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## MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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### Truths for Bitter Providences, Part 23

Isaiah 61 is a fitting summary of the message of Daniel 12.

Isaiah 61:1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn *in Zion*, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. // So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."

Isaiah indicates at least two things; first, being a child of God does not absolve us from difficulty or hardship in this life. Notice the words used to describe the Christian in this age:

- Afflicted.
- Brokenhearted.
- Captives.
- Prisoners.
- Mourners.
- People given to a fainting spirit.

Secondly, as a child of God living with such difficulties, it is possible to have a disposition comparable to an “oak of righteousness” and a “planting of the Lord” both of which speak of an immovable disposition of trust in, love of, and service to the Lord!

How is this possible? As we’ve seen, though “in the world we have tribulation,” nevertheless in Christ we can “be of good cheer” (John 16:33)! Again, how can this be so?

Daniel 12 contains six reasons for hope in a difficult situation. We have seen three reasons so far:

1. The Promised Protection of the Lord,
2. The Glorious Deliverance Affected by Christ’s Return,
3. The Hope of the Resurrection.

Through these truths and more, in the words of Pete, are these:

1 Peter 1:5, “...protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Don’t ever forget that!

This brings us to the fourth reason for hope because of God’s promised compensation.

### Compensation

Daniel 12:2b, “And many [the Hebrew used here is NOT the normal word for “all” כָּל (*kol*), but רַב (*rab*) which speaks not so much of a specific quantity, but vastness of numbers, “*many beyond counting*”- it is a more dramatic way of saying “all” and in fact is translated as “all” in Deuteronomy 7:1; Is. 2:2<sup>1</sup>] of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.”

If one ever wanted an Old Testament passage which speaks decisively as to the Final Judgment and the eternal state this is it! In fact, there was a time when Christ Himself, in the New Testament taught on this subject, and He did NOT speak *ex cathedra*, BUT rather referenced this verse (cf. Matthew 25:46; John 5:28-29)!

From this passage we learn that when Christ returns, there is going to be a Final Judgment in which the life of EVERY man, woman, and child that has ever lived will be publically examined with sentence being passed. No doubt this raises a host of questions to which thankfully the Bible gives answers.

First of all the Final Judgment is that time when all of mankind will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and be judged! Daniel 12 indicates that after the resurrection, a portion of the resurrected will rise:

Daniel 12:2, “to everlasting life” and a portion will rise “to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.”

In order for this to occur, a determination/judgment will have to be made. Do you see it? Why do some inherit “everlasting life” while others receive “disgrace” and “contempt”? While Daniel doesn’t answer that, the rest of Scripture does.

Matthew 25:31-32a, “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him...”

This is the Last Judgment. Someday, every man, woman, and child who has ever lived or will live will stand before God and be judged according to what they have been or done. Christ’s words to His soon-to-be persecuted disciples was this:

Matthew 10:26, “Therefore do not fear them [the persecutors], for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”

In other words all that a man does, all of it, will someday be revealed. For all will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ! Speaking of the non-believer, Peter wrote:

1 Peter 4:4-5, “And in *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign *you*; but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

So indeed, the non-believer is going to stand before Christ’s throne and give an account. But what about the believer? Will he be spared such a judgment? Paul answered this question this way:

1 Corinthians 4:4-5a, "For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts..."

All of us are going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where a determination will be rendered concerning us on account of what we have done or not done. The aim of the judgment will be to differentiate the genuine servant of Christ from the false.

Matthew 25:32-33, "And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."

On what basis will God have separated the nations? The text continues:

Matthew 25:34-36, 41, "Then the King will say to those on His right [those saved], 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [On what basis?...] FOR I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty... <sup>41</sup>Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels [again, on what basis?]; FOR I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty..."

So the Final Judgment is looming on the horizon of this world in which ALL will be judged *on account of their deeds*- that's the basis!

Now as threatening as this may seem, as believers we have the assurance that every sin that will be revealed on that day will have been forgiven- "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1)! The non-believer cannot have that confidence!

When will the Final Judgment occur?

Daniel 12:1b-2, "...and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued [by the Second Coming of Christ]. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake [the Resurrection all Mankind], these to [which indicates a Judgment] everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."

Obviously the Last Judgment will occur after Christ's Second Coming. So when Christ comes back, He will resurrect the dead; those living at the time on the earth will be caught up together with them to accompany Christ back to the earth, and then, we'll all be judged (cf.

again Matthew 25:31-32a). And yet, Scripture goes further when it comes to describing the “When?” of the Final Judgment.

2 Peter 3:11b-13, “...what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God [this is a reference to the Final Judgment. Following this Final Judgment, notice what is going to happen...], on account of which [the Last Judgment] the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

Based on this passage, it appears that the Final Judgment will occur after the General Resurrection, and yet before the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth (cf. also Revelation 21:1). And so, the timetable/picture looks something like this:

1. Sometime at a day and hour no one knows (Mark 13:32), Christ is going to return!
2. And upon His Second Coming, our Lord is going to...
  - a. Conquer Satan and the anti-Christ (Revelation 20:10).
  - b. Resurrect all that have ever lived on this earth and so reunite their souls to their bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:12-13).
  - c. Judge the peoples of the earth- everyone who has ever lived and/or is living at the time of His Second Coming (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20). At this time, the earth is destroyed and remade (2 Peter 3:10, 13).
  - d. Cast Satan and his followers into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 15).
  - e. Bring His people to the New Heavens and Earth (2 Peter 3:11b-13).

This again is why as believers our hope and anticipation in this life revolves around and is centered upon the Second Coming of Christ!

Thirdly, what will be the result of this judgment?

Daniel 12:2, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt”

Based on this verse we learn that on the Last Day, following the Last Judgment, some will be vindicated and enter into “everlasting life.” But others will not; they will enter into “disgrace and everlasting contempt.” It is toward this that everything in this life is headed! This is what is at stake at all times! This is the backdrop against which we evaluate all things in this life. Anthony Hoekema wrote this:

As we live on this earth, we are preparing for life on God’s new earth. Through our kingdom service the building materials for that new earth are now being gathered... Only eternity will reveal the full significance of what has been done for Christ here.

(Hoekema, 1994, p. 287)

With this in mind, notice the two different fates referenced here by Daniel that await mankind. The first is “everlasting life.”

This is NOT just a New Testament concept, but that in which Daniel hoped! We’ve talked about this in the past. To what does “everlasting life”/“eternal life” refer? It is NOT to ceaseless existence, for if this were the definition, then we would have to conclude that the non-Christian has everlasting life (because they also will exist forever)! So it can’t mean that! It means “*life pertaining to the age!*” What age? The Age to Come!

On the Last Day the child of God is vindicated/judged, they will enter into the New Heavens and the New Earth where there no longer is corruption, sin, and its awful effects! Upon the Final Judgment they will enjoy fully the life that God intended! Ferguson wrote this:

As elsewhere in Scripture, the description of the blessedness of those whose names are ‘written in the book’ (v. 2) is both fuller and richer. They will shine like the sun and display a splendor like the stars (v. 3). The ‘saints of the Most High’ (Daniel 7:27) will reflect the glory received by the One like the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13–14). They will be changed into His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:1–3). Nothing will then be able to undo that final transformation. It will last ‘forever and ever’ (v. 3). (Ferguson, 2002, p. 226)

Likewise the expression “disgrace and everlasting contempt” speaks of a place which we know is physical- “...where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48)! We are speaking here of hell. In that place, not only does the non-believer suffer spiritual/emotional torment, but physical torment as well! Notice the wording of Daniel.

- The word for “disgrace”/“shame” (ܝܗܪܦܐ [herpâ]) refers to the casting of scorn or taunting with insults! It speaks of how the host of condemned individuals will spend their time hating, abusing, and reviling not only God, but each other!
- The word for contempt: ܕܝܪܐܢܐ (dērā’ôn): speaks of an aversion or abhorrence.

Together, the picture is that of a wretched existence where not only one’s condition, but one’s company torment the soul forever. John Leadley Dagg put it this way:

Devils, and wicked men, all under the same condemnation, will be their eternal companions: and the companionship, instead of affording relief, will be an aggravation of their woe. The whole throng, hateful, and hating one another, will be tormentors of one another. The malignant passions, which, on earth, caused wars, assassinations, cruelty, oppression, and every species of injury, will be let loose without restraint to banish peace and brotherhood forever from the infernal society; and the passions which burn in the hearts of wicked men on earth, and destroy all internal peace, and sometimes drive to

suicide, will then be unrestrained, and do their full work of torture... (Dagg, 1859, p. 368)

There would be a little favorable news here if only this was but for a time! Yet Daniel is clear; the torments are forever, "...EVERLASTING contempt." In the words of John Bunyan speaking of the misery of hell,

If after ten thousand years, an end should come, there would be comfort. But here is thy misery: here thou must be forever. (Foster, 187, p. 450)

Why is there a day of judgment? Specifically stated: Why a day of *public* judgment? Why doesn't God just judge us in private? Why must the whole world witness it? And in the case of the believer, why have a judgment at all? We could provide three answers to this question: First, to vindicate His name.

Do you recall why Christ's crucifixion was in public for all the world to see? Why instead it wasn't a private slaying/execution in a dungeon in Jerusalem? Because it was God's intent to *demonstrate* publically His righteousness to the world. Speaking of the public crucifixion of Christ, Paul said:

Romans 3:25b-26, "*This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*"

Through the public execution of Christ, God manifested Himself for the entire world to see that He is both a righteous God and a righteous-making God! We see this focus throughout redemptive history, God acting in such a way to vindicate His name.

Ezekiel 36:23 (cf. also vv. 24-32), "And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.""

This theme is repeated throughout Scripture (cf. Isaiah 5:16; Ezekiel 20:41; 38:23; 39:7, 25; Deuteronomy 9:6)! Truly, God is wholly jealous for His name! He made us for His glory and He is unwilling to share that glory with another (Isaiah 42:8)! In light of this, what do you suppose is behind a public judgment of all of mankind? The manifestation of the righteousness of God! Speaking of the Jew who represents the religious unbeliever:

Romans 2:5, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the RIGHTEOUS judgment of God."-

One thing we learn from this is that the Last Judgment, if it does anything, will demonstrate the righteousness of God! And yet, it will also demonstrate Christ's mercy.

2 Thessalonians 1:7b-10a, "...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed..."

This is beautiful! As the world beholds the revelation of the sin of God's elect, no doubt the worldling will respond with accusation and attack (just as Satan did when gazing upon Joshua the High Priest in Zechariah 3:1)! Will we be frightened and shaken? I don't know! But this I do know: at this time the glory of God's grace will be manifested unto our forgiveness such that all the world will marvel and give praise to God, *"What a gracious and merciful Savior!"*

The Final Judgment is ordained by God that the world might know that God is righteous as well as glorious in His grace!

The Final Judgment is also to sober the child of God unto Godly living.

Romans 13:12, "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand [when everything is going to be exposed]. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."-

Knowing that the day is going to come that we will stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, the Bible calls us to spiritual vigilance.

Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

Brothers and sisters, if you take God to be a Celestial Santa Claus, then as long as you are in Christ (In other words, you've been made nice), you can do whatever you want knowing that a great Christmas lies on the horizon of your life.

In truth, glory does await us, but not before all that is hidden in your life is exposed before the throne of God's Judgment. In the words of Peter therefore, "...what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God..." (2 Peter 3:11b-12a)?

Another reason for a public day of judgment is to sober mankind. Everything hidden will be revealed. There will be no secrets!



Finally, the final judgment is to give us hope!

2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

At first glance, this verse sounds somewhat threatening, "according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Yikes! On the Day of Judgment it is possible for the believer to receive bad news? Yes, recall Paul's words:

1 Corinthians 5:11-15, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

So yes, it is possible for a child of God to receive bad news at the Last Judgment; yet whatever they receive, they most certainly will be saved and welcomed into the beloved! That's the "threatening" side. Notice the glorious side! This text indicates that as we live for the Lord, Christ will not miss a single act done in His name, "...according to what he had done, whether GOOD or bad." Think of it... "God stores our tears in a bottle" (Psalms 56:8); in other words, He never misses the slightest grief! Likewise, God also doesn't miss the smallest act of kindness to the Lord. Recall the words of Christ:

Mark 9:41, "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as *followers* of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

Even this seemingly insignificant act not only is noticed by the Lord, but it will never be forgotten! So, unless you are living in unrepentant sin, you can fully anticipate that the Last Judgment will be a time of vindication, hope, and joy! Truly, it is at that time we will receive the glorious summons:

Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master."

From this I hope you see that all things in this life have significance. Not only will they be revealed on the last day, but if done in Christ's name, they will be remembered and so honored. So as Christians "in the world we have tribulation" (John 16:33)- not a promise but a statement of fact. Yet we can ever and always be of good cheer. NOT ONLY:

- Has God committed His resources to our protection and care in this life.
- Is Christ returning to this earth to deliver His people once and for all.
- Will we rise again incorruptible to live in a world uncorrupted by sin.
- BUT every individual that has ever lived will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where every act of violence and harm perpetrated against God's people will be brought to light and judged, but also every act of kindness done by the believer will be proclaimed and celebrated!

This is what awaits us in Christ!

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joyce Baldwin put it this way, "The Hebrew word *kol*, 'all', means either 'totality' or 'sum'; there is no word for 'all' as a plural. For this *rabbîm* does duty, and so comes to mean 'the great multitude', 'all'; cf. 'Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth ...' (NIV). The emphasis is not upon many as opposed to all, but rather on the numbers involved." (TOTC, pp. 225, 226)