

## YOUR FIRST DAY IN HEAVEN

### Message 5

#### Words

INTRO: We have looked at the possibility that when we die, or after the rapture, we may go through a process before we become at home in heaven. In the last message we looked at the three formal judgments and I recommended that the Judgment seat of Christ will take place at this altar. I am not dogmatic on this, but I am dogmatic that it will take place, and recommended that this is a likely place for it to happen.

I have recommended that we will go through a judgment called the judgment seat of Christ. We looked at what this is. It is not a judgment to see what kind of punishment will be administered, but it will be a judgment such as is used in sports events. If one did things that were against the rules unknowingly, there would be loss of points. If all things were in order and one was first, a prize was in order. This is called a bema judgment.

Romans 14:10 says, "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "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."

I have recommended that it seems most probable that this would take place at the altar, when the Christian enters glory. That it takes place in heaven, I think, is certain. In the last message we began to look at what will be judged here. I have recommended that all things unknown and such like things will be judged here. I think that this judgment will also determine what rewards will be given. There may be loss of rewards or crowns for various reasons. This morning we want to consider this judgment further.

I want to recommend that another matter that will come up for review, and this matter will directly affect what rewards will be given to believers, is the matter of carnality. That is our subject this morning.

## 2. Carnality

So we want to now consider this matter of carnality. I propose that at this altar another matter is taken care of. Turn to 1 Corinthians 2. You see, there are two kinds of people in the world, from a spiritual perspective; saved and lost people. But there are two kinds of Christians from a spiritual perspective; carnal and spiritual. Let me show you each of these kinds of people in 1 Corinthians 2. We begin in verse 13 which says:

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Now you might circle the word translated 'natural'. In the original it is the word *psykikos*. We don't have such an adjective, but if we did it would be 'soulish' or 'soulical'. This is the soulish man, and he is the unregenerate person. I cannot take time here to explain further. So we go to verse 15:

15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.

Here is the man called the spiritual man, and the adjective is correct to the original. This man is spiritual. He is spiritually minded. He is godly. He is the kind of Christian God wants. So here we have the Christian and the first kind of Christian and in verse 14 we had the non Christian. We go on in chapter 3:

1 ¶ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

Now in this verse we have the second kind of Christian. He is called carnal. Carnal means fleshly, and the original adjective here is *sarkikos*, fleshly. Here is the second kind of Christian.

Now let me bring us back to the altar of Revelation 6. Thankful people brought their gifts to this altar and sacrificed them, and gave them up for God. I recommend that when we arrive here, that it is here that the Lord will judge all carnality and reward the believer for that which was truly spiritual and done for the Lord. Again, it may take place at another time, but it seems to me that this is the most likely place. Most certainly it will take place at the judgment seat of Christ, and it will take place in heaven.

Now many Christians have the idea that a carnal Christian is one who dabbles in sin. He or she does not seem to be very sincere about his or her Christianity. Maybe they laugh at or even tell off color jokes. They watch shows they shouldn't. Maybe they use language unfit for Christians, or maybe they even swear and some even use the Lord's name in vain. We think that is a carnal Christian. They go to church. They talk the talk.

But we ask, just what is carnality? Is carnality a life that dabbles in that which is not right? Does it speak of someone who goes to church off and on; reads the Bible off and on; and prays off and on? Is it one who lives partway in the world and partway in the Church? Is it one who smokes and drinks socially and such like things? Well, we'll begin 1 Corinthians 3:1 once more. This is a most crucial passage on our subject. As I mentioned, the word carnal comes from the word flesh. It is to be fleshly. We begin in verse 1 again:

1 ¶ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

Now note the carnal Christian is fed with milk, not solid spiritual food. Why? They cannot bear it. And why can they not bear it? Because they are carnal, or fleshly. And just how do we know they are fleshly? Well, there is envy among them. There are divisions among them. So they are behaving like unsaved human beings.

Now just what is this envy and strife and so on? How did it manifest itself? What kind of envy and strife are we talking about here? You see, in our day, if somebody has been a Christian for some time and they are still, maybe smoking, or drinking a bit, or their language is still foul and so on, we call them carnal Christians. That, I believe, is not carnality. That is sinfulness. The big question is if the new birth really happened at all in such people. But today, we brush all kinds of sinfulness away as carnality, and we say, "Oh they will be saved yet so as by fire, like the Apostle Paul says in this passage."

Well, Paul will now identify carnality. look at verse 4:

4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

Here is carnality explained. One said, "I am of Paul. Paul is the best. You should hear this man." Another said, "I am of Apollos. What a guy. That little guy Paul, he's not much of a speaker, but you should hear Apollos. Wow!" And this kind of envy and strife caused church strife among them. Paul is not here dealing with alcohol and swearing and off color jokes; he is dealing with one wanting to appear more spiritual than

the other. It would be like witnessing to others, not for Christ's benefit, but so I could say, "I led so or so many to the Lord." This is carnality. It is not envy over someone's material possessions, but envy of another's spirituality and wanting that recognition for oneself. Here is strife caused by wanting to appear to be more spiritual than others, or thinking one knows better than the other who is the best speaker. It is seeking the praise of men for one's spirituality above others, seeking to draw followers after oneself against other Christians whom one views to be not as spiritual. The divisions caused in Corinth by these Christians was because of self-seeking. And such things exist among believers. This is carnality.

So let me read verse 3 again with verse 4:

3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

Do you see the carnality there? "I am of Paul!" And another, "Oh, that's nothing, I am of Apollos. Have you heard him speak?" And what does Paul say that is? It is carnality. We go on:

5 ¶ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 ¶ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now Paul will speak of the works of the Christian. Some are carnal, and building carnally. Others are doing a good spiritual work motivated by true godliness. So we go to verse 12:

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

Here we see how the Christian's work for the Lord is viewed. Works motivated by true godliness are likened to gold, or silver or precious stones. But when someone seeks to lead many people to the Lord so he can report in church what he has accomplished, and he does it to gain honor for who he is, this is like building with wood hay or straw.

But there is something that is going to take place someday. Someday each one's work will become clear. And I propose to you that it will take place at this altar. There at the altar, every work will become clear. Every motivation will be revealed and nobody will argue. Oh the shame some great men of God will experience when everything is laid out in the open. It will become clear.

And we are told that each one's work will become clear of what kind it was. And how will it become clear. It will be tested by fire.

Now a question remains for me here and that is, what is meant by 'the Day'? This sounds most like the day that is referred to as the day of Christ, which I believe always refers to the rapture and the time immediately following. When the Church is raptured, it is no question to me that the judgment seat of Christ will happen right shortly after entering heaven. But what about those who arrive there before the rapture? And at this point it seems to me that for them it will happen as soon as they arrive. But I would certainly not be dogmatic on this. What I would be dogmatic on is that it will happen after the Christian arrives there.

13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

What we do know is that sometime here in heaven, every Christian's work will become clear, very clear. The Day will declare it. Now it will be declared. This means it will be made manifest, or be made known by telling it, or to give one to understand this. You see, it will become very clear.

And how will it become clear? It will be revealed by fire. Now take the six materials mentioned here; gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw, and put them in fire, and what will happen? Well, that is a no-brainer. Now picture a believer who has given all kinds of money to the church, witnessed to all kinds of people, taken in all kinds of missionaries, but he did it to be recognized. What will happen? You see that huge pile of good works? And look at it after the fire is done. Nothing left but some smoke!

You see, it will be tested by fire. And the fire will try everyone's work of what sort it is. And we ask what fire? Could it be the fire of the altar? Turn to Revelation 1. When John was given the Revelation which we have in the book of Revelation, in chapter one he saw Christ. We begin with verse 10:

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire...

And I am wondering, is this the fire of the altar in heaven? Is it His eyes that are the fire that tries all the believer's works? Is the Lord, who was always pictured in all the sacrifices on this altar, is He on this altar when the believer gets there, and His eyes see clear through every part of us?

*Listen to Hebrews 4:13, Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

So there are those who, when the Lord views their works, some or many of their works will burn up. But notice now verses 14:

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

Here we have the gold, silver and precious stones. Here we have the Christian's works which were done from pure motivations and they were good. And here is the promise: He will receive a reward. It is beyond all doubt that this will be a very sad day for some,



and a day beyond description of rejoicing for others. We go on in verse 15:

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Now we sometimes have the idea that if a Christian is worldly and dabbling in sin a little, and skips church half the time and hardly reads the Bible, and so on, that that is a carnal Christian. That is not a carnal Christian. There is a question if that is a Christian at all. And if so, some of that makes such a person a sinning Christian. The carnal person did such things as witness to others or give money or any such like things. But he did it for personal glory, not out of pure motivation; and there are many other such types of carnality.

I believe it is likely that it is at this altar that all the dross of carnality will be burned away. The person is saved, but our passage says, 'yet so as by fire'. And I think this is what happens at the altar. You see, this altar is the first place one comes to when one enters heaven. Listen to 1 Peter 4:18, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

But note now verses 16-17 in our passage:

16 ¶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.

Carnality will survive, but when we defile the temple with sins for which there is no sacrifice, we will be destroyed. What words are here! Oh what fear for God this should produce in us!

Go with me now to 2 Corinthians 5. This is a most interesting passage in light of our subject. We have

been talking about the works of the believer. We begin in verse 1:

1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven,

3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked.

4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

By the way, there may be here some indication of the interim body that we have spoken of some time ago. We go on:

5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.

8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

And why do we do that? Verse 10:

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,

Now here is our subject of the judgment seat of Christ. In this passage we see clearly that it happens in heaven. And Paul will now tell us what the objective is here at the judgment seat of Christ so we go on:

*...that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*

Let me make a note here. Every formal judgment is according to works, but works are never used to determine where one goes. For those judged in heaven, it is to determine rewards. For those judged at the end of the tribulation it is to see what positions they receive in the millennium, and what those will receive who go to hell. For those at the great white throne judgment, it is to see what kind of punishment they will endure forever.

Now back to our clause, *...that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* Let us take note first of the phrase, "...whether good or bad..." Now we might get the idea here of Christians who go to heaven who are doing bad things. And that lines up with the common view of a carnal Christian. J. Dwight Pentecost makes two very interesting points here. Note the word 'appear' in verse 10. First, he says, "the word translated 'appear' in 2 Corinthian 5:10 might better be rendered 'to be made manifest,' so that the verse reads, 'For it is necessary for all of us to be made manifest.' This suggests that the purpose of the bema is to make a public manifestation, demonstration or revelation of the essential character and motives of the individual. Plummer's remark: 'We shall not be judged en masse, or in classes, but one by one, in accordance with individual merit,' substantiates the fact that this is an individual judgment of each believer before the Lord" (223).

Now I want us to think about this. If our works are all made manifest here, our life will be opened as to our motives for doing the things we did. All of what we did and why becomes clear in heaven, whether good or bad. And I ask, what kind of life should we be living? Could it be here that Jesus' words of Luke 12:2-3 will be fulfilled? He said:

2 "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

3 "Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

Such a possibility should put the fear of God into us. Oh to stand before the One who has eyes of fire. Hebrews 4:13 says, "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."

Let me now read the last part of verse 10 again: "... that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Let me quote once more from Pentecost on the second noteworthy point he makes. He writes, "The believer's works are brought into judgment, called 'the things done in the body' (2 Corinthians 5:10), in order that it may be determined whether they are good or bad. Concerning the use of the word bad (phaulos), it is to be observed that Paul did not use the usual word for bad (kakos or poneeros), either of which would signify that which is ethically or morally evil, but rather the word which according to Trench means, '...evil under another aspect, not so much that either is active or passive malignity, but that rather of its good-for-nothingness, the impossibility of any true gain ever coming forth from it...This notion of worthlessness is the central notion...'" (223).

We have seen that there are good works done out of good motivation. The works are good and the motivation is good. Then there are bad works and they are described in the NT a *kakos* or *poneeros*, the words just mentioned. But then there are dead works. This is the good-for-nothingness that he meant. What are these? "I am of Apollos. I am of Paul", etc..

What will happen to these kinds of works when the fire begins to lick around them? Let me begin with verse 10 again:

10 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.

Paul then continue like this in verse 11 of 2 Corinthians 5:

11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Now the whole context, I think, does not allow the idea of the terror of the Lord to refer to hell. Further, the word terror here is *phobos*, fear. So what Paul is saying is, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. Does it not put the fear of God into us to think that all my works will be opened up before others some day, if I don't repent and deal with it here? The judgment seat of Christ is for Christians and it will take place in heaven. I am recommending this may be our first day in heaven. As I have said, I would not be dogmatic on this, but it will take place in heaven, and I don't see Christians going past this altar with these kinds of things.

Let me ask you, when we come past this altar, if the things I have recommended do take place here, and all things unknown and forgotten are taken care of and every motivation of the works in my Christian are made clear, and all is said and done, how clean will I feel! I expect that if we lose rewards, but everything is now made clear and clean, we will absolutely jump for joy.

Now let me clear up a common and misleading statement. Here it is: "If we can't get along here on earth as Christians, how are we going to get along in heaven?" Have you ever heard that? Now that saying is

misleading and reveals very humanistic thinking. It gives the idea that if we can't get along on earth, it will be even harder to get along in heaven than here on earth. If we can't get along here, how will we get along in heaven!?

Let me tell you one thing about which there can be no mistake: If we are truly Christians once we pass this altar, we will have no trouble getting along with anyone who is also there! Let me tell you another thing of which I have no fear of being wrong: nobody will have trouble getting along with me or us, and we won't have any trouble getting along with anyone else, if we or they get there! We will get along in heaven without hypocrisy! We will love each other without hypocrisy! We will have no trouble saying, "I was wrong about that!" nor will anybody else have trouble saying they were wrong, if in fact they were. We will have no trouble saying, "I am so glad you stood for what is right!" No one else will have trouble saying, "I am so glad you stood for what was right!."

Let me tell you what I see. In the recent past, the United States had an election campaign for president that was unpleasant, as far as mud slinging is concerned. And the Republicans had a number of men in the influential end of things who tried to keep Donald Trump from becoming president. Among them were men like Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Mit Romney. After Trump was elected, all of a sudden these men who had nothing good to say about Trump, turned about face and tried to be Trump's best friend. Cruz and Rubio and Romney were all friendly with Trump. But it was not a true friendliness. If it had been they would have acknowledged some things or required the acknowledgment of some things from Trump before they became all friendly.

I am here to tell you that it won't be like that in heaven! Everybody who gets past this altar, I believe, will be a true and genuine friend with anyone else who

has gone past this altar. Heaven is going to be a wonderful place!

When the Jews wanted to crucify Christ, Pilate didn't want to do it. And though he was a ruthless man he still had a sense of justice. But he knew Christ was righteous and that the Jews had delivered Jesus to him out of envy. He couldn't get this situation off of his hands so he sent Jesus to Herod. And that day Pilate and Herod became friends. Luke 23:12 says, "And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."

You see, on earth people who were enemies can become friends when there is something for them to gain or when they have a common enemy. That friendship is not real, but it removes the enmity, at least on the surface. But let me tell you what will happen after Christians pass this altar. Whatever is there to be exposed in anyone of us, after it has been exposed and dealt with, I have absolutely no question that no one who arrives in heaven, when he or she gets past this altar, will have any more trouble getting along with anybody at all. Whoever will be there, when the fires of the altar are done, will have no difficulty with humility.

When we get to heaven, and we pass this altar, all Calvinists and Arminians who were true Christians will love each other. Let me tell you something else. They will be in full agreement! If you and I were strongly disagreed on some spiritual matter here on earth, and we both go to heaven, in heaven, if I was wrong I will come to you and will not only be friendly to you; the friendliness will be real. It will not be hypocritical. I will congratulate you. I will even be happy for you for whatever you were right in, for I will see that what I viewed so strongly was wrong.

On the other hand, if you were wrong, you will feel exactly the same way about me. We will most gladly congratulate the one who was right. There is no question about that. So let me say this, "If we can't

get along on earth, and we arrive in heaven, we will get along in heaven!" There is just no question about that. And I believe what happens at this altar will make the difference. When we have passed the altar, we'll all be wearing white, not hypocritical white either.

Well, our first day in heaven may not be quite like we expected it to be. But not all is gloom and doom. Let me tell you one of the most wonderful things about true revival. Joy is restored! Who would imagine that dealing with wrong can have such wonderful results as joy, but true revival will always do that. When all that needs to be dealt with has been dealt with, we will know true joy!

And let me say this, there are many wonderful Christians whose works won't burn. And they will be rewarded. For many there will be works that will stand the test of fire, and for them this will be a time where joy is multiplied!

CONCL: I have called these messages, "Your First Day In Heaven." I do not know that what will happen here will not take more than a day, or even if it will take 70 days. But I have no question that there will be a transition from this life to the next.

Many years ago, in the preaching of the Sutura Twins, they taught that Christians should not keep short accounts, but current accounts. I encourage all of us to do that. Let us be quick to repent, of even what we might view as little things. Let us remember that someday all things will be manifested. We ourselves will become manifest. We will be opened right up for all to see.

Then let us remember to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ with gold and silver and precious stones.



