

ORDER OF EVENTS IN THE JUDGMENT

THE INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

The Question Stated - The Magnitude of the Work - Judged as Individuals - Time for this Work - The Righteous Judge the Wicked - A Judgment Message - Accounting Worthy - Record of Sins

“I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” [Ecclesiastes 3:17](#) JEO 5.1

THE judgment of the great day is an event certain to take place. “He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” [Acts 17:31](#). What God hath appointed is sure to come in due time. The resurrection of Christ is an assurance to all men of the final judgment. It is not the fact of the judgment, however, but the order of its work, that at this time engages our attention. The work to be accomplished is of immense magnitude. The judgment relates (1) to all the righteous; (2) to all the wicked; (3) to all the evil angels. The number of cases, therefore, to be acted upon at this grand tribunal exceeds our powers of conception. We must not, however, suppose that there will be any difficulty on the part of the Judge in acting upon every case individually. Far from this, “there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.” The judgment, indeed, pertains to an immense number of beings; yet every one of them shall give account of *himself* to God. [Romans 14:12](#). It will not relate to so vast a number as to make it otherwise than a strictly personal matter. Nor will there be aught of confusion or disorder in that final reckoning. God has plenty of time for the work, and he has no lack of agents to do his bidding. That he has order in this work, the Scriptures clearly teach. JEO 5.2

1. The righteous are to judge the wicked; yet the righteous are themselves to pass the test of the judgment. Whence it follows that the judgment must pass upon the righteous before they can sit in judgment upon the wicked. JEO 6.1

This is a very important proposition. That it is truthful we know from the express testimony of the Scriptures. JEO 6.2

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” [1 Corinthians 6:2, 3](#). JEO 6.3

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and *judgment was given unto them*; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” [Revelation 20:4](#). JEO 6.4

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came, and *judgment was given to the saints of the Most High*; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” [Daniel 7:21, 22](#). JEO 6.5

Here is the exalted work of the saints in the judgment. They are to take part in the examination of the cases of all wicked men and fallen angels. But this is not to be till they have been changed to immortality, and exalted to thrones of glory. They do not, therefore, have their cases decided at the same time with the wicked. We believe the reader will acknowledge the justice of this reasoning. Let us state another proposition:- JEO 7.1

2. The trump of God sounds as the Saviour descends from heaven. When that trump is heard, all the righteous are, in the twinkling of an eye, changed to immortality. There can be no examination after this to determine whether they shall be counted worthy of eternal life,

for they will then have already laid hold upon it. From this it follows that the examination and decision of the cases of the righteous takes place before the advent of Christ. The resurrection of the righteous to immortality is decisive proof that they have then already passed the test of the judgment, and have been accepted of the Judge. That they are thus raised to immortality the following texts plainly teach:- [JEO 7.2](#)

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; *it is raised in incorruption*; it is sown in dishonor; *it is raised in glory*; it is sown in weakness; *it is raised in power*; it is sown a natural body; *it is raised a spiritual body*. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” “Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead *shall be raised incorruptible*, and we shall be changed.” [1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51, 52](#). [JEO 7.3](#)

These passages are certainly convincing. The resurrection of the saints is to immortal life, and they are made immortal in the very act of the resurrection. The decision of their cases is, therefore, passed before their resurrection, for the *nature* of their resurrection is declarative or eternal salvation. But the fact that the decision of the judgment in the case of the righteous precedes the advent is proved by another proposition, as follows:- [JEO 8.1](#)

3. The righteous are to be raised *before* the wicked have their resurrection. This shows that the examination of their cases takes place before they are raised, for the final discrimination is made in the very act of raising the just and leaving the unjust to the resurrection of damnation. [JEO 8.2](#)

“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. *Blessed and holy* is he that hath part in the *first* resurrection; *on such the second death hath no power*, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” [Revelation 20:5, 6](#). [JEO 8.3](#)

“But they which shall be *accounted worthy* to obtain that world, and *the resurrection from the dead*, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and *are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*.” [Luke 20:35, 36](#). [JEO 8.4](#)

“If by any means *I might attain* unto the resurrection of the dead.” (Literally “the resurrection out from the dead ones.”) [Philippians 3:11](#). [JEO 8.5](#)

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; *afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming*.” [1 Corinthians 15:22, 23](#). [JEO 8.6](#)

There is a resurrection which bears the inspired designation of the “first resurrection.” All who have part in this resurrection are pronounced “blessed and holy.” On them “the second death hath no power.” This resurrection is out from among the dead. Paul earnestly labored to attain unto it. It is to be at the coming of Christ. Only those who are Christ’s shall have part in it. All that have part in it are the children of God because they are the children of the resurrection to life. These facts clearly prove that the examination of the cases of the righteous precedes their resurrection at the advent of Christ, that event being really declarative of their innocence in the sight of God, and of their eternal salvation. Such as are accepted of God are raised; the others sleep till the resurrection to damnation. These facts are decisive proof that the righteous are judged before they are raised. [JEO 9.1](#)

But we have a still more explicit statement yet to notice. Says our Lord: “But they which shall be *accounted worthy* to obtain that world, and *the resurrection* from the dead,” etc. Then it is certain that the act of *accounting worthy* to obtain the resurrection from among the dead, and a part in the world to come, does precede the resurrection of the righteous. But this act of accounting men worthy of a part in the kingdom of God is the very act of acquitting them in the judgment. The investigative judgment in the cases of the righteous is, therefore,

past before their resurrection. As the resurrection of the just is at the advent of Christ, it follows that they pass their examination, and are counted worthy of a place in the kingdom of God, before the Saviour returns to the earth to gather them to himself. [JEO 9.2](#)

It is proved, therefore, that the resurrection of the saints to immortal life is declarative of their final acceptance before God. Whatever of investigation is requisite for the final decision of their cases, must take place before the Saviour in mid-heaven utters the word of command to his angels. "Gather my saints together unto me." [Psalm 50:5](#); [Matthew 24:31](#). The act of accounting them worthy must precede all this. The saints alone are to be caught up to meet Christ in the air. [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#). But the decision who these saints are, who shall thus be caught up, rests not with the angels who execute the work, but with the Judge, who gives them their commission. We cannot, therefore, avoid the conclusion that the investigation in the cases of the righteous precedes the coming of the Saviour. Let us now consider an important proposition. [JEO 10.1](#)

1. This period of investigative judgment is ushered in by a solemn proclamation to the inhabitants of the earth; and this investigative work embraces the closing years of human probation. This is a very important statement. But it is susceptible of being clearly proved. [JEO 10.2](#)

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, *Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come*; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." [Revelation 14:6, 7](#). [JEO 10.3](#)

The gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." [Romans 1:16](#). No other gospel than this can be preached, not even by an angel from heaven. [Galatians 1:8](#). Whence it follows that the angel of [Revelation 14:6, 7](#), preaching *the everlasting gospel*, represents some part of the great gospel proclamation. It is a part of that preaching which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. This fact alone is decisive that this proclamation concerning the hour of God's judgment must be made while human probation still lasts. Two other solemn announcements follows. And it is evident that the human family are still upon probation, when the *third* angel declares that "if any man worship the beast ...the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.... *Here is the patience of the saints*." This is a consecutive prophecy, as several expressions plainly indicate. And it is to be observed that the Son of man is seen upon the white cloud after all these solemn proclamations have been made. [JEO 11.1](#)

That this announcement of the hour of God's judgment precedes the advent of Christ, and is addressed to men while yet in probation, the fourteenth chapter of Revelation clearly proves. That this is not some local judgment is proved by the fact that "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," are concerned in it. It is evidently that part of the judgment work which precedes the coming of Christ, and, as has been already shown, this is the work of determining who shall be *accounted worthy* to have part in the resurrection to immortal life, and, we may add, who also of the living shall be *accounted worthy* to escape the troubles that shall come in the conclusion of this state of things, and to stand before the Son of man. [Luke 20:35](#); [21:36](#). [JEO 11.2](#)

2. When the sins of the righteous are blotted out they can be no more remembered. They are blotted out before Christ comes. There can be, therefore, no act of calling them to account for their sins after the advent of Christ. Thus we read:- [JEO 12.1](#)

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." [Acts 3:19, 20](#). [JEO 12.2](#)

Mr. Wesley, in his “Notes on the New Testament,” gives a different translation, which may be more accurate:- [JEO 12.3](#)

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send to you Jesus Christ, who was before appointed.” [JEO 12.4](#)

Albert Barnes, in his “Notes on the Acts,” speaking of these two translations, says, “The grammatical construction will admit of either.” One of these represents the blotting out to be *when* the times of refreshing arrive; the other makes it the *cause* of that refreshing. But neither of them gives the idea that this blotting out takes place when the sinner turns to God. Both of them throw it into the future. Each of them represents it as *preceding* the second coming of the Lord. But this is especially true of the latter translation, which follows the original in using a conditional verb respecting Christ’s advent; not as though that were a doubtful event, but rather as if his coming to the personal salvation of the ones addressed depended upon their having part in the refreshing, and as if that refreshing was to come in consequence of the blotting out of sins. [JEO 12.5](#)

The sins of the righteous are blotted out before the coming of Christ. They cannot be called to give account of their sins after they have been blotted out; whence it follows that whatever account the righteous render to God for their sins must be before the advent of the Saviour, and not at, or after, that event. [JEO 13.1](#)

3. The sins of men are written in the books of God’s remembrance. The blotting out of the sins of the righteous does therefore involve the examination of these books for this very purpose. That the sins of men are thus written, is plainly revealed in the Scriptures. [JEO 13.2](#)

“For though thou wash thee with niter, and take thee much soap, yet *thine iniquity is marked before me*, saith the Lord God.” [Jeremiah 2:22](#). And thus the Lord speaks of the guilt of Israel: “Is not this *laid up in store with me*, and sealed up among my treasures?” [Deuteronomy 32:34](#). And Paul speaks in the same manner: “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart *treasureth up* unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds.” [Romans 2:5, 6](#). These statements of wrath being treasured up can have reference only to the fact that God takes notice of men’s sins, and that every sin is marked before him. To this fact all the texts which speak of the blotting out of sins must have reference. Thus David prays that God would *blot out* his transgressions. [Psalm 51:1, 9](#). And Nehemiah, and David, and Jeremiah, pray respecting certain persons, that their sin may *not be blotted out*. [Nehemiah 4:5](#); [Psalm 109:14](#); [Jeremiah 18:23](#). And Isaiah, in prophetic language, speaks of this blotting out as if it were a *past* event, just as in the next verse he speaks of the new creation, and the final redemption. [Isaiah 44:22, 23](#). And in the previous chapter he speaks in a similar manner of this blotting out as necessary in order that the sins of the people of God may be no more remembered. [Isaiah 43:25](#). These texts plainly imply that the sins of men are upon record, and that there is a time when these are blotted out of the record of the righteous. [JEO 13.3](#)