

THE PENTECOST

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THE PENTECOST

Welcome to another issue of *The Pentecost*. In this May, 2011, issue we will be discussing the *judgment seat of Christ, conviction* and *contrition*. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens



When crime happens, we cry out for justice. But what happens after a person dies? Is justice still required? Will they be judged for how they lived their life? Let's look at this from a biblical perspective.

Ramona Stevens

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THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The Bible talks of a great and terrible day in which God will judge the nations, both their leaders and their individual citizens. Yourself, myself, and every person who has ever walked this earth, will stand before Him and answer for *what we have said and done*. In fact, this is a major theme throughout the Scriptures. Jesus Christ refers to it frequently in His teachings. We are told plainly that God, "... commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). The command has gone forth, the day and hour has been set, and all of history races toward this climax. We read Jesus' own words:

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

John 5:25-29

Consider, for a moment, this awesome event when, at the call of the LORD Jesus Christ, all of humanity rise out of the graves and are gathered in one place, at one time, to receive a resurrection of either life or of condemnation. Make no mistake about it; "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Let us now look at three great passages of Scripture that discuss the final judgment.

1. The great white throne judgment

The Apostle John was allowed to see this fearful vision:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

Who can imagine the terror of those who had no reverence for God in their lifetime, as they are suddenly standing at the foot of God's great throne, as His books are opened, revealing His judgments? Then all of their works are judged according to what is written in the books, and the great *Book of Life* is searched for their names. Men and women whose names are not written in it are cast into the lake of fire. On that day, all that will matter to you will be whether your name is in that Book.

2. The sheep and the goats

Jesus Christ described the *Day of Judgment* in this parable:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the

sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Matthew 25:31-46

Dear reader, know for certain that the same Jesus who walked the earth, healed the masses and taught the people, will come again with His holy angels, this time to judge the earth. We will be judged, not only for what we have done but, also, for what we have not done and, then separated as either righteous or unrighteous.

3. Lord, Lord, open the door

Scripture records that one of Jesus' disciples asked Him; "Lord, are there few who are saved?" Jesus responded with this answer:

Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.

Luke 13:24-30

Dear reader, perhaps you are thinking or have even said, "I don't believe in a God who judges in this way." Think back to the second of the Ten Commandments. Could it be that you have created your own god, in your own mind, rather than receiving the true God as He has revealed Himself in holy Scripture? What if the true God is altogether different from what you have imagined?

The LORD says in the Bible; "... I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the LORD." (Jeremiah 9:24). Scripture also says; "But the LORD shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment." (Psalm 9:7).

Make no mistake about it. God has commanded that all men, everywhere, repent and He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world.

In this life, it is possible to deaden our conscience by acting against our conscience the many times it speaks to us. On that day, it will be awakened to maximum sensitivity.

How do men and women gain the assurance that their name is, in fact, recorded in the Book of Life? He or she must come to Jesus Christ and receive this assurance from Him. Friend, if you have not done this, call out to Christ. Call out to Him now. Cry out to Him, that your spiritual ears would be opened. Cry out to Him, that your heart would be cleansed and forgiven. Cry out to Him, and commit your life to follow Him and His ways.

God is a forgiving God and He receives those who come to Him in repentance and faith. He redeems them. The Scriptures say; “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5). To “redeem” means to “purchase back, to ransom, to liberate from slavery, captivity or death by the payment of a price.”¹

Jesus paid the price so that our sins may be forgiven. The price was His own life being put to death on the cross. The price was tremendous. Jesus was willing to pay it that we might be forgiven, redeemed and set free. Jesus died for our sins and, three days later, rose from the dead.

Friend, if you do not know the forgiveness of God, call out to Him. Turn to Him now. Be reconciled to God. The Apostle Paul wrote; “And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” (Romans 5:11). This could be your experience and testimony as well. You could find joy in God through Jesus Christ. You could receive the reconciliation. To have your name written in the Book of Life is joy beyond words.

Again, how do you receive this reconciliation? You must come to Jesus in faith. The Bible calls Him “... The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). We will all, one day, stand

before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. If you have not done so already, make things right with God before that day. Call out to Jesus and ask Him to take away your sins. Commit to follow and obey Him for the rest of your life. God bless you.

I want to pray also:

Lord Jesus, one day You will judge all of humanity. One day, we will stand before Your great throne. We want to be ready for that moment. We want to stand before You with our sins forgiven, and in relationship with You. We want to hear You say; “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”. Lord, we want our names to be found in the Book of Life. I pray for those who are reading now, that You would help them make the great crossover from the kingdom of darkness to Your kingdom of light and love. You paid the price. You died for our sins. You rose from the dead. Now help them to call out to You in repentance and faith. Help them to surrender their lives to You. Adopt them into Your spiritual family. May they receive adoption and redemption. May they receive reconciliation. May they know in their hearts the joy of reconciliation and the assurance of salvation. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

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Endnotes

1 John Miley, D.D., LL.D., Systematic Theology Vol.2 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 84

CONVICTION AND CONTRITION

What is conviction? To answer this, we must look at the words of Jesus. While He walked the earth, He taught that the day would come when He would leave this world, at least in bodily form, and that He would send the Holy Spirit of God to His disciples. Jesus said further; “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” (John 16:8-11). So, conviction is when God's Spirit impresses upon the conscience of a person the truth about sin, righteousness and judgment. It is when one comes to the shocking realization that they are guilty of sinning against God, that God is righteous and that He requires righteous standards of all His creation, and that there is judgment awaiting those who do not obey Him.

The Bible records an occasion, after the death and resurrection of Christ, when the Apostle Peter spoke to a crowd in Jerusalem about Christ's resurrection and ended his address with the declaration; “ ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ ” (Acts 2:36). The people's reaction was; “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ ” (Acts 2:37). They were “cut to the heart” or, put another way, Peter's words cut like a knife deep into their very soul. God's Spirit pressed these words upon their conscience. They had crucified Jesus and now they must face the guilt. This is conviction.

The Bible also tells us of David, Israel's king in approximately 1000 B.C., who committed adultery with another man's wife and even had her husband murdered. God responded to this by sending Nathan, one of His prophets, to David. Nathan told David a story about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had many sheep. The poor man had only one. The poor man loved his one sheep dearly. Yet, when the rich man had a visitor and desired to slaughter a sheep for the feast, instead of using one of his own many sheep, he chose to take and slaughter the poor man's only sheep. David responded to the story with anger, declaring that the rich man must die for what he had done, and for showing no pity. At this, Nathan thundered back with these words; “ ... 'You are the man! ... ’ ” (2 Samuel 12:7). He reminded David of God's goodness toward him in the past and questioned David, asking him how he could have acted in this way; “Why have you

despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight?...” (2 Samuel 12:9). Then he told David of the judgments that would befall him. These words were like a sharp arrow piercing David's heart. He now realized the horror of what he had done, and that God held him fully accountable for his deed. Full of conviction, David cried; “ ... 'I have sinned against the LORD'...” (2 Samuel 12:13).

Surely, God has also searched our hearts. How do you respond to being convicted by the Holy Spirit? Are you quick to admit that you are a sinner, or have you minimized your sins believing them to be of little consequence? Perhaps you have even justified your sins, saying, “everyone does this” or, “I have my rights” or, “it's OK, I'm a good person.”

Consider this event from the 1800's:

“If this is conviction, what is hell?’ These were the words exclaimed by a shaken evangelist on a frigid, snowy night in Reading, Pennsylvania, in the winter of 1829. Although he was a skilled soul winner and had seen many come under deep conviction of sin— even to the point of shrieking and crying out while he was preaching— this was more intense than anything he had ever witnessed. He had received an urgent call at midnight. A strong-willed, muscular, unsaved man was overcome by guilt after attending a gospel service. When he got home, he began to contort and groan under the enormous weight of his sin. His family called the evangelist to come at once, fearing that he would die if he could not get relief. And so it was that Charles Finney made his way over to the home of Amos Buck, in spite of a severe blizzard.

Buck was married to a believer but showed no interest at all in the Lord. On this particular night, he attended a gospel meeting, and as Finney described, 'the sermon had torn him to pieces.'

Finney approached the house. 'I could hear his moanings,' he recalled, 'or I should almost say howlings' from a distance of several hundred feet. Still, he was not prepared for what was coming:

'When I entered I found him sitting on the floor, his wife, I believe, supporting his head, — and what a look on his face! It was indescribable. Used as I

was to seeing persons under great convictions, I must confess that his appearance gave me a tremendous shock. He was writhing in agony, grinding his teeth, and literally gnawing his tongue for pain. He cried out to me, 'O Mr. Finney! I am lost! I am a lost soul!' and added several things that still increased the shock upon my nerves. I recollect exclaiming, 'If this is conviction, what is hell?'

After some effort, Finney was able to reach him: 'His burden was soon removed. He was persuaded to trust the Savior, and he came out free and joyful in hope.' And so Amos Buck was born from above, the first convert in Finney's meetings in Reading, serving the Lord as an exemplary Christian until his death at age 60 in 1841.'

A moving story? Yes. A totally unusual story? Not really! Such scenes are typical in times of revival. After all, what type of reaction can be expected when a rebel comes face to face with the King against whom he has been fighting—and sees that he is absolutely undone and within inches of eternal destruction? What kind of response would be considered normal when an unholy sinner encounters the Holy One — and finds himself utterly and completely without excuse? Or when an unclean transgressor stumbles into the blinding light of the pure and spotless One—and discovers his nakedness, his pollution, his filthy stains? Or when a child molester beholds the face of the Heavenly Father? Or when a murderer sees the giver of life? Or when a lawbreaker stands before the Judge of all the earth? Oh, what intense conviction will come! It is a work of the Spirit and the Word.”¹

Oh, the piercing, probing word of God! How it tears open the human heart and searches every corner. Is there any sin here to be found? What is this sin doing in the heart of one who has been created by God to follow God? We read:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

A person may not feel very dirty, or out of place, when he works in the presence of other farm workers and farm animals as he cleans out the stalls. However, transport him immediately to a wedding banquet, and how does he feel? He then feels very unclean in that setting. This is the effect that God's Spirit has upon us when He awakens our conscience, bringing us to the sobering awareness of our sinful state.

One writer has said:

'When the comforter is come,' said our Lord, '...He will convict the world of sin, ...' This is the only way to give true comfort to sinners. No preaching of 'Peace, peace,' will do. The prodigal must be brought to himself, and see his want and misery, ere he will determine to return to his father. The whole need not a physician, but they who are sick. The Lord begins His great work, then, by sending home arrows of conviction to the heart. Thus those long careless and stout of heart fall wounded before Him. They awake out of their long sleep of carnal security, to see themselves posting on to hell. They feel as if ready to be swallowed up by the pit of destruction. The terrible sense of the awful guilt of their sin presses upon their awakened consciences. They can no longer resist the strivings of God's Spirit. They can no longer close their eyes to the momentous concerns of eternity.²

Friend, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ has been laid down for you and me. The death of Christ was not an arbitrary act. It had specific meaning and specific purpose. The death of Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Like the crowd which stood before Peter on the Day of Pentecost, we must face the fact that we have sinned and need reconciliation with God. Friend, your life may be commendable when compared to that of your neighbor's, and it may be good when compared to the lives of the very worst in our society. However, this is not the standard by which God judges us. Friend, there is a great day on which we will stand before God. God wants to spare us shame and regret on that day. God wants to spare us from judgment. However, to be spared, we must respond rightly to His way to making things right. King David said; “ ... 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” (Psalm 32:5).

What is contrition? If conviction is awareness of sin, then contrition is remorse for sin.

We read in the Bible; "... But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66:2). Contrition is a deep regret for all the wrongs we have done against God and against our fellow man. It represents heart-felt grief, an inner agony that mourns over our sinful condition.

Remember King David, of whom we spoke earlier, and of how he was confronted by Nathan over his sins of adultery and murder. Nathan's rebuke, "You are the man!", landed like an arrow in David's heart and his conscience was completely overwhelmed with the guilt of what he had done. David spoke of his burden of guilt in the following passage:

*When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
Selah
I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I
have not hidden.
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the
LORD,'
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

Psalms 32:3-5

Scripture also records of how Peter, Jesus' disciple, pledged to follow Christ even to prison or to death. However, Jesus, Who knew the future, replied; "... 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'" (Luke 22:34). As the events of Christ's trial unfolded, Jesus' words proved true. Peter denied knowing Jesus. As Christ was led away, their eyes met one last time before the crucifixion. It was then that Peter was overwhelmed with remorse and sorrow at what he had done. Convicted over what he had done, he was filled with contrition and he "...went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62).

Dear reader, have you found this place of contrition? Has God's truth penetrated deep enough into your soul to affect you in this way? Or have you presumed that you have little to mourn over, that you have not much need of God's grace. One writer has said:

Presumption hinders mourning because it is really a form of pride. It recognizes the need for

grace, but not much grace. It is satisfied with cheap grace, expecting God to forgive little because it sees little to be forgiven. Sins are bad, but not bad enough to be confessed, repented of, and forsaken.³

To find this place of contrition we must look to the cross of Christ, and understand in our hearts how great a price was paid for our sins.

Two thousand years ago, a brilliant light shone into this dark world, a gift from heaven, the Lord of heaven Himself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, full of kindness. He grew up like a tender plant. He taught the people of the kingdom of God and healed them of their diseases. However, His purpose for being here extended beyond this. The day would come when He would die for your sins and mine. God's justice required a penalty to be paid for all the sins of humanity. Thus, the pure Son of God took upon Himself the sins of the entire world, so that we could be set free and forgiven. He was despised and rejected by men. He was tortured and sentenced to death. With painful wounds in His body and nails in His hands, He alone paid this awful price. (See Isaiah chapter 53).

All sin requires enormous penalty. This was the price; "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13 KJV).

A poet has written:

*Am I a stone and not a sheep, That I can stand, O
Christ, beneath Thy cross, To number drop by
drop Thy bloods slow loss And yet not weep? Not
so those women loved Who with exceeding grief
lamented Thee; Not so fallen Peter weeping
bitterly; Not so the thief was moved; Not so the sun
and moon Which hid their faces in starless sky. A
horror of great darkness at broad noon—I, only I.
Yet give not oe'r But seek Thy sheep, true
Shepherd of the flock; Greater than Moses, turn
and look once more And smite a rock.⁴*

Shawn Stevens

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Endnotes

1 Michael L. Brown, From Holy Laughter To Holy Fire, America On The Edge Of Revival (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 1996), 91-92.

2 Anonymous quoted in Ibid, 94. In this quote I have corrected the author's slight misquotation of John 16:8.

3 John F. MacArthur, Jr., The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), 163.

4 Christina Rossetti, as cited by John F. MacArthur, Jr., The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1985), 163.