

Foundation Truths - Eternal Judgement

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God having created the Universe, is also responsible for its well-being. He is, therefore, the judge of all His creatures who possess a moral nature.

He has revealed that this present Creation will pass away and be replaced by a New Heaven and New Earth. There is also in the eternal State to be a Lake of Fire, which was not part of the original creation. ([Gen. 1:1](#), [Is. 65:17](#), [Mt. 24:35](#), [Rev. 20:11-21:8](#).)

While God, as Judge, is constantly passing judgments upon His creatures, e.g., at the Flood or Nineveh, yet these judgments are temporary and may be revised or revoked, as justice or mercy dictate. There are, however, before the eternal state begins two inexorable judgments which must be universally passed:—

(a) The Judgment of whether a person is to exist eternally in the Kingdom of God or in the Lake of Fire.

(b) The Judgment of where in that vast Kingdom of the New Heaven and Earth each one whose name is in the Book of Life is to be placed; whether in Heaven or Earth, and in what position in either. These Judgments, once passed, are unalterable.

([Gen. 6:7](#), [Jonah 1:2](#), [Jer. 18:7](#), [10](#), [Mt. 11:21-24](#), [Rev. 20:11-15](#), [Mk. 16:16](#), [Lk. 19:11-27](#), [Heb. 12:17](#).)

Originally Heaven was created for Angels and earth for men; but the passage of time and the intrusion of sin have brought about modifications in the original structure.

The number of those who dwelt in Heaven and shared in its government has been greatly depleted by the rebellion of Satan and his Angels. God has revealed that it is not His intention to create more Angels to take their places; but, instead, to choose from amongst men those who might become His Sons by adoption, and hold a place higher than that ever offered to Angels, so that Jesus Christ would not be ashamed to call them brethren. ([Rev. 12:7-9](#), [21:7](#), [Heb. 2:5-18](#).)

Every Christian, being begotten again by the Spirit of God, has this Heavenly calling by right of inheritance; it is his natural development from a babe in Christ to a full-grown Son of God. Yet it is an inheritance which has to be won, and may be forfeited by incompetence; for God cannot put

responsibility and honour upon those who are manifestly unable to bear it. ([Eph. 1:5-11](#), [4:13](#), [Rom. 8:14-19](#), [Phil. 3:13-21](#), [Heb. 3:1](#).)

The gift of God to His children is their eternal life, and the only qualification for this is faith in Christ, however slight; but God is leading many Sons to glory, if they will come His Way. Glory is something which cannot be given, it must be won. It is a faith which has stood the trials of life victoriously, an overcoming faith, which will alone be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There is the possibility of being ashamed from Him at His coming because we have been disobedient or idle or lukewarm. ([Heb. 2:10](#), [12:17](#), [I Peter 1:7](#), [II Tim. 4:6-8](#), [James 1:12](#), [Rev. 3:16](#), [I John 2:28](#).)

The headmaster of a school may give all the pupils a holiday, but he cannot give all the first prize, or, indeed, any prize at all. It is the essence of a prize that its winner has accomplished some feat which has marked him out from his brethren. He has written a better essay or run a faster race than the others, and so has gained a position of honour. The whole value of the prize is that it is the badge of achievement. Glory is that feeling of respect that rises in the minds of men when they hear of what you have done. Even Christ was moved to admiration of the believing centurion and the poor widow woman. ([Matt. 8:10](#), [Lk. 21:3-4](#).)

So far as a Christian is concerned the first of these Judgments, i.e., of Life or Death, is passed at his new birth; he then has eternal life, and nothing and nobody can deprive him of it: for God will not allow anything too powerful for him to come against him. So long, therefore, as he continues to believe in Christ he is justified by faith and a member of God's Kingdom. ([John 5:24](#), [10:27-29](#), [I Cor. 10:13](#), [Rom. 4:5](#), [5:1](#), [I Peter 1:5](#).)

It is possible that he himself may throw away the gift that was his, and commit spiritual suicide. But this will need the most determined effort and continuous rebellion on his part, and be as unnatural as is physical suicide. There is, of course, nothing that can ever take away from man his freedom of choice; there is a backsliding which knows no repentance, a final shipwreck of faith. ([James 5:20](#), [II Peter 2:20-22](#), [Jude 12](#), [I Tim. 1:19](#), [6:9](#), [Heb. 6:6](#), [10:26](#), [I John 5:16-17](#), [Philip. 3:18, 19](#), [I Chr. 10:13, 14](#).)

N.B. There are two touchstones by which every theological dogma may be tested. The first, that God is Love ([I John 4:16](#)); the second, that man's will is free, though not necessarily his actions ([Luke 13:34](#), [Gal. 5:17](#)).

[Rom. 7](#) gives us a vivid picture of a man whose will is set upon righteousness, but whose actions are forced upon him by habitual sin in the

flesh. The drunkard, the drug addict are obvious examples of this pitiful condition.

And, on the other hand, the old lag in the cell gives us an illustration of the exact opposite. Here we have a man whose will is all for evil, but whose actions are forced into a blameless mould of stone breaking or oakum picking, such as a saint might copy!

Men have always feared the responsibility which attaches to free will, and longed to believe that God can do something which will relieve us from the burden. Yet the truth remains that although God is Love and will secure us from all outside aggression or internal decay, yet even He is not master of men's wills but only of their actions. Were He so, all would be saved; for He is not willing that any should perish: but the decision of salvation or destruction is man's own decision; and his only eternal security lies in his eternal determination to obey God. It is man's spirit, not his soul, which is born again. His soul, adopted out of his earthly family and introduced into his heavenly family, may yet hanker after the old home and bring God to a dreadful decision. For God having saved a people out of Egypt, after destroyed them that believed not, and they knew God's breach of promise. It is unfortunately true that there are those who by their own choice and with determination have repeated their original transgression, and are therefore twice dead. ([Heb. 10:26.](#)) For the soul that once received a living spirit from the Almighty can also kill it, and again plunge into the darkness from which it once emerged. ([II Peter 2:20-22](#), [Jude 5-12](#), [Num. 14:34](#), [Heb. 3:12-4:2.](#))

On the other hand, while the Christian is sure of Eternal Life, he is not sure of glory. The reward of the Christian is to be allowed to share with His Lord in the Eternal government of His Kingdom; in a word the faithful servant is, as always, rewarded by more work and higher responsibility!

The Judgment of Christians for position in the Kingdom will take place at the Lord's return before the Millennium. All who appear thereat are assured of life in the Kingdom; it is only their position in the Kingdom that is at stake. Full accounts are given of this Judgment that no one may have any misunderstanding in the matter. Verdicts will range from "Well done good and faithful servant" to "Thou wicked servant," from being entrusted with all that belongs to God, to being deprived of what is rightfully one's own, from joy in the Lord's Presence, to being bound hand and foot and cast out of it. Those Christians who have proved by their lives on earth that they are unfit to rule over it, will have to wait in darkness till they can be found a place upon the New Earth, where maybe some faithful servant of the Old Testament will find himself exalted to take his

inheritance amongst the Brethren and to rule over him for his good. The Lord has clearly spoken of the weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst those of His children, who, too late, find that they have forfeited the blessing they despised, and must content themselves with second best for Eternity. (Cf. [Ezekiel 44:10-14](#).)

It is madness to imagine that because we are Sons of God we shall automatically inherit the Government: to forget the "if" of [Rom. 8:17](#). We may be Sons who cause shame, who cannot be rightfully entrusted with even the slightest responsibility upon earth, whose lives cause shame to the Family, and are a stumblingblock to the world. The greater the responsibility the higher the standard!

The Biblical illustration is the contrast between Abraham sharing God's secrets upon the mountain top, and Lot drinking himself drunk in a lonely cave; both saved, but worlds between them! ([Gen. 18:17](#), [19:30](#).) When an Apostle runs his hardest, we may well determine to do our best! ([I Cor. 9:24-27](#), [Phil. 3:10-15](#).) The rationale of this Judgment of the Sons of God by the Son of God is that the Government of the earth during the Millennium is to be in the hands of Christ and His Brethren, who will take the place of Satan and his Angels, who will have been cast out of their thrones in the heavenlies. It is necessary, therefore, for this Judgment to precede the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. ([Mt. 25:14-30](#), [Lk. 12:31-48](#), [16:1-12](#), [19:11-27](#), [Rom. 8:17](#), [I Cor. 3:10-15](#), [II Cor. 5:9-10](#), [Heb. 2:3](#), [12:16, 17, 23](#), [Rev. 3:11](#), [Prov. 17:2](#), [29:21](#).)

The Great White Throne

There remains, however, the final Judgment Throne of God at the close of the Millennium, at which will appear all the dead of all the ages, including Angels and demons as well as men. Here again, the first question to be decided is that of Life or Death. Will one be in the Kingdom or in the Lake of Fire? And therefore the Book of Life is opened. ([Rev. 20:11-15](#), [Jude 6](#), [II Peter 2:4](#).)

N.B. The present course of events upon this earth is most deceptive to the natural mind. God in His mercy, though He condemns instantly every work of evil, does not immediately execute His sentence, but waits to see if His forbearance will lead the sinner to repentance. Unfortunately, so hard are the hearts of many sinners that this very forbearance only emboldens them in their wickedness, as was the case with Pharaoh, who was hardened by God's repeated forgiveness, till he lost all fear of God's justice. God's children are often perplexed when they see the wicked

apparently unscathed, and themselves chastened! Calvary, however, has shown us in one glaring example God's real estimate of sin. The soul that sinneth it shall die, and Christ died therefore for the doomed. God's wrath is indeed mounting up steadily, till it shall be revealed at the Day of the Lord and the Great White Throne. ([Ps. 73](#), [Eccles. 8:11](#), [Is. 26:10](#), [Rom. 2:4-9](#), [9:17, 18, 22](#), [Rev. 6:16-17](#).)

It has often been hastily assumed that all who appear at this Judgment are lost; but there is, of course, no scripture to support this, and a moment's reflection will show that it cannot possibly be so; for at this Judgment will appear those who have been born during the Millennium as well as those who have either rejected or never heard of God's salvation, and the great assembly of Angels and demons who have been waiting for the execution of sentence uttered long ago. It will, indeed, be a mixed company. The Book simply says, "And if any man was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire," and in [Rev. 21:8](#) it gives a description of the characters of such. ([Mt. 25:41](#), [II Peter 2:4](#), [Jude 6](#).)

It is a scene of unimaginable solemnity. Here upon the brink of eternity are gathered a vast concourse of beings to hear a verdict, which will carry with it their eternal fate. The Judgment, we are told, will be in the hands of the Royal Family, every member of which will have passed through the temptations of life and know the infirmities of human nature. At their head will be the Son of God, who took our nature upon Him that He might be qualified to perform this very duty. The Judgment will be in the hands of Him, who is not willing that any should perish. ([I Cor. 6:2-3](#), [Dan. 7:22](#), [Rev. 20:4](#), [John 5:27](#).)

Why then in face of this loving mercy of God, will there be any who throughout eternity will know no alleviation of their pain? Eternal punishment is not the retribution for the sins that men have committed in the past—it is neither vindictive nor remedial nor punitive. It is, however, the only safeguard against the sins which the finally unrepentant intend to go on committing for eternity if left at liberty. Eternal punishment is God's answer to eternal sin: and the responsibility for it lies, not with God, but with the soul that is set upon sin, scorns mercy, and would gladly destroy the happiness of others for his own base ends. ([Acts 17:31](#), [I Tim. 2:4](#), [II Peter 3:9](#), [Mk. 3:29](#) (R.V.))

The Lake of Fire is the second death: i.e., it is the second time a man loses his body. The first time was because God had taken away the Tree of Life after Adam's sin: the second time is because of his own sin. On both occasions it is torment; the first time temporary, the second time eternal.

God cannot prevent a free will desiring to do evil, but He can and will prevent it doing it. This He will do by depriving them of their bodies. without which they can do nothing. The ruin and anguish of those in Hell is irremediable and eternal, and rests solely upon the truth that it is impossible to renew them to repentance. and so make them fit to live with others.

It is as if a father had given his son a penknife that with it he might be enabled to do all sorts of needful things, only to find that instead the boy is cutting things up just to suit himself, and spoiling other people's property. That boy could, if he refused to listen to admonition and warning and continued in his folly, force his father to take away the knife, lest others should be inconvenienced. A razor is a good thing for shaving; but when used for cutting throats it is always confiscated! The Lord pointed out that disembodiment was a ceaseless torment allowing of no rest; so that even a swine's body was better than none, allowing its tenants to do at least one more act of senseless destruction. ([Rev. 20:14](#), [21:8](#), [Gen. 3:22-24](#), [Heb. 6:6](#), [10:26](#), [Dan. 7:11](#), [Lk. 16:19-31](#), [Mt. 10:28](#), [Lk. 8:32, 33](#), [11:24](#).)

Hades was the place of departed souls not of dead bodies. In the same way the bodies of those destroyed by the Lord at His coming will lie in the Valley of Gehenna: their souls will be in Hades, just as our Lord's body was in the tomb while His soul was suffering the pains of death in Hades. ([Is. 66:24](#), [Lk. 16:22](#), [Acts 2:24-31](#), [John 11:24](#).)

N.B. It is perhaps worth pointing out here that the parable of Dives and Lazarus is a physical picture of the suffering or peace of the souls of the departed. Dives' body was not actually being burned: it was in the grave where it had been buried: nor was Lazarus actually reclining on Abraham's bosom. That was the ordinary Jewish description of the destiny of the believing dead, i.e., with faithful Abraham awaiting the resurrection in faith.

The torment of Hell will not in any sense be vindictive; God will not needlessly afflict even the wicked, nor add to their pain any unnecessary suffering. The awful truth is that their endless pain will be absolutely unavoidable, and spring from the fact that never again will they be free to do anything: since all they desire to do is evil. They will spend eternity in fruitless remorse and hatred of God and each other and the whole creation; yet in the mercy of God not able to inflict physical torment even on each other. Their souls wrapped round in endless lying pride they will refuse to admit their own guilty folly and will instead throw the blame for their

awful condition upon a long-suffering Judge, whose love and mercy they spurn and whose every act they treat with suspicion and hatred. To come to the place where you cannot even trust the Almighty, and see a trap in His every word, and throw a doubt upon His every promise, is the last darkness of despair, from which there is no deliverance.

It has been said that not only must justice be done, it must also appear to be done; lest there should be any possibility of doubt about the righteousness of it. There are always those who feel that surely punishment will bring repentance. God has lovingly safeguarded us against this by leaving Satan in prison for the Millennium and then allowing him to come out. We shall then see that he is at once at his old ways of life in hatred and destruction. Hell then is the painful duty which the unrepentant force upon a long-suffering God. They are hardened, not softened, by forbearance, and His only choice is either to abandon the righteous to the tender mercies of the wicked, or else to bring the wicked to a full stop. He has in His love for the righteous chosen the latter step. ([Rev. 20:7-9](#), [19:1-3](#), [Rom. 2:4-6](#), [Eccl. 8:11](#), [Ex. 4:21](#).)

It is often said that this end would be equally achieved by the annihilation of the wicked. In the first place, the language of Scripture will not allow of such an interpretation. It is torment, not just the smoke of it, which is everlasting. In the second place, the very severity of the penalty will doubtless frighten into the sanity of repentance countless numbers, who would cheerfully have had their fling at the expense of others, if there had been no retribution to be feared. The fear of the Lord may not be the last attitude of wisdom, but it is often the beginning. In the third place, there will likely be many who will be eternally safe because the smoke of Hell, continually ascending in their sight, will play its part in the steeling of their determination to obey God. For the saved will include not only those saved with glory, but also those who are scarcely saved, and only brought to repentance with the greatest difficulty. In the vast Kingdom of God will be vessels to honour, but also to dishonour; yet in the Kingdom. God will save into Eternal Life everyone who can by any manner of means be induced to turn from evil and do good.

Finally, and most important of all, it is the very fact that man is eternal that gives him his importance, and makes him different from the animals. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Let him think of himself as the mere creature of a day, and you prevent him from thinking highly of himself. The evolutionist who tells man that he is but the short-lived head of an animal creation must not be surprised if men live like animals. It is the very fact that man is eternal which gives him dignity, rescues him from

the frustration of death, and allows him to live in hope and eternal purpose: the Christian is saved by hope, and in the light of eternity pulls himself together as one whose actions matter, and will have eternal consequences. Deprive man of eternity, and you have but a dying animal. ([Rev. 20:10, 14:10-11](#), [Is. 66:24](#), [I Peter 4:18](#), [II Peter 3:9](#), [Jude 23](#), [II Tim. 2:20-21](#), [John 15:22-25](#), [Ez. 18:23](#).)

N.B.1. It is essential to remember that all who will be in Hell will be there because they hate God without any cause, would spoil the happiness of Eternity if only they could, and cannot be induced to repent and receive a free pardon and Eternal life. It will be the unreasonable hardness of their own heart, not of God's, which will be responsible for their fearful condition. Yet God will make use of them for the eternal warning of the righteous.

N.B.2. If it be objected that it had been better for God not to have created at all, with His foreknowledge that the result of so doing would be the creation of Hell as well as Heaven, the answer is:

(a) that He is in no sense responsible for Hell; it is an unwanted addendum forced upon Him by the wicked,

(b) that it would be most unfair to deprive the righteous of their happiness, just because some elected to play the fool and preferred misery to happiness, without a cause.

What amazing joy it will be to know that a happy eternity in a glorious place with a loving God and kindly companions is finally assured! No wonder that those who believe the promises of God are exhorted to shout upon their beds! True emotion is the inevitable effect upon the soul of facts. The greater the facts the greater the emotion. No emotion can be too great in the face of the greatest of all facts, Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God.

The Justice of God

Finally God has laid down in His Book certain lines which He always follows in Judgment. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

1. [Matthew 11:21-24](#). God will take into account at that day not only what one did, but what one would have done under happier circumstances. cp. [Mt. 10:15](#), [I Sam. 30:21-25](#).

2. [John 15:22-25](#). There is a real sense in which men do not have not sin until they see and hate God. It is the person who knows it all and yet falls away, who is utterly hopeless. [Heb. 6:4-8](#), [10:26-31](#), [II Peter 2:20-22](#).

3. Matthew [10:41-42](#). A man will be credited with doing the thing with which he sympathised though he had no opportunity himself. It is the intents of the heart which count with God. cp. [Mt. 20:6-7](#).

4. [Matthew 25:31-46](#). Love for and kindness to any Son of God, will be counted as love and kindness to The unknown Son of God. cp. [Mt. 10:40](#), [18:5](#).

5. [Rom. 2:11](#). God is no respecter of persons. All will be treated with scrupulous fairness and generosity. There will be no one in Heaven or Earth through their own righteousness, but all solely through the forgiving mercy of God, who is rich in pity. cp. [James 2:1](#).

6. [I Cor. 3:13](#). Quality, not quantity is God's criterion. cp. [Mark 12:41-44](#), [Lk. 16:10](#).