurrection of judgment.”- **John 5:28-29.**

God has a much better plan for the salvation of mankind. He does not desire to see any of us perish, “The Lord is not delaying the promise *of His coming*, as some in their own minds reckon delay; rather, He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”- **2 Peter 3:9.**

1 Timothy 2:3-4- “For this *is* good and acceptable before God our Savior, Who desires all men to be saved and to come to *the* knowledge of *the* truth.”

He has promised us the positions of kings and priests to reign with Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom. **Revelation 1:5-6-** “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And has made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen” **(Revelation 5:9-10).** With these precious gifts and blessings comes with an obligation to do our part. **Revelation**

2:25-26- “But hold fast what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the* end, I will give authority over the nations;” We cannot sit idly by and make the fatal assumption that by believing in God we have achieved eternal life. How many times have you heard someone proclaim, “oh I believe in God and Jesus Christ”? **James 2:19-** “Do you believe that God is one? You do well *to believe this*. Even the demons believe—and tremble in fear.” Merely believing doesn’t cut it. It requires action on our part. It really isn’t complicated to understand God’s Way. It just takes obedience and a willing heart and desire to grow according to His Word. Simply stated, God says, “If you will obey my laws and commandments as I have instructed, then I will do this for you.” It requires work on our part, if we do this, He’ll do that. There’s no sense of entitlement here. It’s all part of our application process for our future positions in His Kingdom. This deals with our *faith*. Our obedience. This deals with *believing* the promises of God. This involves *trusting* and following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The gifts and blessings of God do not come from believing in the Bible but rather doing what it says in it.

We have been called, given His gifts and His promises. **2 Peter 1:2-4-** “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in *the* knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, According as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and

virtue; Through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is in the* world through lust.”

Ephesians 2:4-8- “But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead in *our* trespasses, has made *us* alive together with Christ. (*For* you have been saved by grace.) And He has raised *us* up together and has caused *us* to sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, So that in the ages that *are* coming He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this *especially* is not of your own selves; *it is* the gift of God.”

With these points in mind, it is rightfully so that we stand in God’s judgment first. He would not have sent His only Son to die for the sins of mankind to achieve mediocre obedience. He will not hand over such important roles in His Kingdom to those that lie on their applications. His Divine scrutiny is meticulous and finite.

1 Peter 4:17- “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?”

But as we mentioned last week, we need not fear this judgment. We have God's promises. "Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."- **Revelation 20:6**. "Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is."- **1 John 3:2**. Our application process will take the rest of our lives. But the final interview will be one I'm sure we're all be looking forward to. As Passover is in a couple of weeks, keep in mind of the price that was paid for the blessings we have been given and I know we are all much obliged.

BL/04-02-22

