

Entering into the Kingdom of the Heavens (3)

The following article is excerpted from Chapter 48 of Crucial Truths in the Holy Scriptures, Vol. 5, by Witness Lee, published by Living Stream Ministry.

The End of the Believers Who Do Not Enter the Kingdom of the Heavens

The Bible clearly reveals that only the overcoming believers will enter the kingdom of the heavens. These overcoming believers, however, do not include all the believers. In contrast to the blessings that await the overcomers in the kingdom of the heavens, there is another end for the believers who do not overcome and who cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Although the New Testament clearly speaks of this matter with great seriousness, Bible scholars throughout the ages have either misinterpreted many of the portions that refer to this matter or have ignored them. Therefore, we must spend time to examine these portions in the Bible one by one in order to be clear about this matter.

The Question of Whether Believers Are Disciplined in This Age Only

1. **“By the Lord, we are disciplined that we may not be condemned with the world”; “The Father of spirits...disciplined...for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness”** (1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:9-10).

First Corinthians 11:32 says that the Lord disciplines us so that we would not be condemned with the world. Hebrews 12:9-10 says that God disciplines us for what is profitable that we might partake of His holiness. The word *discipline* in both portions is the same Greek word; it implies teaching and punishment. To keep us from being condemned with the world and to cause us to partake of His holiness, God comes in to discipline, teach, and punish us. All Bible readers and Bible scholars agree that the discipline referred to in 1 Corinthians 11:32 and Hebrews 12:9-10 occurs in this age. All believers confess that God disciplines saved believers in this age after they become His children, but in the understanding of most, God disciplines believers only in this age. Consequently, we must consider whether this understanding is according to God’s Word.

2. **“My master is delaying his coming...That slave who**

knew his master’s will and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes” (Luke 12:45, 47, see also vv. 46, 48).

In these verses the Lord clearly said that when He comes, some of the slaves who serve Him will receive many lashes from Him. These ones must be saved because they are slaves. This shows that when the Lord comes, He will discipline His believers. There is no place in the Bible that says that the Lord disciplines His believers only in this age. This is the human concept. Man has placed this limitation on the Lord, but the Lord has never limited Himself in this way by saying that He will discipline His children only in this age. On the contrary, He clearly said that some believers will not be disciplined until He comes (Matt. 25:5-13, 19). The Bible speaks of the Lord disciplining believers in this age, but it does not say that He disciplines them only in this age. Instead, it clearly states that when the Lord returns, He will discipline His believers.

Many think that when the Lord returns, the millennial kingdom will solve every problem of the believers. When the Lord returns, however, the believers will have to face His judgment (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10). It is not wrong to say that the Lord judges the believers today (1 Cor. 11:31-32), but when He returns, He will judge them even more. Today His judgments are fragmentary, partial, and incomplete; when He returns, His judgment will be comprehensive, full, and complete. Since the Lord will comprehensively, fully, and completely judge His believers when He returns, how can we say that there will be no punishment then? Will every one of the Lord’s believers be perfect before Him at that time? It is not credible to think this. Since many believers will have unconfessed faults, how can the Lord not punish them? If the Lord does not punish them, His failure to judge would be unrighteous. Therefore, when the Lord returns, it is certain that some believers will be punished. Realistically speaking, we should realize that many believers will receive punishment when He returns.

The millennial kingdom will be a time of restoration only (Acts 3:21); it will still be related to the old heaven and the old earth. In this world of the old creation, death and the curse will continue to exist (Isa. 65:20). These former things will not pass away until the time of the new heaven

and new earth, when God makes all things new (Rev. 21:1-5). Only when there is a new heaven and new earth will God's judgment be complete. Even though the age of the old creation, including the old heaven and old earth, is the time and place for God's work of judgment, He will not be completely satisfied when there are still things that need to be judged. God will have His full enjoyment only in the new creation—in the new heaven and new earth—after His judgment is completed. Since the millennial kingdom is associated with the world of the old creation in the old heaven and old earth, it is a time and place for God to do His work of judgment. Since God's work will not be finished in the church age, the age of grace, He will continue to work until everything is done in the coming age of the millennial kingdom. In the age of grace, God will not complete His work of judging, disciplining, and dealing with the believers to the extent that the believers no longer have any problems. Consequently, He will continue His work of judging, disciplining, and dealing with the believers in the millennial kingdom. This is natural and necessary. In His Word God clearly and solemnly tells us that He will discipline the believers in the coming age of the kingdom and discipline them thoroughly.

Therefore, although many think that the Lord disciplines and deals with the believers only in the age of grace, God's Word tells us that the Lord will discipline and deal with believers in the coming kingdom age as well. The Lord deals with believers in the church age, and He will deal with believers in the coming kingdom age. Furthermore, His dealing in the coming age will be thorough and complete. Those who are thoroughly dealt with today will not need to be dealt with further in the coming age, but those who are not thoroughly dealt with today will need to be dealt with in the coming age. This is very logical.

The children of God place too much emphasis on God's dealings in this age; they think that God disciplines His children in this age only and that if they make mistakes, He will deal with them only today. However, we all know that there are believers who sin and do evil, who love the world instead of the Lord, or who are cold and backslidden but who are not disciplined and dealt with by the Lord even up to the time of their death. Does this mean that there will be no consequences for their actions? Does this mean that the Lord will never judge or discipline

them? If this were the case, it would be altogether unjust. The Lord would never do something as unjust as this.

The Lord never said that He would discipline and deal with believers only in this age; instead, He said that He would discipline and deal with them also at His coming at the time of the millennial kingdom. Some believers are disciplined and dealt with by the Lord today; some will not be disciplined and dealt with until He comes in the future. Some are dealt with today, and some will be dealt with in the future; the Lord can do as He pleases. This is similar to parents who discipline their children; some children who are naughty are disciplined immediately, but others who are naughty are not disciplined for a few days. Parents discipline the children as it pleases them and in the manner that best benefits each child. But regardless of when the discipline occurs, the children are disciplined. Regardless of whether He disciplines in this

age or in the future, the Lord will discipline His children. If He does not discipline them today, He will discipline them in the future. He will never simply overlook the need for discipline.

Believers who lust after sinful things, who love the world, or who are cold and backsliding will be disciplined and dealt with by the Lord; this is reasonable, real-

istic, and necessary. However, if they do not repent and the Lord does not discipline them in this age, does this mean that they will not be disciplined after they die or when the Lord returns? Does it mean that they will have no problems? Will their death free them from their responsibilities concerning sinning, loving the world, and not loving the Lord? Will their death free them from the Lord's righteous punishment? Will the Lord be required to forgive them when He returns? Will the Lord forget about asking for an account of their mistakes in this age? This is impossible and unreasonable. Dear brothers and sisters, the necessity for discipline in the coming age is certain. Whether we look at it from the angle of reasonableness or from an angle of necessity, there will be discipline in the future. According to the Lord's Word, this kind of discipline is a certainty.

Some may wonder how a believer, who is either raptured or resurrected with a body that is like the Lord's glorious body, can be disciplined when the Lord returns. This is a human thought. Is it realistic to think that only a believer in a corrupted body from the old creation can be

IN THE AGE OF GRACE, GOD WILL NOT COMPLETE HIS WORK OF JUDGING, DISCIPLINING, AND DEALING WITH THE BELIEVERS TO THE EXTENT THAT ALL BELIEVERS NO LONGER HAVE ANY PROBLEMS. CONSEQUENTLY, HE WILL CONTINUE HIS WORK IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM.

disciplined but that a believer in a resurrected and transfigured body cannot be disciplined? This would make a resurrected, transfigured body into some kind of protection for believers who sin and love the world today. In any case, the Lord's Word clearly tells us that in the future some believers will be disciplined by the Lord.

The Coming Discipline: In Principle

1. **"The Son of Man is to come...and then He will repay each man according to his doings"** (Matt. 16:27).

When the Lord returns, He will repay each man according to his doings. According to the context of this verse, the Lord's word does not refer to His judgment of worldly people; rather, it refers to His judgment of the believers, of the disciples who are following Him. When He comes, He will repay each man according to his doings. This means that He will judge and repay us according to our doings after our salvation. If our actions are pleasing and acceptable to Him, He will give us a reward; if they are not pleasing and acceptable, He will chastise us. This is certain, and we cannot deny it.

2. **"We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad"** (2 Cor. 5:10).

All believers will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ when the Lord returns, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what they have practiced, whether good or bad. If we have done good things, we will receive a reward, and if we have done bad things, we will receive punishment. The ones doing good receive a reward; the ones doing evil will receive punishment. If the Lord considers our actions today to be good, we will receive a good recompense, a reward, but if the Lord considers our actions today to be evil, we will receive a negative recompense, a punishment. This is something that we cannot fail to acknowledge.

According to the two preceding verses, some believers will receive a reward when the Lord returns, and some will receive punishment. These two portions speak of a principle: if the Lord approves of and accepts a believer's actions today as being good, He will reward the believer when He returns, but if the Lord condemns a believer's actions today as being evil, He will punish the believer when He returns. This is the principle, but now we need to see the details associated with this principle.

The Coming Discipline: In Detail

1. **"Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction...**

Narrow is the gate and constricted is the way that leads to life" (Matt. 7:13-14).

We have seen that the Lord's teachings on the mountain in Matthew 5—7 speak of the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. The Lord spoke these words to His disciples, not to unbelieving sinners. These words do not speak of salvation from perdition for sinners; rather, they speak of entering the kingdom of the heavens for saved believers. Thus, the future consequences that are referenced in these chapters do not relate to a person's salvation from perdition but to a person's status in the kingdom of the heavens. This applies to the content of verses 13 and 14. We cannot take verses out of context; we must determine the meaning of these verses based upon the meaning of the Lord's entire teaching on the mountain. According to the Lord's teachings on the mountain, the phrase *leads to destruction* does not refer to perdition but to being unable to enter the kingdom of the heavens and encountering destruction; the phrase *leads to life* does not refer to the life obtained through salvation but to entering the kingdom of the heavens to enjoy it as a realm of eternal life.

This is different from John 3:16, which speaks of man receiving either eternal life or perdition. Here it says that we are led to destruction or to life. When we believe, eternal life enters into us. However, being led to life by following the Lord to take the constricted way is to enter into this life. This refers to our future entrance into the realm of life in the kingdom of the heavens to enjoy it blessings. Since this is the significance of *leads to life*, the phrase *leads to destruction* must refer to encountering the destruction of punishment instead of being able to enter into the realm of life in the kingdom of the heavens. Such destruction will be the end of those believers who are unwilling to enter in by the narrow gate and follow the Lord on the constricted way but who instead enter through the wide gate and follow their own will to walk on the broad way. This destruction will be their punishment.

2. **"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens...Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power? And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness"** (Matt. 7:21-23).

This word was spoken during the Lord's teaching on the mountain, so it does not refer to unbelievers who will go into eternal perdition but rather to believers who will not be able to enter the kingdom of the heavens. This group is not made up of unbelievers. We know they are saved because they call Him their Lord (cf. Rom. 10:13), and they serve the Lord and do good works in His name (which even the Lord does not deny). Although they are saved,

they will not be able to enter the kingdom of the heavens when the Lord comes in that day, because they did not work for the Lord according to God's will. Although they did many good things, they did not do them according to the will of God. Although they worked in the Lord's name, they did not do God's will; instead, they acted contrary to God's will. In the Lord's eyes they are "workers of lawlessness." This can be likened to a school that has a lights-out rule at ten o'clock. If some students study after ten, they are breaking the school rules, even though they may be doing something beneficial. In the school's eyes, however, they are being lawless. Similarly, those who do a work for the Lord that is not according to God's will are lawless in His eyes. Since their actions are not according to God's will, He does not know or approve of them.

The Greek for "never knew" in verse 23 is translated "do not acknowledge" in Romans 7:15. In the King James Version it is translated "allow not," and in Darby's version and Berry's Greek-English interlinear version, which is based on Stephen's Greek text, it is translated "do not own." In Romans 7:15 Paul says, "What I work out, I do not acknowledge." According to the context of this verse, what Paul works out is not something that he allows, owns, or approves of, because "what I will, this I do not practice; but what I hate, this I do" (v. 15). Since he does what he hates, he certainly does not allow, own, or approve of it. Similarly, the Lord considers those who are not working according to God's will to be lawless, and He does not acknowledge, allow, own, or approve of them. Therefore, they will be refused by the Lord and will not be able to enter the kingdom of the heavens. This will be the end of every worker for the Lord who does not work according to the will of God; it will be the punishment they receive.

3. "He who finds his soul-life shall lose it"; "Whoever wants to save his soul-life shall lose it"; "Whoever seeks to preserve his soul-life will lose it"; "He who loves his soul-life loses it" (Matt. 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33; John 12:25).

We have previously seen that these verses, which speak of losing the soul-life, refer to believers not being able to enter the kingdom of the heavens because they were unwilling to allow their soul to suffer in this age. The coming kingdom of the heavens will be given to those

who were willing to give up the enjoyment of their soul in this age. Thus, everyone who enters the kingdom of the heavens will experience a marvelous enjoyment in their soul. Those who cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens will not enjoy its glory and happiness; instead, they will suffer shame and loss. Therefore, their soul will feel a particular suffering. Those who seek to save or preserve their soul-life today by being unwilling to lose their soul-life for the Lord's sake with respect to their families, desires, or other matters will lose their soul-life when the Lord returns. They will feel a particular suffering in their soul that will be associated with punishment.

4. "Everyone of you who does not forsake all his own possessions...If even the salt becomes tasteless...It is fit neither for the land nor for the manure pile; they will throw it out" (Luke 14:33-35; see also Matt. 5:13).

EVERYONE WHO ENTERS THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS WILL EXPERIENCE A MARVELOUS ENJOYMENT IN THEIR SOUL. THOSE WHO CANNOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS WILL NOT ENJOY ITS GLORY AND HAPPINESS; INSTEAD, THEY WILL SUFFER SHAME AND LOSS.

The believers are the salt of the earth, so they should forsake all their possessions and the world; they should be separated from the worldly people and be full of the pure flavor of salt with its germ-killing power. But some believers are unwilling to forsake everything and instead lust after worldly enjoyment, so they lose their salty flavor as Christians.

Although they may not sin, they lose their heavenly flavor as Christians, and they lose their separation from the world. In their living, interests, attire, and adornment, they are not at all different from worldly people, and even the worldly people cannot taste a pure, heavenly flavor in them or sense God's power bringing them out of filthy things. They love what the worldly people love; they are unwilling to love the Lord above all else. Although they are Christians, they do not have the flavor of a Christian, nor can they fulfill the function of a Christian. The Lord says these ones are fit neither for the land nor for the manure pile; He can only throw them out.

In Luke 14:35 the Lord speaks of three places: the land, the manure pile, and outside. In the Bible, land refers to the earth created by God (Matt. 13:38, 44). The land here refers to the earth during the restoration of all things. The Lord will use the overcoming Christians to rule the earth. The manure pile is a most filthy place. Since hell is the filthiest place in the whole universe, the manure pile refers to hell. Outside refers to a place outside the glory of the coming kingdom of the heavens but

different from the manure pile. Christians who have lost their flavor will be unsuitable to rule on the earth in the coming age because they were not faithful, but they will also be unsuitable for the filthiest place because even though they have committed sins, they have been eternally saved. The only thing left for them is to be thrown outside the glory of the coming kingdom of the heavens, which puts them to shame, because they do not have the flavor of the Lord's testimony. This will be the end of all believers who are unwilling to leave everything to follow the Lord today; it will also be their punishment.

5. **“Out of your mouth I will judge you, wicked slave”; “Evil and slothful slave...Even that which he has shall be taken away from him. And cast out the useless slave into the outer darkness. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth”** (Luke 19:22; Matt. 25:26, 29-30).

In these verses the Lord spoke of those who have received His gift but do not faithfully and diligently use it to work for Him. When He returns, He will condemn them, take away their gift, and cast them into the outer darkness where there is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Being cast into outer darkness is different from being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). The lake of fire is where sinners are punished for eternity. Outer darkness is where the Lord's unfaithful servants are punished when He returns. *Outer* refers to a place apart from the Lord. When the Lord returns and judges the believers, He will be in His glory, that is, in the light of His glory (Matt. 16:27). To be outside is to be outside the light of His glory. This outer place is darkness. Psalm 18:9-12 says that when the Lord returns there will be darkness surrounding His brightness. Outer darkness must refer to the darkness outside the light of His glory when He returns. The Lord's faithful servants will be with Him in the light of His glory with joy; the unfaithful servants will be thrown from the light of His glory into darkness to weep and gnash their teeth. They weep and gnash their teeth because they are ashamed and suffering. This will be the end of all those who are not faithful in serving the Lord today; it will also be their punishment.

6. **“If that slave says in his heart, My master is delaying his coming, and begins to beat the male servants and the female servants and to eat and to drink and become drunk, the master of that slave will come...and will cut him asunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master's will and did not prepare or do according to his will, will receive many lashes; but he who did not know, yet did things worthy of stripes, will receive few lashes. But to everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required from him; and to whom much has been committed, they will ask of him all the more”; “Appoint his portion with**

the hypocrites. In that place there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (Luke 12:45-48; Matt. 24:51).

If those who serve the Lord do whatever they want because the Lord delays His coming, if they fight with their fellow servants and indulge their lusts, if they clearly know the Lord's will but do not do it, and if they do not prepare for the Lord's coming and for the settling of accounts with Him, they will be punished when the Lord returns. The Lord will severely punish them and appoint their portion with the unbelievers and the hypocrites. Therefore, they will weep and gnash their teeth. More will be required of those who have received much instruction from the Lord, who understand more of His will, and who have received a greater commission from the Lord. Since the Lord will require more of them, He will punish them with more lashes if they fail to do His will. However, even those who did not know these things will receive some lashes if they do things that He condemns. However, the number of lashes that they receive will be much less. Thus, all the servants of the Lord, both those who know and those who do not know, will receive punishment from the Lord if they do things that the Lord condemns. Although the punishment will differ in its severity, no one will be exempt.

7. **“If one does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”** (John 15:6).

A believer must abide in the Lord, just as a branch of the vine abides in the vine (v. 5); he must have unhindered fellowship with the Lord in order to absorb the Lord's riches and to bear the fruit of life. If he leaves the Lord and his fellowship with the Lord is broken, he will lose the function of bearing fruit for the Lord and will not be able to do anything. The Lord said that believers who do not abide in Him, whose fellowship with Him is broken, and who do not have the function of bearing spiritual fruit will come to a certain end, a punishment, like that of branches being cut off, dried up, picked up, and cast into the fire to be burned. If a believer breaks his fellowship with the Lord and loses his spiritual function in life, the Lord will not only cast him out to dry up but will also have him thrown into the fire. This does not refer to being thrown into the lake of fire, which is related to eternal perdition, because anyone who is a member of the Body is a member of the Lord with His life and cannot perish in eternity (10:28). A believer who has the Lord's life and is a member of the Body can never be thrown into the lake of fire to eternally perish simply because his fellowship with the Lord was broken, and he did not bear fruit. If this were the case, it would mean a believer's eternal salvation depended on works. But the Bible clearly and assuredly tells us that salvation and the obtaining of eternal life are by faith alone and nothing more.

Thus, the Lord's word about being cast into fire must refer to something else. According to 1 Corinthians 3:15, it refers to a punishment that the believers who have broken their fellowship with Lord and who do not bear fruit in this age will receive when He returns.

8. "If anyone builds...wood, grass, stubble, the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is...If anyone's work is consumed, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:12-13, 15).

Those who serve the Lord must be careful how they work because they can build with gold, silver, and precious stones or with wood, grass, and stubble. Building with gold, silver, and precious stones involves work that is according to the divine nature, in the principle of the cross, and for the expression of God's glorious image. Building with wood, grass, and stubble is exactly the opposite. In the Bible wood refers to the human nature (Exo. 25:10, 23); grass refers to the will of the flesh or the flesh (1 Pet. 1:24); and stubble, according to its nature and condition, refers to what is earthly, lifeless, and worthless. Thus, to build with wood, grass, and stubble is to work according to the human nature, according to the flesh, and according to the general condition of the earth; it is a work that is full of the self, the will of the flesh, and the flesh, and it also expresses an earthly element. When the Lord returns, the nature of the work of each person will be manifested. The work of each one will be manifested and tested by fire to reveal its true nature. If one's work has been built using gold, silver, and precious stones, it will remain after passing through the test of fire, and the worker will be rewarded. If one's work has been built using wood, grass, and stubble, it will burn up as it passes through the test of fire, and the worker will suffer loss but not the loss of his salvation, because he himself will be saved. Although he will be saved, it will be as if he has passed through fire. This will be a punishment to all the Lord's workers who work according to themselves, according to their flesh, and with an expression of the earth.

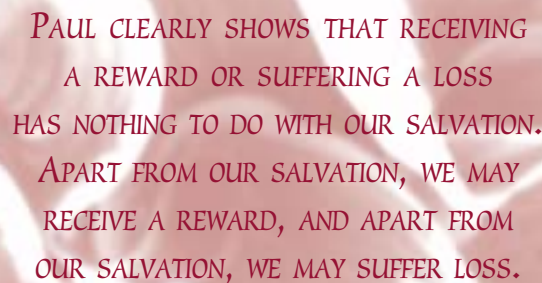
Paul clearly shows that receiving a reward or suffering a loss has nothing to do with our salvation. Apart from our salvation, we may receive a reward, and apart from our salvation, we may suffer loss. Although we suffer loss, we will

be saved, but this does not mean that we will have no problems, because we still must pass through something like fire.

Too many of God's children today think that as long as they are saved, they have no problems. In their eyes eternal perdition is the only problem, and they think that as long as they are saved, they have no worries. But the Bible reveals that eternal perdition is not the only consideration. Apart from salvation, we still need to be concerned about whether we will receive a reward or suffer a loss. Salvation is something we receive as soon as we believe in the Lord, and we receive it once for eternity, but in addition to salvation there is the matter of receiving a reward or suffering loss. This is a matter that we cannot neglect.

Brothers and sisters, this word is so clear: "He will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." I hope we will see that there is still the possibility of suffering loss even though

our salvation is eternally secure. The reward that believers will receive is an entrance into the kingdom of the heavens; this should stir up our appreciation. In contrast, the punishment that some believers will receive will be like passing through fire; this should stir up our fear.



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More than ten years ago an elderly brother invited me to eat with some co-workers. At that dinner there was another elderly believer who knew the Bible very well but who did not believe that believers would be punished in the future. He said to one of the co-workers, "Some say that Matthew 25 refers to saved ones when it speaks of evil servants being thrown out into outer darkness. Please tell me, how can a saved person be thrown into darkness?" When he said this, I knew that his words were really directed toward me because by that time I had written a book, *The Kingdom of the Heavens*, and I had made this point in the book. The co-worker also knew that he was really addressing me, so he looked at me and indicated that I should answer the question. Since this elderly saint did not directly ask me his question, I did not directly answer him. Instead, I asked the brother who had invited us to dinner if the wife of Lot was saved or not in type. When he said that he had never considered this question, I asked him to consider it because he knew the Bible very well. I said, "If you say she was not saved, I would answer that the angels took her out of the city of Sodom before its destruction. If you say that she was saved, I would answer

that she never reached the city of Zoar with Lot. She became a pillar of salt while she was on her way (Gen. 19:16-26). Please consider, was she saved or not?" This brother turned to the one who had originally posed the question and asked him whether he thought Lot's wife was saved or not. He could not answer. I waited for a moment and then continued. I said that most of today's Christians are only concerned about two matters—salvation and perdition—and only two places—heaven and hell. They have not seen that the Bible speaks of another matter apart from salvation and perdition. Lot's wife did not suffer perdition with the city of Sodom, nor was she saved into the city of Zoar; instead, she was left in a third place as a pillar of salt to be a warning to future generations. This warning is especially for us believers today. The Lord said, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32); furthermore, the Lord spoke this word in His warning concerning the possibility of being put to shame when He returns. I continued to say that the Bible shows that there can be a third place for us, just as there was for Lot's wife. The Lord spoke of this third place in Luke 14 when He spoke of Christians who had lost their salty flavor because of their love for the world. His word compares believers, who were useless as salt, with Lot's wife, who became a useless pillar of salt. Such ones are fit neither for the land nor for the manure pile, and they must be thrown out. Being thrown out involves a third place. Then I said that 1 Corinthians 3 also shows the matter of suffering loss, which does not involve either salvation or perdition. I continued by saying that this passage clearly says that some believers will suffer loss when the Lord comes but that they themselves will be saved. Even though they are saved, they will still have to pass through something like fire. The two elderly brothers clearly knew this passage in 1 Corinthians 3, so I asked the elderly brother, who was hosting the dinner, which punishment he would choose if he had to choose between being thrown into darkness or passing through fire. He quickly answered that he would choose to be thrown into the darkness because he thought it was a lesser punishment. Then I said that even if being thrown into darkness is a lighter punishment than passing through fire, the Bible still says that some believers will suffer loss as if they have passed through fire. Consequently, if some believers will suffer such a severe punishment, why is it unreasonable to expect that some saved believers will be thrown into darkness? When I got to this point, the host turned to the elderly brother and said, "He has answered your question." The other elderly brother then said, "That is not really passing through fire, because it says 'so as through fire.'" When the host heard this, he said, "Even if it is 'so as through fire,' it is a considerable suffering."

This is a serious matter that we must face. Will we receive a reward or a punishment when the Lord returns? Will we receive the reward of the kingdom of the heavens or will we suffer loss that is like passing through

fire? This is a serious matter. We need to take the responsibility to resolve it for ourselves.

9. "Whoever will deny Me before men, I also will deny him before My Father who is in the heavens" (Matt. 10:33).

If we deny the Lord before others because we are afraid of being opposed or persecuted by them, the Lord will deny us before His Father when He returns. According to the context of this verse, His denying does not refer to eternal perdition but to receiving a shameful punishment from Him when He returns, because we did not confess Him before others out of fear and shame.

10. "Whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

The Lord spoke this word to those who were following Him. In this adulterous and sinful generation, some believers are ashamed of the Lord and of His words. Therefore, when the Lord comes again in glory, He will be ashamed of them; this will also be their punishment.

11. "Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation...Be faithful unto death...He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:10-11).

We have seen that the blessings that the Lord promised to the overcomers in His seven epistles would be in the coming kingdom. Since this is the case, the Lord's warnings to the believers in these epistles must also speak of punishments during the kingdom age. In 2:10 the Lord tells the church to be faithful unto death when the devil harms the church and the church undergoes sufferings and persecution. If believers overcome in this way, they will by no means be hurt of the second death. Conversely, if believers do not overcome, if they are afraid to die for the Lord and are defeated, they will be hurt of the second death. They will not receive the second death; however, they will be hurt of the second death, which is related to the lake of fire (20:14; 21:8). Being hurt of the second death is a punishment in the kingdom age.

Matthew 10:28 says that we should not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; instead, we should fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. According to the context of verses 24 and 25, this word was spoken to the Lord's servants. Therefore, the Lord's servants, who are saved ones, will receive such a punishment if they are afraid to die for the Lord. This does not mean that they will perish for eternity. It refers to

some kind of punishment that the Lord will give to those believers who are afraid of being martyred for Him.

12. “A few...who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with Me in white because they are worthy. He who overcomes will be clothed thus, in white garments, and I shall by no means erase his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3:4-5).

This is the Lord’s word to the church in Sardis. When those in the church are weak, fading, and full of death, some believers must be living and strong and must not allow death to stain their actions (garments) before Him. If believers overcome in this way, they will be worthy of walking with the Lord in the kingdom, and their names will not be erased from the book of life; moreover, the Lord will confess their names before God and His angels. If believers do not overcome, they will not be worthy of walking with the Lord in the kingdom, their names will be erased from the book of life during the age of the millennial kingdom, and the Lord will deny them before God and His angels. This is not eternal perdition but a temporary punishment during the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens. Having one’s name erased from the book of life proves that one’s name has been recorded there. Those whose names are recorded in the book of life are saved ones who belong to the Lord. Since they are saved, they are eternally saved and will not perish for being weak, fading, or stained with death. Although they will not perish, they will be punished.

13. “His master became angry and delivered him to the torturers until he would repay all that was owed. So also will My heavenly Father do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your hearts” (Matt. 18:34-35).

When the Lord comes to judge the believers and to settle accounts with His slaves, He will deliver a believer who has not forgiven his brother from his heart to the torturers (that is, cause him to suffer a punishment in the kingdom age) until he forgives his brother from his heart.

Matthew 12:32 says that there is a sin that “will not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in the one to come.” From this we see that some sins are forgiven in this age (the present age of grace) and some sins are for-

given in the coming age (the age of the coming kingdom). Sins that are forgiven in this age will not be judged and punished in the coming age. But if a sin has not been forgiven in this age, it will be judged and punished in the coming age. If a believer’s sin of being unwilling to forgive a brother is not dealt with and forgiven in this age, the Lord will have to judge and punish the believer in the coming kingdom age. Matthew 18:34-35 shows that a brother who is unwilling to forgive another brother today will receive punishment in the kingdom age.

14. “Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to the judgment. And whoever says to his brother...Moreh, shall be liable to the Gehenna of fire”; “If your right hand stumbles you, cut it off and cast it from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish than for your whole body to pass away into Gehenna”; “And if your eye stumbles you,

pluck it out and cast it from you; it is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be cast into the Gehenna of fire”; “Everyone shall be salted with fire” (Matt. 5:22, 30; 18:9; Mark 9:49).

The verses from Matthew 5 above were spoken by the Lord when He taught His disciples on the mountain. His

teaching was related to the reality of the kingdom of the heavens and to the conditions for entering the kingdom of the heavens, not to eternal salvation or perdition. Moreover, verse 22 speaks of a brother being angry with another brother. Since brothers are saved, this portion speaks of saved ones who commit sins. Matthew 18:9 and Mark 9:49 also were spoken by the Lord to His disciples in relation to the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 18:1, 3; Mark 9:47), so these verses speak of believers who commit sins. These portions of the Bible clearly show that when saved ones commit sins, they will be judged and punished with fire. This punishment is not eternal perdition but a temporary chastisement. The Lord said that everyone shall be salted with fire. In this temporary chastisement the Lord will use fire like salt to cure the believers who are contaminated by the germs of sin and spotted by the stains of sin but who were unwilling to deal with them. In doing this He will remove the germs and stains of sin from them, sanctifying them.

15. “How shall we escape if we have neglected so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:3).

IF A BELIEVER’S SIN OF BEING UNWILLING TO FORGIVE A BROTHER IS NOT DEALT WITH AND FORGIVEN IN THIS AGE, THE LORD WILL HAVE TO JUDGE AND PUNISH THE BELIEVER IN THE COMING KINGDOM AGE.

Hebrews speaks of God's New Testament salvation, and every section of this book gives us an important word with a serious warning. The entire book has a total of five sections of fundamental truths, so there are also five important warnings, each of which speaks of punishment during the kingdom age and uses the kingdom punishment as a warning. The first warning, in 2:1-4, is given to warn us to not neglect the Lord's great salvation. In this salvation the Son of God, who has greater glory than the angels, became a man, who was lower than the angels, to be the Author of our salvation (v. 10). He is the same as we are in all things, and He redeemed us from our sins, tasted death on our behalf, defeated the devil, and accomplished a great salvation for us (vv. 8-9, 14). Therefore, verse 3 warns us, saying, "How shall we escape if we have neglected so great a salvation?" This salvation surpasses the law of the Old Testament, which was given through angels. It not only saves us from sin, death, the devil, and temptations but also causes us to become sons of God, the many brothers of the Son of God, having the same life and nature as the Son of God (vv. 10-11). This salvation also brings us into glory to inherit the earth with the Son of God, that is, to obtain the kingdom with Him and rule the earth. It was accomplished for us and was given to us. We simply need to enjoy and apply it; if we neglect this salvation and pay attention to other things, how shall we escape being punished by God? If those in the Old Testament were punished for disobeying the law given through angels, should not we receive a greater punishment if we neglect the salvation accomplished for us by the Son of God?

This word does not refer to sinners, who neglect God's salvation of forgiveness and justification and thus are unable to avoid condemnation and perdition. Rather, it refers to believers (since it was written to Hebrew believers at that time) who will be condemned and punished for neglecting God's great salvation, which they had obtained. In the kingdom age God will punish any believer who has neglected His great salvation and who did not enjoy or apply it well. This is not about sinners perishing for eternity but about believers being punished temporarily.

16. "Let us fear therefore, lest, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it...So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:1, 9, 11; see also 3:7—4:13).

The second warning, in 3:7—4:13, is given to warn us to not come short of the promised rest. Since Christ, as the Apostle of God who is over the house of God and who cares for the house of God, is far superior to Moses and Joshua, He is able to bring us into the rest of the kingdom (3:1-6). Therefore, Hebrews warns us to not have an evil heart of unbelief (v. 12) but instead to be diligent to enter

into the promised rest, that is, to be diligent to enter into the kingdom (vv. 11, 18). Those who fall behind because of unbelief and disobedience to God's word will not be able to enter the kingdom.

This warning is based on the history of the children of Israel who were not able to enter into the good land of Canaan because of their lack of faith and their disobedience to God's word. Their history is a warning for us. God saved the Israelites and brought them out of Egypt, and He placed the promised land of Canaan before them because He wanted them to go in and enjoy rest there. But they did not believe, and they disobeyed His word. Consequently, they fell in the wilderness and were not able to enter and enjoy the blessings in the land. Similarly, God saved us out of the world, and He has placed the promised kingdom of glory before us because He wants us to enter into it and enjoy the rest there. Therefore, we should not be unbelieving or disobedient to God's word. We must be diligent to enter into the kingdom rest; we must pursue it diligently lest we fall behind and are unable to enter into it. If we have an evil heart of unbelief and do not obey God's word to diligently pursue, we will forsake the living God and lose our portion in Christ in the kingdom. We will not be partners of the Christ (v. 14), and we will not enter into the kingdom rest. If this is the case, we will receive a great punishment from God, and we will lose the highest blessing in God's salvation.

17. "Therefore leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, let us be brought on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith in God, of the teaching of baptisms and of the laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and yet have fallen away, to renew themselves again unto repentance, crucifying again for themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame. For the earth, which drinks the rain which often comes upon it and produces vegetation suitable to those for whose sake also it is cultivated, partakes of blessing from God. But if it brings forth thorns and thistles, it is disapproved and near a curse, whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6:1-8; see also 5:11—6:20).

The third warning, in 5:11—6:20, is given to warn us of our need to be brought on to maturity. According to Hebrews, Christ is a High Priest forever according to an eternal order (5:6), and He has the power of an indestructible life (7:16). Therefore, His priesthood is far superior to that of Aaron, and He is able to save us to the uttermost (4:14—7:28). We need to pursue growth unto maturity in order to gain a deeper knowledge of this superior High Priest,

Christ, the One who resurrected and overcame weakness and death and who ascended over all things (5:7-9; 6:20). In order to be brought on to maturity, we need to leave the word of the beginning of Christ (v. 1). This means that we should pursue the growth in life until we are fully matured. In order to grow, we should not lay again the foundation of repentance since that foundation was laid when we were saved. Now we need to build upon the foundation that was laid. The foundation comprises (1) repentance from dead works, (2) faith in God, (3) the teaching of baptisms, (4) the teaching of the laying on of hands, (5) the resurrection of the dead, and (6) the eternal judgment (vv. 1-2). We obtained these at the time of our salvation, and now we must grow; we do not need to obtain them again. Verse 3 then says, "This we will do if God permits." If God gives us grace, and He has, we must leave the word of the beginning and endeavor to grow to maturity; we must not lay again a foundation but rather grow. This portion explains that we do not need to lay again a foundation, because it is impossible for those who are saved and have once been enlightened, have tasted of the heavenly gift, have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and yet have fallen away from the Lord's word and way, to renew themselves again unto repentance by crucifying again for themselves the Son of God, which puts Him to open shame. The powers of the age to come refers to the power in the coming kingdom age to cast out demons, heal the sick, and work miracles. These powers will be used in the kingdom age to fully deal with anything that is related to demons, sickness, and suffering.

We do not need to lay again a foundation, because we cannot renew ourselves again unto repentance, which is the foundation that has already been laid. Hebrews speaks of "not laying again" because "it is impossible...to renew...again unto repentance" (vv. 1, 4, 6). Since the foundation has been laid by God, it is impossible for us to lay it again. Even if we could lay it again, it would not count for anything before God. When a couple gets married, they may fight and not speak to each other for a while, but when they reconcile with each other, they do not need to get married again, and even if they held another wedding ceremony, it would not count for anything. It is impossible for us to renew ourselves again to repentance; we only need to come back to the place from which we fell, confess our sin in falling, and continue to be brought on to maturity. If we

were to lay again a foundation and renew our repentance, we would need to crucify for ourselves the Son of God, and this would openly put Him to shame. This is impossible, and we should not do it. If we try to lay a foundation and do not build upon the one that has been laid, if we try to renew ourselves again unto repentance for the things we repented of when we were saved, and if we do not grow, we will be like a field that receives rain but does not grow things that are suitable. Thus, we will be disapproved and become near to a curse, and our end will be to be burned (v. 8). This end is not perdition but a suffering of loss. The word *disapproved* in verse 8 is the same Greek word that is in 1 Corinthians 9:27. There the apostle does not say that he would perish; he says that if he did not run well, he would become disapproved by the Lord and lose the crown and suffer loss. To become near a curse is different from being under a curse. Unbelievers are under a curse, but believers who do not grow or who are defeated become

near a curse. The thorns and thistles that grow up from the earth in Hebrews 6:8 are what is burned, not the earth itself. When believers are judged in the future, their living and work of wood, grass, and stubble will be burned (1 Cor. 3:10-15), and they will suffer loss for their lack of growth and their defeat, but they themselves will be saved.

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Therefore, this portion does not refer to the eternal perdition of false believers who were never saved, as Mr. Scofield and those who follow him assert. We know this because it says that they have (1) been enlightened, (2) have tasted of the heavenly gift, (3) have partaken of the Holy Spirit, (4) have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and (5) have fallen away from the Lord's word and way. Such ones must be saved because only saved ones have these five qualifications. If a person who has these qualifications is not saved, what qualifications must one have in order to be saved?

This portion also does not refer to saved believers losing their salvation, which some assert is possible; however, we know that this is not possible, because the Bible clearly says that once a person is saved, he obtains eternal life and shall by no means perish forever (John 10:28). To say that a believer can perish because he falls after his salvation goes against the basic truths of the Bible.

This passage does not refer to the eternal perdition of false believers or to the eternal perdition of saved believers who

have fallen; it refers to a temporary punishment in the kingdom age for believers who do not grow or who are defeated. This portion emphasizes the need to grow, the way to grow, and the end for those who fail to grow. Their end is not eternal perdition but punishment from the Lord in the kingdom age.

18. “Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is,...and so much the more as you see the day drawing near. For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without compassion on the testimony of two or three witnesses. By how much do you think he will be thought worthy of worse punishment who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has considered the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine; I will repay’; and again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:25-31, see also vv. 19-24, 32-39).

The fourth warning, in 10:19-39, is given to warn us to come forward to the Holy of Holies and to not shrink back to Judaism. God’s Son, Christ, offered Himself once for all as an eternal sin offering and with His own blood entered once for all into the Holy of Holies in the heavens, accomplishing an eternal redemption for us (9:12). He established the new covenant with His blood, which is better than the old covenant established with the blood of bulls and goats that could not remove sin eternally. He is in the heavenly Holy of Holies as the Mediator of this better covenant (v. 15). Therefore, the blood of this better covenant can purify our conscience and give us the boldness to enter the Holy of Holies to contact God, serve Him, and participate in the heavenly worship and service (10:19-22). In this new covenant we also have God’s law of life in us which enables us to know God without anyone teaching us (8:1—10:18). This Epistle warns the Hebrew believers that they should not despise the Son of God and the new covenant He established and that they should not go back to Judaism to serve God with the old covenant offerings of the blood of bulls and goats.

In the early days of the church, many Jews who believed in the Lord were still zealous for the law of Moses despite the fact that they believed in the salvation of Christ (Acts 21:20-24). Although they were under the new covenant, they still kept the ordinances of the old covenant, so they were in the church but also in Judaism. At the time Hebrews was written (sometime after A.D. 60), Jewish authorities were promoting the persecution of Jewish believers in an effort to force them to abandon

the church and return to Judaism. These authorities even seized the household property of the believers (Heb. 10:32-34). In this situation, some Jewish believers naturally became weak and doubted whether they should completely reject Judaism. The apostle wrote this letter to bring those in Judaism out of that religion and to call them to stand absolutely in the new covenant.

Therefore, in 8:1—10:18 the apostle shows how Christ and the covenant He established are superior to the old covenant. In 10:25 he exhorts the Jewish believers not to abandon their own assembling together, that is, not to abandon the Christian meetings. If they abandoned the Christian meetings, they would return to Judaism in order to worship God. If they abandoned their assembling together, they would be going against the truth that God had established a new covenant and abolished the old, the truth that the blood of bulls and goats in the old covenant cannot take away man’s sins, the truth that only the blood of Jesus can take away our sins, and the truth that the offerings of bulls and goats in the old covenant were only shadows of the good things to come. After knowing these truths, if they went back to Judaism to offer sacrifices of bulls and goats according to the old covenant that God had abolished, they would be sinning willfully (v. 26). God wanted them to stand absolutely on the ground of the new covenant to serve Him. Based on their knowledge, they would be deliberately sinning if they went back to Judaism. But even if they went back to Judaism, there still would no longer be a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins because these sacrifices had been abolished (v. 26). In the Old Testament there were daily sin offerings, but in the New Testament a daily sin offering is abolished because Christ accomplished an eternal redemption so that there is “no longer an offering for sin” (v. 18). In the New Testament age there is no longer a sin offering made by killing bulls or goats, nor is there a need for such an offering. If the Hebrew believers returned to Judaism to offer sacrifices, their offerings would be worthless as a sacrifice and in rebellion against God. In such a condition, there is only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire of the kind that consumes the adversaries (v. 27). Because some believers returned to Judaism to offer sacrifices of bulls and goats, they trampled the Son of God underfoot, placing Him on the same level with bulls and goats (v. 29). They also considered the blood of God’s Son, which had sanctified them, as something common by putting it on the same level as the blood of bulls and goats (v. 29). When they did this, they not only considered the Son of God and His blood to be common; they also insulted the Spirit of grace (the Greek word for *insulted* is different from the word for *blasphemed* in Matthew 12:31). The Holy Spirit was operating in them, leading them to simply believe and trust in the Son of God and in His blood and telling them not to return to Judaism to offer sacrifices of bulls and goats, but they insulted Him by ignoring Him. Therefore,

they surely would receive a heavier punishment because the Lord will judge His people and have vengeance on them (Heb. 10:30). If the Lord's people do things against His will and despise His salvation and insult His Spirit, they will fall into the hands of the living God to be judged by Him, and their end will be terrible (v. 31)! This does not refer to eternal perdition but to being disciplined by the Lord in the age of the kingdom. This section clearly shows that in the future some who are sanctified by the Lord's blood will still be punished.

19. "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks, for if those did not escape who refused Him who warned them upon the earth, much more we shall not escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven...Therefore receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with piety and fear; for our God is also a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:25, 28-29, see also vv. 1-24, 26-27).

The fifth warning, in 12:1-29, is given to warn us to run the race and not fall away from grace. Faith is the unique way to run the race (11:1), and in previous generations the saints who lived before God did so in faith (vv. 4-39). We should be encouraged by all these witnesses of faith to look away to the

Author and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus, and to run by faith the course that is set before us (12:1-2). This section warns us not to forsake the God who speaks to us and not to turn away from the Lord who warns us from heaven (v. 25). If we forsake Him, if we turn away from Him, it will be difficult for us to escape condemnation. He will have to punish us. If we want to receive the unshakable kingdom He desires to give us, we must receive His sufficient grace and serve Him by this grace in piety and fear according to what is pleasing to Him (v. 28). We should fear losing His grace and not being able to enter the kingdom He desires to give us, and we should fear His condemnation and punishment. This means that we should be in fear and trembling and should obey Him and do His will with piety and fear because our God is a consuming fire (v. 29).

All these warnings in Hebrews speak of the believers' punishment in the future. Thus, according to the Bible, there truly will be a future punishment for some believers. There are enough portions in the Bible that clearly tell us that believers—who are sinful, cowardly, fearful, unfaithful, unwilling to forsake everything to

follow the Lord, unwilling to pay the price to live for the Lord, disobedient to the Lord's word, or fail in any number of ways—will suffer great punishment and loss in the kingdom age when the Lord returns. If believers confess their sins and deal with their failures today, God will forgive them because of the Lord's blood (1 John 1:7, 9), but if believers do not confess their sins, forsake evil, or deal with their failures today, they will be punished in the kingdom age when the Lord returns. At that time some believers will "receive a reward," and some will "suffer loss"; some will be rewarded, and some will be punished (1 Cor. 3:14-15; Rev. 22:12).

Anyone who does not accept the truth of the believers' being punished in the future will have difficulty avoiding being loose, lazy, or lustful in his living and actions. We are fallen, and if we do not acknowledge these warnings, it will be easy to be loose and follow our own will, fulfilling the lusts of our flesh. May we all have a heart of piety and fear, and by the Lord's grace, may we adjust our hearts to be upright in our actions lest we suffer the Lord's punishment in the future. We should not oppose this truth simply because our own actions are bad. This is pitiful. May God have mercy on us so that we would not deny His truth.

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The Question of Whether the Believers' Punishment Proves That the Lord's Salvation Is Not Complete

1. "Being judged by the Lord, we are disciplined"; "The Father of spirits...disciplined...for what is profitable" (1 Cor. 11:32; Heb. 12:9-10).

Some believers think that the punishment of believers when the Lord returns shows that the Lord's salvation is not complete, but we know that His salvation is absolutely complete. Even though the Lord's salvation is complete and we are saved, we can still be punished if we do not apply the Lord's salvation to a particular point or matter in our living. If we apply the Lord's salvation to every matter, the Lord's salvation will save us from difficulties and temptations by the power of His indestructible life and wash us of our failures by the efficacy of His precious blood. If we do not apply the Lord's salvation to such matters, His salvation cannot be operative for us, even though the Lord's salvation is absolutely complete. The power of the Lord's life and the efficacy of His blood must be given

the chance to save us and wash us. The Lord's complete salvation cannot function if it is not applied. Without its application, a day will come when the Lord will punish us for our failure to apply His salvation. His future punishment does not affect the completeness of His salvation or prove that His salvation is incomplete.

First Corinthians 11:30-34 speaks of believers being judged and punished by the Lord for sin after being saved. Hebrews 12:6-11 also speaks of the children of God being disciplined and punished by God for things related to unrighteousness. The punishment that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 11 and the discipline, or chastisement, that is spoken of in Hebrews 12 both occur in this age. All believers accept the truth in these two portions, and none think that God's punishment, discipline, and chastisement of the believers today affects the completeness of His salvation or proves that His salvation is incomplete. Nevertheless, some of God's children have a different opinion about the Lord's future discipline of the believers. They think that any future discipline would affect the completeness of the Lord's salvation and prove that it is not complete. But if the Lord's punishment of the believers in the future proves that His salvation is incomplete, would not His judgment and chastisement of the believers today likewise prove that His salvation is incomplete? Is not the principle the same? How can the Lord's chastisement of believers not affect His salvation today but affect His salvation in the future? This is illogical. If the Lord's chastisement of the believers today does not affect His salvation, future punishment also will not affect it. If the Lord chastises us today, it is because we have not applied His salvation to a particular matter. In the same way, if the Lord chastises us in the future, it will be because of our failure to apply His salvation to a particular matter.

In conclusion, the Lord will not punish us if we apply His salvation, but if we do not apply His salvation, He will punish us. Thus, the Lord's punishment is for matters that have not been dealt with through the application of His salvation, regardless of whether this punishment is now or in the future. The time for punishment does not matter; it will be freely chosen by the Lord. We do not have any choice about the time. If we fear the Lord's discipline, we should quickly apply the Lord's salvation. If we fear the Lord's discipline in the future, we should quickly apply the Lord's salvation today. The Lord will not chastise us for any matter to which we have applied His salvation. The Lord's chastisement is His judgment. Everything about us is under the Lord's condemnation, and the Lord will judge any matter that has not passed through His salvation. Our being judged by the Lord, either today or in the future, does not affect the Lord's salvation.

2. "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask...There is a sin unto death; I do not

say that he should make request concerning that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death" (1 John 5:16-17).

These verses speak of a believer committing sins that are not unto death and sins that are unto death. A sin that is not unto death means we can continue to live on the earth after we commit such a sin. A sin that is unto death means we must die and cannot continue to live on the earth after we commit such a sin. Only God can determine what is a sin that is not unto death and what is a sin that is unto death. This is not something we can determine, because it is according to the level and position of each individual's salvation, which only God knows. However, this shows that it is possible for a believer to commit a sin that would lead to his death, even after obtaining the Lord's complete salvation. The fact that he has obtained the Lord's complete salvation does not free him from the requirement of death. Therefore, while the Lord's general discipline of the believers does not affect His salvation, even a special discipline of death for certain kinds of sins will not affect His complete salvation. Since the Lord's discipline of the believers today does not affect His salvation and does not disprove the completeness of His salvation, the Lord's punishment of the believers in the future also does not affect His salvation or disprove the completeness of His salvation.

The Lord's redemption on the cross is completely effective. But after we receive the Lord's redemption, we must apply it every time we fall, sin, become stained or dirty, or commit an offense before the Lord. If we apply His redemption, we will be forgiven and cleansed of these sins. This is like the Israelites who were saved and cleansed by God but who still needed to cleanse themselves, according to Numbers 19, with water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer whenever they became filthy. Despite the fact that they had been cleansed, they were considered filthy before God if they did not continue to use the water of impurity to cleanse themselves of any defilement. In the same way, we have been redeemed and cleansed of our sins by the Lord's precious blood, but before God we may become defiled with sin if we do not continue to apply the cleansing of the Lord's precious blood whenever we sin. First John 1 shows that after we receive the Lord's life, we must confess our sins to God and ask Him to cleanse us whenever we sin (v. 9), and we must allow the Lord's blood to manifest its efficacy again and again (v. 7). If we do not confess to God, ask Him to cleanse us, and allow the Lord's blood to continually manifest its efficacy, God cannot forgive us even though the Lord's blood is efficacious. Therefore, God will still judge and punish us for sins that He has not forgiven and cleansed. Therefore, we should quickly confess our sins, deal with them before Him, and ask for His forgiveness and cleansing. During the kingdom

age, the believers will receive judgment and punishment if they have unconfessed sins and offenses because they did not deal with them or ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing. If we have not allowed the Lord's blood to be efficacious with respect to all our sins, God will judge and punish us for these sins. However, this judgment will not affect the completeness of the Lord's salvation and certainly will not prove that His salvation is incomplete.

The Coming Judgment Being God's Governmental Discipline

God's future punishment of the believers is a matter of His government. God has a governmental administration in the entire universe and even more so among His children. If God's children live according to the principles of God's government, they will not receive His governmental punishment; if they do not, they will have difficulty escaping God's discipline. God the Father's governmental discipline is so that His children, after receiving grace and being saved, can overcome sin, the world, and the self, follow His Son and live for Him, and accomplish His will in the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. If we have some weakness or sins, we must take advantage of our time on the earth to confess and deal with them before God, asking Him to forgive and cleanse us. If we do not take advantage of our time, we will offend God's governmental administration and receive punishment. This aspect of God's governmental administration will occur when Christ returns to judge all things. The punishment that comes out of His judgment will be in the kingdom age.

Punishment in God's governmental administration does not conflict with the eternal, complete redemption accomplished by His Son, nor does it affect this redemption in the slightest. The redemption accomplished by His Son is eternally in accord with His governmental administration; His governmental administration eternally acknowledges the redemption accomplished by the Son. Although the Son accomplished an eternal redemption, we must diligently apply this redemption in this age. If we do not apply the Lord's salvation, we will not be in accord with God's governmental administration, and we will receive discipline. This discipline does not affect redemption; rather, it strengthens the standing of our redemption and proves its efficacy...

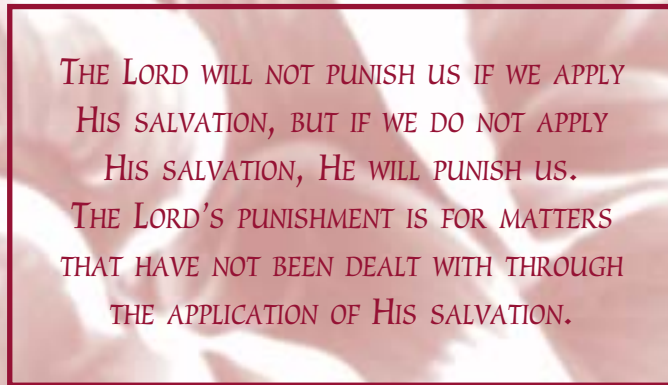
A Supplementary Word

Since we published *The Kingdom of the Heavens* in 1936 and *The Truth concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens* in 1939 and 1940, the children of God in many places have received much help. We thank God for this. However, we have also faced continual opposition. Because of this opposition, we must be willing to carefully examine the question of the kingdom of the heavens before God. We truly must be in fear and trembling concerning misinterpreting the Word of God. However, after passing through more than twenty years of opposition, during which time we have carefully studied and considered the Word, the light of this truth is even clearer to us, and we are even more convinced that our study accurately reflects God's Word. As we were revising these messages, we felt even stronger and more assured of this truth. The truth does not fear investigation by opposers, just as pure gold

does not fear trial by fire. If this is the truth, the more it passes through the examination of opposition, the more it will be manifested as the truth.

Although it is the truth, we do not want to argue. While a proper explanation concerning this truth is necessary, such an explanation is not for the purpose of arguing. Yet

because of opposition and criticism, we carefully considered whether or not God wanted us to speak on this. For example, when we were not able to complete this chapter on time because the editors did not have enough time to work on it, we had to consider whether or not God wanted us to publish this message. But after much deep consideration, we still felt that we should release this important truth of God and that we should not avoid mentioning this matter to the children of God simply because some strongly oppose it. We also realized that releasing this truth again would make it difficult to avoid even more and even stronger opposition. But we believe all this opposition will serve only to make the truth clearer. Our only hope is that regardless of whether we are expounding the truth or opposing a false teaching, our hearts would be pure and our words would be proper. Brothers, it is a very serious matter to expound the truth! We are responsible to God not only for the content of what we say, but also for the motives behind what we say and for the words that we use in our speaking. God will judge us before His judgment seat concerning all these things. May we fear Him and not consider it as a small matter before Him. God have mercy



THE LORD WILL NOT PUNISH US IF WE APPLY
HIS SALVATION, BUT IF WE DO NOT APPLY
HIS SALVATION, HE WILL PUNISH US.
THE LORD'S PUNISHMENT IS FOR MATTERS
THAT HAVE NOT BEEN DEALT WITH THROUGH
THE APPLICATION OF HIS SALVATION.

on us. We have no desire to dispute many of the arguments of those who oppose. We feel we should simply release the truth. However, there are two points we would like to clarify for the brothers and sisters.

1. Some say that because we teach the discipline of the kingdom of the heavens, we are teaching concerning purgatory. Many friends, especially those from the West, are very concerned for us with respect to this matter. For many years our friends have frequently asked us about this point. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to clarify this matter.

Purgatory is one of the great heresies taught by the Roman Catholic Church. They erroneously use the word in 1 Corinthians 3:13 and 15 to say that if a person sins while he is living, he will go to the fires of purgatory after his death to be purified and thus be a soul in purgatory. His living relatives must then say prayers for his soul in purgatory to gain merit on his behalf and reduce the number of years he suffers in purgatory. This teaching is a great heresy! In 1 Corinthians 3:13 and 15 the testing by fire that is spoken of does not occur after a believer dies but takes place in the day of the Lord's return. This fire also does not purge dead believers but rather causes the Lord's servants to suffer loss or punishment when they are judged by the Lord when He returns. Finally, this testing fire cannot be averted or reduced by the prayers or by the merit of family and friends. The thought of using prayers and family merit to shorten the suffering of a soul in purgatory is actually a Buddhist concept, and it is completely satanic. Therefore, this is a great heresy!

...We saw that the discipline of the kingdom referred to in the Bible occurs when the Lord returns and that believers are punished during the kingdom of the heavens. When a believer dies today, his spirit and soul go to rest and wait in Paradise. They will not be resurrected until the Lord returns, and then the believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to what they have done and receive recompense for good or for evil. After they pass through this judgment, they will be given a reward or a punishment, depending on the result of the judgment, during the age of the kingdom of the heavens. What the Bible says concerning discipline related to the kingdom of the heavens is absolutely different from what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about purgatory.

2. Some who oppose the truth about the kingdom of the heavens say that the kingdom of the heavens is for the Jews, not for the church. In particular, they say that the teachings about the kingdom of the heavens in the Gospel of Matthew are for Jews, not for us believers. In their view they do not have to keep any of the teachings in Matthew regarding the kingdom of the heavens because believers never enter the kingdom of the heavens. However, we can

readily see that this kind of speaking is wrong. The kingdom of the heavens spoken of in Matthew is the kingdom of God spoken of in Mark and Luke. The same parable that refers to the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew 13:31 is used to refer to the kingdom of God in Mark 4:30-32. Likewise, the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens in Matthew 13:11 are referred to as the mysteries of the kingdom of God in Luke 8:10. These portions are sufficient proof that the kingdom of the heavens spoken of in Matthew is the kingdom of God in Mark and Luke, and that this kingdom of God is the same kingdom that John in his Gospel says we must enter by being born again (3:3, 5). Moreover, after the Lord resurrected, He spoke to the disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). After the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost, the apostles preached the gospel of the kingdom of God in every place (8:12); the apostles also wanted the Gentile churches to pursue an entrance into this very kingdom of God (14:22). Later, in his Epistles Paul told the churches in the Gentile lands to take heed to pursue the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; 2 Thes. 1:5). Finally, Revelation prophesies that the kingdom of God will come to the earth (11:15; 12:10).

After seeing these things in a general way, we realize that it makes no sense to say that the kingdom of the heavens is only for the Jews and not for the church or that the teachings about the kingdom of the heavens were given to the Jews and not to the believers. If the kingdom of the heavens is only for the Jews, the kingdom of God should also be only for the Jews. If the teachings concerning the kingdom of the heavens are only for the Jews, the teachings concerning the kingdom of God should also be only for the Jews. If this were the case, what teachings would be left for the believers? This is too illogical. Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, the kingdom of the heavens in the Bible is for the believers. It is something we should pursue in order to enter.

We hope that all God's children would seriously investigate this matter according to His Word and be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11). If this is God's truth, we hope that our brothers will receive it; if it is shown to be a human speaking, we will gladly set it aside. We are willing to receive correction from our brothers concerning any truth. We also ask the brothers and sisters who have received this truth to not debate with others simply because they understand this matter. Our understanding of the truth is for our living, not for debating with others. We should use the truth to help others in the matter of life; we should not use the truth to debate with others about doctrines. People sometimes do not receive a certain truth because they do not have a sufficient level of life, not because they do not have enough knowledge of truth. If we help others to grow in life and to receive the truths that help them to grow in life, this is sufficient. May God give us grace. **A²C**