

**PUNISHMENT**



**FOR OUR SINS**

The cover image for this booklet derives from the words spoken by the prophet Daniel to Belshazzar, king of Babylon: "...You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27; compare, also, Job 31:6, Psalm 62:9 and Proverbs 24:12).

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# Introduction

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What happens when we die? Do we have an immortal soul that keeps living? If so, will the soul go to heaven or to hell or to purgatory? If not, then what, exactly, takes place at the end of our physical existence?

According to the Holy Scriptures, the concept of an immortal soul is erroneous, and death is simply a sleep without consciousness—without awareness of anything—until a resurrection. Yes, there is to be a resurrection from the dead. In fact, Scripture reveals there will be three resurrections, at different times, as we have covered in previous publications.

Quoting from our free booklet, *Is That in the Bible? The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation*:

“In Revelation 20, we are introduced to the concept of THREE resurrections... Paul was inspired by God to write in 1 Corinthians 15:20–26... that there is an ORDER of resurrections... When Christ returns, only those who died IN CHRIST will be resurrected. They will be resurrected to immortality. However, not all of the dead will be resurrected at that time... This resurrection to eternal life at the time of Christ’s return is described in 1 Corinthians 15:50–54... Those in the first resurrection will become immortal Spirit beings—they will be part of the resurrection of ETERNAL LIFE. They will rule with Christ ON THIS EARTH for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4, 6; 5:9–10)...

“Following the first resurrection of those who died ‘in Christ’ will be the second resurrection of those who had not accepted Christ when they died. They will come back to live as humans, and will then have their first opportunity to learn the truth and accept Christ. But their resurrection will come LATER—it will NOT occur at the time of Christ’s return. Revelation 20:5, 11–12 describes the SECOND resurrection: ‘But the REST OF THE DEAD [who were not in the FIRST resurrection] did not live again UNTIL the thousand years [the Millennium] were finished... Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it...

And I saw the dead, small and great, STANDING before God... And the dead were JUDGED...'

"This second resurrection is not one to eternal life, but to physical life. It is a resurrection to JUDGMENT... Ezekiel 37:7–11 describes the resurrection of the entire house of Israel to PHYSICAL LIFE. They will be resurrected in the SECOND resurrection. When the dead of Israel are brought back again to physical life, God will deal with them as He deals with true Christians today... It is not only the people of Israel who will be resurrected at that time. We read in Matthew 12:41–42 that the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South 'will RISE UP in the JUDGMENT' together with people who were alive at the time of Jesus Christ. Compare, too, Matthew 10:14–15 and Matthew 11:21–24, referring to other unconverted people who had died in the past...

"But there will be a FINAL resurrection following the second resurrection. We refer to it as the THIRD resurrection... Unfortunately, there are those who have rejected their opportunity to come to repentance and accept Christ. They have committed the 'unpardonable sin.' They once knew and understood perfectly well that they had to submit to Christ, but they refused to do so. They became bitter, hateful, resentful and malicious. They made the irreversible decision NEVER to repent... God will save such a person from eternal misery, by DESTROYING him in a lake of fire. Revelation 20:13–15 describes the THIRD resurrection, which will occur sometime AFTER the judgment period of the second resurrection: '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.'"

We have explained in other booklets what God's immortal saints will be like, how they will rule over human beings in the Millennium, and what they will do for all eternity.

In this booklet, we will focus primarily on the nature and living conditions during the Second Resurrection or the Great White Throne Judgment, as well as in the Third Resurrection. We will place great emphasis on the sins that were committed in this life and how God will deal with people at the time of their resurrection from the dead. We will answer the question of whether their sins will be ignored in

the Second Resurrection, or whether there will be punishment for them, and if there is to be punishment, how will it be administered?

With regard to the Third Resurrection, will the incorrigible sinners “simply” be thrown into the lake of fire to be burned up within a few seconds, or will there be punishment for their horrible deeds before they are extinguished permanently?

The answers to these questions, and more, will be thoroughly addressed in this booklet.





# Chapter 1

## Similar Conditions During the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment Period

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In our free booklet, *Biblical Prophecy—From Now Until Forever*, we state, “As a general truism, when we look at the physical conditions during the Millennium and compare them with the conditions during the Great White Throne Judgment period, we find that the conditions are very similar.”

This observation is of great significance in understanding exactly how people in the Second Resurrection will live.

### **RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS**

With regard to the restoration of all things, we make the following statements in our aforementioned booklet on biblical prophecy:

“For instance, we read the famous statement in Isaiah 11:6–9 that during the Millennium, wild beasts will be tame and that the wolf and lamb shall feed together. The same conditions are described in Isaiah 65:25, referring to the Great White Throne Judgment period (compare the context in verses 17 and 20), but a few more details are given then; i.e., that ‘dust shall be the serpent’s food.’...

“We know that Christ will come to restore all things on this earth (Acts 3:19–21), and... this includes, of course, the establishment of the government of God here on earth. The restoration must therefore also apply, by necessity, to the time period of the Great White Throne Judgment. Christ’s restoration includes the fact that mankind will be brought to repentance at that time, and that the Holy Spirit will be offered to them... Christ will rule on the throne of David in Jerusalem during the Millennium. His rule will continue during the Great White Throne Judgment period. He will continue to RULE on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32–33)...

“Notice Isaiah 25:7–9: ‘And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over ALL people, And the veil that is spread over ALL nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from ALL faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from ALL the earth; for the LORD has spoken.’ As we can see, this is the ultimate goal. This message is partially repeated in Revelation 21:4, when God the Father dwells on the new earth.

“In order to achieve that goal in fulfillment of God’s Will that all men should be saved (even though some will refuse to be saved), Christ’s rule during the Great White Throne Judgment period must allow for that process—including the removal of the spiritual veil which blinds the people to the truth... Even though God will remove the spiritual veil from people’s minds, they still need to be taught the right way, and they have to be encouraged to stay on that right path, as is explained in Isaiah 30:20–21, referring to teachers showing the way. God’s immortal saints will be those teachers, and the God Family will hasten righteousness in mercy on the earth (Isaiah 16:5; Psalm 96:13; 67:3–4).”

## **THE PROCESS OF SALVATION**

It is important to focus on this process of salvation and to understand that people will not “automatically” accept Christ. This is certainly true for those who are being called for salvation in this day and age, and this will also be true during the Millennium. We will present a few examples that show how people will be brought to Christ and God’s Way of Life in the Millennium, from which we can deduce how Christ will also deal with people during the Great White Throne Judgment period.

Quoting again from our aforementioned booklet on biblical prophecy:

“The Bible makes it very clear that after Christ’s return, He will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32) to rule the entire world. But all the nations will not automatically and immediately know and embrace the truth; they will have to be taught and their minds will have to be opened. Their conversion will be a process—the same as ours is today...

“Recall that at the beginning of the Millennium, Asiatic hordes

will try to conquer the land of Israel (compare chapters 38 and 39 of the book of Ezekiel). But notice WHY God will deal with the hordes supernaturally, mightily and swiftly: For one reason, He wants to have the survivors of Israel and Judah understand, once and for all, HOW powerful God is, and that He will always defend them, and that there is never a need for them to fight in war. In fact, God wants them to realize that it would always be wrong for them to fight in war.

“Notice Ezekiel 39:22: ‘So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward.’ Compare also verse 7, first part: ‘So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel. And I will not let them profane My holy name anymore.’ The second part of Ezekiel 39:7 tells us this: ‘Then the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.’

“... when God intervenes for Israel and when He brings the Far Eastern nations into judgment with a great earthquake, pestilence and bloodshed, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone (Ezekiel 38:19, 22), so that even the troops of the hostile armies will begin to fight each other (verse 21), then it will become clear to the nations that God is now hallowed in Israel, and that Israel’s former sins have been forgiven. But equally importantly, Israel will know and understand this too (compare Ezekiel 39:27–29)...”

## **NO MORE WARS**

In the Millennium, individuals and nations will not automatically accept the fact that they must cease from war. It will take time to bring about the transformation of their minds to understand the utter futility of war. We read in Isaiah 2:3 about conditions in the Millennium: “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD... He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’... He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Likewise, those who will be resurrected to physical life during the Great White Throne Judgment period will also have to learn that war is wrong. This learning process will require some time.

## **OBSERVANCE OF GOD'S HOLY DAYS**

In another excerpt from our booklet on biblical prophecy, we describe further developments during the Millennium:

“... not every nation is going to be willing to obey God immediately and to keep His Sabbath and His Holy Days. We read in Zechariah 14:16–19, that not every nation will immediately worship God in the right way—some will refuse for a while to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. When this happens, God will deal with them. He will withhold certain blessings—rain in due season, which is necessary for a good harvest—and so they will learn swiftly that it does not pay to disobey God...”

There is no reason to assume that it will be different in the Great White Throne Judgment period. There will be those who won't really want to follow God's Law, including observance of His weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days. Because of this, God will have to correct them in the same way He will have corrected those in the Millennium who were disobedient.

We need to realize that it will be no different from the way God works with us today. God chastens us when we disobey Him (Hebrews 12:4–11; Revelation 3:19), and He will do the same in the Millennium, as well as during the Great White Throne Judgment period.

In the next chapter, we will show exactly how God will deal with those who will be brought back to physical life in the Second Resurrection.

# Chapter 2

## Judged by the Books

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In the introduction and the first chapter of this booklet, we discussed the concept of three resurrections, and we began to discuss some of the living conditions and the learning process of those who will be raised in the Second Resurrection.

We can clearly see that there WILL BE a Second Resurrection. Revelation 20:4–5, 11–12 states that the Second Resurrection will occur 1,000 years AFTER the first resurrection. We read that those in the Second Resurrection will STAND before God and His Great White Throne. We also read: "... 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."

We will explain in this chapter what these books are, and exactly how the people will be judged by these books.

### **THE BOOK OF LIFE**

Regarding the BOOK of LIFE, we explain the following in our free booklet, *Are You Predestined to Be Saved?*:

"... we read in Revelation 3:5: 'He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I [Jesus Christ] will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.'... true Christians are written down in a particular book—the Book of Life—and... they will not be erased from it as long as they continue to overcome. We can also understand from this that their names could be blotted out from the Book of Life.

"At the end of the book of Revelation, in the 21st chapter, we are again introduced to the Book of Life. We read in verse 27: 'But there shall by no means enter it [the New Jerusalem] anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.'...

"[We also read that] 'anyone not found written in the Book of Life' will be 'cast into the lake of fire' (verse 15). This lake of fire is the 'second' or 'ultimate' final, eternal death, from which there will be no resurrection (verse 14)..."

We explain in the remainder of the aforementioned booklet that those whose names are written in the Book of Life are those who are called in this day and age (but again, if they commit the unpardonable sin, their name will be blotted out). For the rest of mankind, their names are NOT yet written in the Book of Life. However, for those living in the Millennium and for those in the Second Resurrection, their names CAN be written in the Book of Life, as it will be OPEN to them at that time. Today, it is only OPEN to those who have been predestined to be saved in this day and age. As long as their names ARE written in the Book of Life (and not blotted out by committing the unpardonable sin), their inheritance of ETERNAL life is guaranteed.

## **RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT**

John 7:37–39 shows that at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, the Holy Spirit will be offered to all. [Today, the Holy Spirit is only offered to the "firstfruits" (Revelation 14:4)—to those who are called now according to God's purpose.] We read:

"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Christ spoke these words in 30 AD. At that time, His disciples had not received the Holy Spirit, but they would subsequently receive it on the Day of Pentecost in 31 AD. Christ's statement that all those who thirst could come to Christ and receive the Holy Spirit is applicable when the Holy Spirit will be available to all, beginning with those living in the Millennium.

Revelation 22:17 makes the same point: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely!" We also read in Isaiah 55:1: "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come

to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price."

## **THE GREAT DAY OF THE FEAST IN JOHN 7:37**

For the overwhelming majority—the masses of peoples of all nations who have lived and died without accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior—their "day of salvation" will come in the Second Resurrection. (For true and converted Christians, their day of salvation is today, 2 Corinthians 6:1–2). It is therefore obvious that the reference in John 7:37 to the "last day, the great day of the feast," describes the seventh Holy Day, known in Scripture as the "eighth day" (compare Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35; Nehemiah 8:18), which became also known as the Last Great Day (compare again John 7:37: "on the LAST day, that GREAT DAY of the Feast...").

This day is also referred to as "*Shemini Atzeret* (the eighth day of assembly)" and was treated by the rabbis as "an independent festival" (Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*, 1998, p. 187). It immediately follows the seven-day Festival of the Feast of Tabernacles. While the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the Millennium, the Last Great Day pictures the Second Resurrection. (The seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not even a Holy Day or an annual Sabbath; therefore, it would make no sense to refer to it as the last GREAT day of the Feast).

Many commentators share the view that the reference in John 7:37 to the "last... great day of the feast" refers to the "eighth day"—not the seventh day.

*Unger's Bible Handbook*, 1967, states on page 553: "The last day... (Lev. 23:36) was the most solemn and climactic of the entire festival cycle. It was the eighth day of rest and holy assembly. During the seven days prefiguring their wilderness wandering, water was drawn from the pool of Siloam and then poured out, commemorating the water supplied Israel in the desert. The eighth day signified the enjoyment of the springs of the land itself and no water was poured out."

Further insight is given by William Henry Green, *The Hebrew Feasts*, copyright 1885, pp. 281 and 292:

"... at Tabernacles they remained not only through the full term of seven days, but an eighth day was added at the end, which in later times at least was reckoned 'the great day of the feast,' John 7:37..."

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1961, also say that the reference to the “last day, that great day of the feast,” in John 7:37, applies to the “eighth (Lev. 23:39). It was a sabbath, the last feast day of the year...”

The *Worldwide Church of God*, under the human leadership of the late Herbert W. Armstrong, taught that Christ spoke the above-quoted words on the eighth day—the Last Great Day—and not during the seventh day of the feast.

The Holy Spirit will be offered and the Book of Life will be opened to ALL who will rise in the Great White Throne Judgment. For these people, the Holy Spirit had never been available before (they were cut off from the Tree of Life, symbolizing the Holy Spirit), and the Book of Life had not been opened to them. But when the fulfillment of the events arrives, which are pictured by the annual holy Festival of the Last Great Day, then their time of salvation has come.

## **THE OTHER BOOKS**

What is the meaning of the other BOOKS, which will be open during the Great White Throne Judgment, and in what way will those in the Second Resurrection be judged by the things that were written in those books?

We quote again from our free booklet, *Are You Predestined to Be Saved?:*

“Let us notice the following interesting passage in Daniel 7:9–10: ‘I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.’... From the context, this passage in Daniel seems to be referring to the time of Christ’s return. At that time, a court will be in session and books will be opened.

“A similar statement, which describes events [1,000] years after Christ’s return, can be found in Revelation 20:11–12. It refers to those who will be resurrected to physical life during the Great White Throne Judgment period... What are those books?

“This passage could refer to the books of the Bible. Certainly, we will



be judged by the standards as revealed in God's Holy Word, the Bible. But, there is another possibility as to what these books might refer to...

"The German Commentary *Rienecker* [*Lexikon zur Bibel*] points out: 'We also hear about... books. According to their contents, judgment will occur at the last day... People will be judged according to their works. In God's judicial records, the books, everything is written down that a human has thought, said and done. Everything will become manifest. There is only one possibility to escape sentence and become pronounced, not guilty. Their names must be written down in the other book, the Book of Life.' Halley's Bible Handbook states: 'Every deed and motive will have been recorded... The "Books" will have the records of men's lives.'... Herbert W. Armstrong... stated during a sermon in 1984 that the books to be opened include the good and the bad works which had been written down, specifically mentioning Matthew 12:36–37 in that context.

"Taking Daniel 7 and Revelation 20 together, it appears that this process of having to give account for one's recorded deeds, whether good or bad, applies to EVERYONE. It applies to those who are called now to salvation AND to those who will be called later. It applies to converted Christians in this life, as well as to those who will be resurrected in the Second Resurrection...

"In Romans 14:10–13, we read Paul's warning to converted Christians: '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... So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.' Paul speaks in future terms. All of us SHALL stand—sometime in the future—before the judgment seat of Christ, and all of us SHALL give account of what we have done in this life. Now notice 2 Corinthians 5:10: '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.'

"... this judgment is not limited to converted Christians. Paul explains in the second chapter of the book of Romans that Gentiles will also be judged on their actions, words and thoughts, when their time of judgment has come. We read of their judgment, which mainly takes place during the time of the Great White Throne Judgment period: 'For as many as have sinned without [the knowledge of the] law will

also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law... in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ' (Romans 2:12, 16).

"EVERYONE will be judged! Hebrews 9:27 tells us that it is appointed to man once to die, and afterwards the judgment. It is true, of course, that judgment has already begun for the house of God—His Church (1 Peter 4:17). But it has not been completed yet. There is still a judgment coming for everyone after death—including the house of God (1 Corinthians 4:5).

"For converted Christians, this coming judgment after death will not deal with the question of eternal life or death. Those who die in Christ will not be judged as to whether they will inherit eternal life, as they will not see eternal death (John 5:24, 28–29). However, their judgment or accounting has to do with their reward (compare Luke 19:13, 15–19). And their reward will depend on what they did in their lives with the 'talents' bestowed upon them by God's Holy Spirit (compare Matthew 25:14–23).

"True Christians who died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life at the time of His Second Coming, but they, too, even though immortal spirit beings by then, will still have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their reward. We are told in Matthew 25:19 that 'the lord of those servants [Christ] came and settled account with them.'...

"When the multitudes of people are resurrected during the Great White Throne Judgment period to be taught God's Word and confronted with their recorded sins, most will deeply repent of what they had done. They will then obtain forgiveness, and their [repented] sins will be blotted out from the heavenly records, just as ours are today [upon our repentance] and the [repented] sins of those yet to be called before the [Millennium and the] Great White Throne Judgment period. The Book of Life will be opened to them, and after a certain period of time of living in the flesh and overcoming their carnal natures and evil habits, they, too, will be able to reach their potential—inheritance of eternal life in the Kingdom or Family of God."

As we will show in this booklet, the process of repentance will be more difficult for some than for others. We will also discuss the fact that those who committed horrible sins and crimes in this day and age will be punished in the Great White Throne Judgment for what they did.

# Chapter 3

## Giving Account for Prior Life's Sins

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As will be recalled from the last chapter, we read in Revelation 20:11–12 that those who will be raised in the Second Resurrection will be “judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

This judgment refers to their new life during the Great White Throne Judgment period. As we have explained, their minds will be opened and opportunity will be given them to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and to live God's Way of Life, and they will be evaluated as to how well they are doing. They will have to give account for the works they will be doing then. Their works, which will be recorded in God's heavenly books, will be judged based on the books of the Bible.

But there is another important aspect regarding the Judgment period. Those in the Second Resurrection will also have to give account for the works, which they did in their PRIOR life.

We understand that all who were not called in this life and who did not commit the unpardonable sin will be in the Great White Throne judgment period (which may last for 100 years). This will include “good” people, such as widows and orphans and all those who lived decent lives in the best way that they could, given the knowledge, which they had. But it will also include mass murderers, terrorists and those who committed horrendous war crimes.

### **PUNISHMENT FOR PRIOR SINS**

It is true that every sin that is truly repented of will be forgiven by God, but that does not mean that despicable criminals will get a “free pass.” We must not think that when they appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they will get “off the hook” and not have to pay for their horrendous deeds. That is not the way God thinks, and it would be manifestly unfair when considering the fate of the “good” and

“decent” people who will also stand before Christ in the Judgment.

Think of modern terrorists who cause unspeakable harm to innocent victims. Some terrorists were killed within a second by a military airstrike or they were shot by the police. Others committed suicide by blowing themselves up and killing thereby dozens of innocent people. They did this in their misguided belief that Allah will reward them for these murders in “paradise.” Some commentators and observers have rightly pointed out that their death came far too quickly. If they receive immediate forgiveness in the Judgment, without having to account for and pay for their sins and crimes, then they would indeed get a “free pass.”

## **COMING TO REPENTANCE**

It is true, of course, that first of all, true repentance must be demonstrated. Those in the Second Resurrection will not qualify automatically. Rather, they will be CALLED and their minds will be OPENED. They will begin to UNDERSTAND the teachings of the Bible, but they still will have to respond to their call, as we must do today. They will need to accept the fact that they have sinned (sin being the transgression of the LAW of God, compare 1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*), and that their human nature was EVIL. (Since this is true for those who lived “good lives”, how much more is it true for those deranged people who committed horrible and despicable sins and crimes!)

They must come to abhor themselves for their wicked deeds, and they must manifest their repentance by works worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). They must recognize that they deserve to DIE the eternal death, because of their rotten conduct, but they will also learn that the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid their penalty of eternal death, and that they can be freed from that penalty IF they repent and believe.

This process will be much more difficult for some than for others. A life will not be changed easily if it had been dedicated to crime and murder, to war and terrorism, to sexual depravity and child molestation, to pathological lies and robbery, to idolatry and Sabbath-breaking, to sorcery and witchcraft and the worship of Satan and his demons. Those who engaged in these kinds of abominable practices will slowly come to the realization that they must change, and that they can only change with the help of the Holy Spirit. But they will need to accept that help and let it work mightily in their lives.

## **FORGIVING OTHERS**

In addition, those who will be in the Second Resurrection will need to learn that they have to forgive others as well for their evil deeds (Matthew 6:12, 14–15). This will also be extremely difficult for some and can only be accomplished with God’s help.

Imagine the children who were raped by their father or who were terribly abused physically by their parents. Imagine the innocent victims who were tortured by depraved murderers in concentration camps or during the Inquisition. Imagine the unborn baby who was aborted by his or her mother. The criminal and the victim will face each other in the Great White Throne Judgment. They will talk to each other. They will try to understand how such cruel conduct could have been possible.

For some, if and when they come to true repentance, the recognition of their wicked conduct toward others will be tantamount to stripes, blows or wounds which they will receive. It will cut to or pierce their hearts (Acts 2:37). They will abhor themselves for their demonically inspired behavior. For many, that will not be easy, and it will certainly be difficult for others to forgive those who abused, raped, tortured or murdered them. Again, none of this can be achieved unless they are willing to embrace God’s undeserved grace and mercy and His powerful help.

But will repentance and change be all that God will require? Will all the prior evil deeds be forgotten and not atoned for? We read that if we repent of our sins, God will forgive them and remember them no more (Jeremiah 31:34). But as we will see, God’s forgiveness does NOT refer to the time before sins have been repented of, nor does it mean that there will be no punishment for sins and crimes (Jeremiah 18:23; Exodus 23:21; Joshua 24:19–20; Isaiah 2:9; Lamentations 3:39–42; Psalm 59:5). Just the opposite is true.

## **HORRIBLE STATISTICS**

Before discussing this most-overlooked fact in the remainder of this booklet, let us review some horrible and most disturbing statistics (which can be easily verified in numerous sources), and while we do so, ask yourself whether it would be righteousness with God if He would not “hear” the blood of the innocent victims “crying out” for just and

deserved punishment (compare Genesis 4:10–11; Revelation 6:9–10).

For instance, Pol Pot was the leader of the communist movement in Cambodia who tried to “cleanse” the country, resulting in up to 2.5 million deaths.

Leopold II of Belgium created a colony, which he called the “Congo Free State.” He enslaved the people and forced them into labor plants. He is accredited with the murder of up to 15 million people.

Adolf Hitler and his Nazi forces engaged in the systematic murder of as many as 17 million civilians, an estimated 6 million of whom were Jews.

It is estimated that Josef Stalin was responsible for the murder of 23 million people, including millions of victims in Ukraine and during the Great Purge or Great Terror in Russia.

Mao Zedong has the grievous reputation of being the greatest mass murderer of all times. He is viewed for being responsible for the killing of up to 78 million people.

In addition to these individuals, consider also the religious groups who have caused horrendous murders. Conservative estimates state that during the Islamic conquest of India, 80 million Indians were killed by Muslims. Over 110 million black people were killed by Muslims, including those Africans killed in the slave trades.

In reviewing the grim history of “Christianity,” we learn that Charlemagne beheaded up to 4,500 Saxons who were unwilling to convert; 80,000 Turks were slaughtered in the battle of Belgrade in 1456; and 18,000 Polish villages were plundered by the Knights of the Order in the 15th century.

In addition, hundreds of thousands of victims were murdered during the crusades, including the slaughter of Turks in Antioch and during the Battle of Ashkelon (in 1099); the slaughter of Jews in Germany and Poland; the murder of innocent victims during the invasion of Jerusalem (in 1099); and the murder of “heretics” such as the Albigenses (up to 70,000), Cathars (up to 1 million), Waldensians, Paulicians and others (at least 100,000 victims).

Millions were murdered during the Inquisition (15th–17th century), including the Spanish Inquisition (up to 3 million people); the Inquisition in France (20,000 Huguenots were killed in 1572); and the slaughter of 30,000 Protestants in Germany during the 17th century.

We might also mention that a total of 150 million American Indians or Native Americans were destroyed from 1500 to 1900 (most of them died of small pox and other epidemics, but about 50 million were killed by violence or slavery). In addition, almost 1 million Buddhists, Protestants and Catholics were wounded, tortured or executed in Vietnam.

The list could be greatly enlarged, and other statistics could be given about millions upon millions of abortions and child abuse cases; millions of deaths caused by drug dealers, weapon manufacturers and producers of chemical and biological weapons.

### **DESPICABLE SINNERS DYING "TOO QUICKLY"?**

The question that every thinking person must ask is this: Will all these atrocities remain unpunished? Some might have received direct punishment from God in this life and very often, sin itself leads automatically to curses, harm, destruction and physical death (Galatians 6:7–8; Numbers 32:23), but other criminals and wicked sinners prospered and remained unpunished in this world ruled by Satan and cut off from God (Jeremiah 12:1; Job 12:6; Job 21:7–15; Job 24:2–16). However, we read that "the wicked will NOT go unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21). But even direct godly punishment in this life is oftentimes quick and swift (Psalm 73:12, 18–19).

We read in Genesis 6:5 that the "wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:13 adds that "the earth [was] filled with violence." And so, God destroyed mankind (with the exception of Noah and those in the ark), by sending floodwaters on the earth (verse 17). The death of those who drowned in these waters was relatively quick. But does this mean that no further punishment is in store for them when they are raised in the Second Resurrection?

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us the opposite. Nothing escapes God's attention, and even though corrupt politicians, rulers and tyrants; depraved murderers and sexual perverts; pathological liars and violent robbers and kidnappers may not be punished by God in this life, God will not forget their evil deeds. We read that "God requires an account of what is past" (Ecclesiastes 3:15) and that God "shall judge the righteous and the wicked" (verse 17). We are told that "for

every matter there is a time and judgment" (Ecclesiastes 8:6); and that "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, Whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Exactly how God will judge those in the Second Resurrection will be discussed in the next chapters.



# Chapter 4

## No Free Pass

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In previous chapters we discussed the fact that those who will be raised in the Second Resurrection will have to give account for their deeds in their prior life, as well as for their actions throughout the Great White Throne Judgment period. We emphasized the point that forgiveness of sins (upon genuine and sincere repentance) does not automatically and necessarily mean that there won't be punishment for crimes and transgressions.

### **DAVID, BATHSHEBA AND URIAH**

A classic example is David's adultery with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. When David was brought to his senses, he bitterly repented and God forgave him his sins, but it did not mean that He left him without punishment.

This gripping story is reported in 2 Samuel 12:7, 9–14:

"Nathan said to David... "Thus says the LORD God of Israel... "Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall not depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife."

"Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will rise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun." So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' And Nathan said to David, "The LORD has PUT AWAY your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme,

the child also who is born to you shall surely die.”

Even though God forgave David’s sins, He still punished him for them. In God’s eyes, these sins were so egregious that David HAD to be punished for them so that he would never forget the gravity of his conduct and the resulting consequences. Subsequent events show that all of the curses God pronounced against David did come true.

## **DAVID NUMBERED HIS ARMY**

Another episode in David’s life shows again that even though God does forgive sins, He does not necessarily leave sins unpunished. We read in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 that Satan “moved” David to number Israel, with the express permission of God (obviously, God wanted to test David, but David failed the test). We read that God was displeased with this thing, and so He struck Israel (1 Chronicles 21:7). This, in turn, had the following result: “And David’s heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly” (2 Samuel 24:10).

God forgave David, but He still proceeded to inflict punishment on the people through a serious plague. David clearly understood that this punishment occurred because of **his sin** (2 Samuel 24:17; 1 Chronicles 21:17). In numbering the people, David showed that he wanted to see how great his army was so that he could attack his enemies or defend himself against them. He did not put his trust in God, but rather in his military. The people were guilty too in that they had the same attitude as David, and they had been acting sinfully as well. But the fact remains that David sinned, then obtained forgiveness upon his genuine repentance, but was still inflicted with punishment for his sin.

## **PUNISHMENT OF MOSES**

Another incident involving forgiveness of sin and punishment can be seen in the life of Moses. As usual, the people murmured against him and Aaron in the wilderness, complaining that they had nothing to drink (Numbers 20:2–5). God told Moses to speak to the rock and it would bring forth water (verse 8). However, Moses spoke rashly

with his lips (Psalm 106:32–33), and he struck the rock twice with his rod (Numbers 20:11). His conduct and God’s subsequent response show that he wanted to receive glory for himself. He claimed that HE would bring forth water for them. Apparently, he did not believe God that by merely speaking to the rock, it would yield water (verse 12). God called this rebellion (Numbers 27:12–14), and since the rock symbolized Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1–4), Moses was viewed by God as actually hitting Christ. As a consequence, even though God forgave him his sin, He did not allow him to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 1:35–37; 3:25–26; 34:4).

## **PUNISHMENT OF MIRIAM**

Also, we read in Numbers 12 that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because he had married an Ethiopian woman (apparently before his conversion). They brought up this incident because of envy, craving for the position which Moses had (Numbers 12:2). God was very angry with Miriam (who was apparently the main culprit) and struck her with leprosy. God forgave Miriam her sin, after Moses and Aaron had prayed for her, but He still decreed a seven-day shameful punishment for Miriam (Numbers 12:14).

All of these examples show that even when God forgives sin, which has been repented of, He might still inflict punishment, depending on the circumstances. How much more is this true for sins that have NOT been repented of!

Applying these principles to people who will be raised in the Second Resurrection, we can see that punishment for sins is, in fact, to be expected, as is clearly taught in Scripture.

## **PUNISHMENT IN THE SECOND RESURRECTION**

Christ spoke numerous times about the Great White Throne Judgment period with regard to who would be in it and how their punishment would be measured.

### ***“More Tolerable in the Day of Judgment”***

In Matthew 10 we read that He sent out His twelve apostles to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. God would work with them and confirm their word through

accompanying signs (compare Mark 16:20 and Matthew 10:8). Christ told His apostles: "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, It will be MORE TOLERABLE for the land of SODOM and Gomorrah IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT than for that city" (Matthew 10:14–15).

The *New International Version* says that it will be "more bearable," and the *Living Bible* states that "they will be better off."

In Matthew 11:20–24, Christ draws a similar comparison, stating:

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in TYRE and SIDON, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes! But I say to you, it will be MORE TOLERABLE for Tyre and Sidon in the DAY OF JUDGMENT than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven will be brought down to Hades [or: Will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades]; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in SODOM, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be MORE TOLERABLE for the land of Sodom IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT than for you.'"

In a similar account in Luke 10, further light is shed on the meaning of Christ's statements. Here, He sent out seventy disciples, two by two, to the cities where He was about to go, giving them the following commission: "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (verse 9). He continued:

"But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' But I say to you that it will be MORE TOLERABLE in THAT DAY for SODOM than for that city. Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in TYRE and SIDON, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be MORE TOLERABLE for Tyre and Sidon AT THE JUDGMENT than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades [or, see the alternative rendering, as mentioned above]. He

who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:10–16).

The *Living Bible* renders the words “it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon” as, “Tyre and Sidon will receive *less punishment* on the Judgment Day than you.”

In the above-quoted passages, Christ speaks about the Second Resurrection or the Great White Throne Judgment period, calling it “the Day of Judgment,” “the Judgment” or simply, “that day.” For some, it will be “more tolerable” than for others—they will receive “less punishment” than others.

Let us review a few more passages that compare the conduct of the people at the time of Christ with actions by others who had lived in previous times.

### **“Confrontations” at the Great White Throne Judgment**

In Matthew 12:41–42, Christ says these revealing words:

“The men of NINIVEH will RISE UP in the JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The QUEEN OF THE SOUTH [the Queen of Sheba] will RISE UP in the JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.”

When we read the parallel passage in Luke 11:31–32, we note that the order of the two examples is reversed, showing that one is not more important than the other, but that both are to emphasize the same truth. The word for “condemn” is used in James 5:9, where it is rendered in many translations as “judge,” which is the same meaning that is conveyed in Christ’s statements about the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South.

In the “Judgment,” the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will not “condemn” the generation of Christ, nor will they even occupy the role of human “judges,” but it will be established by their prior conduct that they had acted in a better way than the people living at the time of Christ. The men of Nineveh might say to them: “How come you did not respond to the preaching of Christ while we responded to the message of Jonah, who was inferior by comparison?”

And the Queen of Sheba might say: “How come you did not listen to the wisdom of Christ while I came from afar to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, who was inferior by comparison?”

We also note that all will “RISE UP” together in the “Judgment”—showing that they will be RAISED in the Second RESURRECTION—the Great White Throne JUDGMENT period.

### ***More Severe Punishment***

In Mark 12:38–40, Christ shows us another important piece of the entire puzzle when He says:

“Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the market places, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for pretense make long prayers. They will receive GREATER CONDEMNATION!”

The *New International Version* gives the meaning more accurately: “Those men will be punished *more severely*.” The *Living Bible* says: “Their punishment will be *the greater*.”

In future chapters, we will address more specifically the kind of severe “punishment” which some will receive for refusing to repent and for rejecting Christ and His messengers, while for others, the Day of Judgment will be “more tolerable.”

# Chapter 5

## Stripes at the Day of Judgment

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In previous chapters we showed that in the Great White Throne Judgment it will be “more tolerable” for some than for others. We explained that the implication is that some will be “punished” more severely than others—that their punishment will be greater than the punishment of others. We also showed that even in case of forgiveness of sins, there might still be a certain penalty that the sinner has to pay, and that this is even truer for those who did not repent of their sins.

### **DIFFERENT DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT**

Christ gives a remarkable parable in the book of Luke, explaining that punishment will differ, depending on the circumstances and individuals involved. He said in Luke 12:42–44:

“And the Lord said, ‘Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.’”

In these verses it is obvious that Christ addresses true and “blessed” Christians—those who remain faithful. They will be “blessed and holy” and rule with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4, 6), and, ultimately, they will rule and reign forever and ever over all things (Revelation 21:7; 22:5; Hebrews 2:5–8).

### **DESTRUCTION IN THE THIRD RESURRECTION**

Christ continues in Luke 12:45–46 to address Christians who did not remain faithful, but fell away from God and lost the Holy Spirit. They will end up in the Third Resurrection to be destroyed:

“But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat

and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”

Those who commit the unpardonable sin will be burned up with the “unbelievers” in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15; 21:8). In the above parable, Christ equates this with “cutting them in two.” The *Authorized Version* says that “he will cut him in sunder.” The *New International Version* says that he will “cut him to pieces.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* says: “The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the unfaithful.”

Christ uses this terminology to show that their fate will be one of utter destruction. In the parallel account in Matthew 24:51, we read that the master of that servant “will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This last sentence is used many times in reference to the Third Resurrection of unprofitable servants (compare Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Their fate will be “outer darkness”; that is, they will never again see the Light of God. Before they are burned up, they will weep and gnash their teeth in hate and utter defiance of God and His Way of Life.

## **PUNISHMENT IN THE SECOND RESURRECTION**

In Luke 12:47–48, Christ proceeds to talk about those who will be in the Second Resurrection of the Great White Throne Judgment period. He now addresses a new category of servants and no longer speaks of the servant in verses 45 and 46:

“And that servant who KNEW his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did NOT KNOW, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

### **“Stripes”**

We don’t read that any of these servants in verses 47 and 48 will be cut in pieces and end up in the lake of fire. Rather, they are those



who are raised in the Judgment, and they will be punished with “stripes.” But their punishment is not the same. For some, it will be more tolerable than for others. Some will receive many stripes, while others will receive few stripes. On some, a more severe punishment will be inflicted than on others. It has much to do with what a person understood. Paul says in Romans 2:14–15 that “Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.”

Many people—although not converted Christians in this life—do understand that it is wrong to murder or to commit adultery or to steal or to lie. If they live by these standards, they will receive a much more merciful sentence than those who also knew this but did not care to live by it. There will be an accounting in any case “in the day when God will judge the secrets of man by Jesus Christ” (verse 16), but the more serious sins will weigh much heavier. One does not need to be a converted Christian to know that killing millions of innocent people is wrong and unjustifiable. Hard-core criminals, terrorists, mass murderers, torturers and sexual perverts might have seared their conscience willingly (1 Timothy 4:2), “being past feeling” (Ephesians 4:19), and so they will have to receive many stripes to bring them to true repentance.

### **“Plagues”**

The Greek word for “stripe” is “*plégé*.” Many times, it is used to describe beatings (Acts 16:23, 33; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:23). In other places, it refers to a wound or a stroke (Revelation 13:3, 12, 14). But the word can also mean “plague.” Revelation 22:18–19 uses this word in this context, stating:

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the PLAGUES that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” When we read about the plagues which God will pour out on rebellious mankind (note especially Revelation 11:6;

15:1; 16:3, 4, 10, 18), we might get a clearer picture as to what kind of “stripes” Christ might be referring to.

For instance, we read that the two witnesses will have power to shut heaven so that no rain will fall in the days of their prophecy, and that they will have power to strike the earth with all kinds of plagues (see again Revelation 11:6). This connection between lack of rain and plagues reminds us of the prophecy in Zechariah 14 where God says He will withhold rain from those in the Millennium who refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Zechariah 14:18–19 describes it this way:

“And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there shall be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the PLAGUE with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the PUNISHMENT of Egypt and the PUNISHMENT of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (verses 17–19).

As we have already explained in this booklet, the conditions in the Millennium will be very similar to the conditions during the Great White Throne Judgment, and God will use the same kinds of “stripes” or “plagues” or individual punishment during both time periods. They describe punishment for wrong conduct throughout the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, but they also relate to punishment for their prior conduct in this day and age. Christ’s parable in Luke 12 does not relate merely to conduct AFTER His return; the emphasis is on conduct PRIOR to His Second Coming.

### ***“Stripes” as a Method of Punishment***

Let us note how the Bible uses the concept of stripes in other passages, showing that they describe just and righteous punishment, including for the purpose of betterment of character.

In Exodus 21:25 we read that the one who inflicts a stripe on another must receive a stripe himself... that is, he is to pay for the value of the stripe with which he beat another person.

Psalm 89:32 tells us that God will “PUNISH their transgression with a rod, And their iniquity with STRIPES,” while not forgetting His lovingkindness and His faithfulness (verse 33).

Proverbs 19:29 says that “JUDGMENTS are prepared for scoffers, And BEATINGS for the backs of fools.” The *Authorized Version* says: “... STRIPES for the back of fools.”

Proverbs 20:30 adds: “BLOWS that hurt CLEANSE AWAY evil, As do STRIPES the inner depths of the heart.” The *New International Version* says: “Blows and wounds clean away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being.” The interpretation of the *Living Bible* is quite interesting: “Punishment that hurts chases evil from the heart.”

In addition, when the people appearing before Christ’s throne hear that their sins have brought upon them the ETERNAL death penalty (since the wages of sin is eternal death), but that true and genuine repentance, and believing in and accepting the Sacrifice of Christ, will free them from that fate, it will be much more difficult for some than for others to truly repent and realize how evil their human nature has been, and that the death of Christ was necessary to atone for their sins.

### ***Painful Realizations***

The stripes spoken of might include the realization of how serious their sinful conduct has been, and this awareness will likely hit them “like a ton of bricks.” Some will have a very difficult time dealing with that reality. That would also be true for those who think that they led pretty good lives and that there was really no need for Christ to die for them. But we are told that everyone sins, and that there is no one who did not and does not sin (1 John 1:8, 10). Ecclesiastes 7:16 says: “Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself?” Verse 20 continues: “And there is not a single man in all the earth who is always good and never sins” (*Living Bible*).

### ***The Unrealized Sin of Self-Righteousness***

Self-righteousness is one of the most difficult sins to recognize and acknowledge. Think of Job, who had to go through many trials, until he recognized his true nature. God HAD to allow this because that was the only way for Job to see and repent of his self-righteousness. Although he was not a wicked person by any means (rather, his conduct was extremely righteous), he still had to receive “many stripes” so that he could ultimately be in God’s Family (James 5:11).

We read Christ’s stern warning to the self-righteous chief priests

and the elders in Matthew 21:31–32:

“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God BEFORE you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.”

The *Revised English Bible*, the *New Revised Standard Version*, and the *New International Version* translate that the tax collectors and harlots will enter the Kingdom of God “ahead of” the chief priests and elders.

Christ is addressing the fact that some will be able to repent earlier and quicker than others. It will be easier for them to repent, realizing the enormity of their sinful conduct, than for the chief priests and elders who were proud of their positions and did not even acknowledge their terrible sin of self-righteousness. Christ might have referred to some “tax collectors and harlots” in this life who recognize their sins and repent and will be inheriting God’s Kingdom at the time of His return, while others will have to wait until they are given their opportunity for salvation in the Millennium or the Great White Throne Judgment. Christ spoke to the Pharisees in this way: “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains” (John 9:41). They claimed to be able to see, but refused to repent. Without repentance there is no forgiveness, which means that their sin remained. (This is not to say that they committed the unpardonable sin, but it does mean that they did not respond to Christ’s offer of repentance, and so their refusal will lead to many stripes in the future.)

Some of the “tax collectors and harlots” will have repented and will enter the Kingdom of God when Christ returns. But of course, this is not true for all harlots and tax collectors at the time of Christ, nor throughout the ages. Neither is it true that all harlots and tax collectors will enter the Kingdom before all chief priests and elders, because in the early Church, “a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

The point remains that the sin of self-righteousness is very difficult to detect and overcome. For those who recognize their sins and are truly sorry, the Kingdom of God won’t be that far away (Mark 12:34). Others might only recognize later that the Kingdom had come near

them (Luke 10:9), but they had been unwilling to respond simply because they wanted to hang on to their wrong standards, ideas and habits. As a consequence, they might have to receive many stripes—in this life as well as the life to come—so that they can finally recognize, confess and forsake their sinful ways (Proverbs 28:13).

In future chapters, we will review additional questions as to whether and how the concept of “stripes” could refer to converted Christians who will become immortal God Beings in the First Resurrection; and we will examine in this context the importance of true and genuine repentance. We will also focus in more detail on “stripes” that people might receive in this life, prior to the time of Christ’s return.



# Chapter 6

## Why Stripes?

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In this chapter, we will mainly address the question as to why there would be “stripes” or punishment for unrepented sins, and sometimes even for sins that were subsequently repented of. This question applies to people in this day and age, as well as those who will be raised during the Second Resurrection or the Great White Throne Judgment.

### **AUTOMATIC CONSEQUENCES OF SIN**

We must realize that sin may have automatic consequences. For instance, if we drive under the influence of alcohol and are responsible for a serious car accident, which may result in bodily injury of ourselves and others, or even the death of an innocent person, then these consequences will remain for the rest of our lives, even though God will forgive our sinful conduct upon true and genuine repentance. But the death or the loss of a limb will not be automatically “annulled,” as if it had never happened.

This is also true when our long-time smoking habit results in cancer. God forgives the sin of smoking upon repentance, but there is no guarantee that He will also heal us from cancer, which was caused by ourselves. God might heal us of this deadly disease, but then, He might decide, based on individual circumstances, that it would be better NOT to heal us from cancer in this life.

Another example would be the murder of innocent human beings. Before conversion, many might have participated in war, and they might have even killed innocent civilians in the “enemy country.” Upon repentance and conversion, God forgives such sins of murder, but this does not bring the killed “enemies” or civilians back to life in this day and age. A mother might have aborted her child and might later bitterly repent of that sin. But God’s forgiveness does not make the child alive again in this life. However, all of these innocent victims

will become alive again in the Second Resurrection.

Consider that even though God forgave David his sins, He later brought up again “the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5), as this was not sinful conduct that was committed because of ignorance or temporary temptation. Rather, these sins belonged to a slightly different category. It was not the unpardonable sin, to be sure, since David will be in the Kingdom of God (compare Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5; see also Luke 13:28, referring to “all the prophets,” and David was a prophet, Acts 2:29–31). However, they were not sins that were committed “in ignorance” or because of a temporary, passing weakness that had “snuck up” on David. Rather, this was planned, premeditated, carefully designed and thought-out sinful conduct. David thought through very diligently how to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba, ultimately resorting to the murder of Uriah. God brought up the “matter of Uriah” because He was terribly grieved that David would have acted in such a way, and He wanted to impress on the reader the awful consequences of these sins for David, as well as his entire household.

## **REASONS FOR PUNISHMENT CLEARLY EXPLAINED**

As we have shown in previous chapters, David was punished very severely for his sins, even though he had repented and obtained God’s forgiveness. But David was supposed to uphold the law of God and be a good example for others. In this instance, he failed miserably. God said that He “has put away” David’s sin (2 Samuel 12:13). But then, He gave a reason for David’s punishment, as follows: “... because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme...” (2 Samuel 12:14).

Note that God had clearly spelled out why and in what way He would punish David. In other examples given in previous chapters, we saw that God punished Moses and Miriam for their sins, but again, He spelled out very clearly what the punishment would be, and why it was given. We must not make the mistake of thinking that if things go wrong in our lives, God may be punishing us for sins which we might have committed earlier, but which we deeply repented of. IF punishment for previous sins is involved, God will make this very clear to us.

Of course, we must ask ourselves the question whether we did indeed deeply repent of our sins, and whether our conscience was



completely purified, or whether we are still carrying with us feelings of guilt for sins which we committed earlier, and which we did NOT truly repent of. “Stripes” or punishment may have to be inflicted on us so that we can ultimately acquire a clean conscience (Hebrews 10:19–22; 13:18; 1 Timothy 1:5). It is also important to note that David, Moses, Miriam and others committed sins (for which they were punished), after they were converted and had received the Holy Spirit. Conversion does not make it impossible to sin (Romans 7:14–25; 1 John 2:8)... including very serious and grievous sins, such as the sins of David in the matter of Uriah. It is important that those sins are deeply repented of before we die!

To reiterate, repentance does not necessarily prevent punishment in this life. One reason for punishment in some cases might very well be that God must show us the enormity of our sin, and totally “ignoring” sins without consequence may only lead to “temporary” repentance or regret, and not to ongoing, continuing and permanent repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9–10). Christ said that Paul had to learn how much He would have to suffer for Christ’s sake, AFTER his conversion, because he had persecuted the saints BEFORE his conversion (Acts 9:10–16). He received mercy because he acted “ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:12–13), but that did not negate suffering.

## **PUNISHMENT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR REPENTANCE**

We must also realize that when God punishes us for our sins, He does so to bring us to repentance. We read the following end-time prophecy in Joel 2:11–13: “The LORD gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; Who can endure it? ‘Now, therefore,’ says the LORD, ‘Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.’ So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God...”

God does not delight in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked repents and lives (Ezekiel 18:30–32). Sometimes “many stripes” in this life, or in the Second Resurrection, are necessary to bring a sinner to repentance. As was mentioned before, repentance is a process. God LEADS us to repentance (Romans 2:4). And so, punishment for sin may be a necessity. Psalm 146:9 speaks about “punishment of the wicked”—

including in this life—so that he might come to repentance: “The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down (Lit.: “makes crooked”).”

John the Baptist told the hypocritical multitudes of his time: “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance... every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Luke 3:7–9). John addresses the need for true repentance to escape God’s wrath, including on the Day of the LORD, the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period, and he warns that refusal of repentance will lead to destruction in the Gehenna Fire during the Third Resurrection.

Focusing on the Millennium and the Second Resurrection, we read in Psalm 149:5–9: “Let the saints be joyful in glory... Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations, And punishments on the peoples; To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute on them the written judgment—This honor have all His saints.” This promise is confirmed by Christ in Revelation 2:26–27: “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I have also received from My Father.” The ultimate goal is that “... Every knee shall bow to Me [God], and every tongue shall confess to God” (Romans 14:11).

## **SINS, EVEN THOUGH FORGIVEN, STILL RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE**

Please realize that God saw to it that certain sins of David were recorded in Scripture, for everyone to read. In addition to David’s sinful conduct in the matter of Uriah, some of his other sins were recorded as well, such as his fighting in war and numbering his army. Furthermore, sins of other righteous men and women were recorded: Moses’s sin of murder and his later outburst before Israel, which prevented him from entering the Promised Land; Aaron and Miriam’s murmuring against Moses; Abraham and Isaac’s lies; Abraham’s adultery because of his lack of faith; Jacob’s deceit toward his father, Isaac; Rachel’s theft of her father’s idol; Peter’s sin of lying and denying Christ three

times, and his hypocrisy toward Gentile Christians; Paul's persecution of Christians when he was still known as Saul; and the list could go on and on. We also believe that Solomon came to repentance at the end of his life, but his prior terrible sins were included in the Bible.

The sins of those mentioned above were forgiven (all of those men and women will be in the Kingdom of God as God beings), but their prior sins were not erased from the written Word of God—the Bible—and we are told that they were **recorded as an example for our benefit today** (1 Corinthians 10:11), and that ALL Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

In addition, we do not believe that Adam and Eve or Judas Iscariot have committed the unpardonable sin, since they never had God's Holy Spirit, which means, that they will be given their opportunity to accept God's Way of Life in the Second Resurrection. Still, everyone knows and will know about [some of] the sins they committed, as they are recorded in God's Word. Jesus even said about Judas that it would have been better if he had not been born. We do not believe that these statements will ever be removed from the Bible. Adam, Eve and Judas will come back to life and will be offered true repentance, which they will hopefully accept. But again, their sins are recorded in the Bible, and the books of the Bible will be opened to the understanding of all who will be in the Great White Throne Judgment period (Revelation 20:12).

When we sin and do not repent, then our sins will stand against us. God will not forgive and forget them. The same is true for our friends and relatives. If they sin in this life, without repenting, God (and we as God beings in the Kingdom) will not forgive and forget those sins prior to their repentance, but we will offer them repentance in the Great White Throne Judgment period so that their sins can be forgiven.

## **REMEMBERING NO MORE?**

But what about sins which have been repented of? Don't we read that God forgives our sins when we repent, and that "their sins and lawless deeds [He] will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34; Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12)? How can this be true for sins, which are even recorded in the Bible?

The answer is that God casts all repented sins behind His back and into the depths of the sea, so that when they are sought for, they shall not be found IN THE SENSE that God will never charge us with them. He does not retain them in His mind in the sense that He will not revisit what has passed. This should show us that we must strive to do the same. When we forgive, we must also learn to avoid revisiting what has passed. This is something which those who come up in the Second Resurrection will have to learn as well when they are confronted by, or confronting, their fellow man against whom they have sinned, or who might have sinned against them.

## **MEETING THE VICTIMS**

For instance, let's take the example of killing in war. Those in the Second Resurrection will become aware of the fact that they committed murder. They will be led to repentance of their sin, and God will forgive them. But they will also meet those whom they murdered. The victims will need to come to the realization that they must forgive their murderers, as they themselves will also be in need of forgiveness of sins, which they might have committed.

An unconverted or converted person might sin, as we saw, resulting in the death of another person (in war, through other killings, abortion, etc.). Since the victim died, there was really no opportunity to achieve reconciliation with the victim before his or her death. Of course, God will forgive these sins upon genuine repentance, and the converted person [or the person coming to conversion in this day and age] will be in the First Resurrection if he or she subsequently dies in Christ.

Still, the person whom he or she killed will be raised in the Second Resurrection, and the converted person—now a God being—will face his or her victim before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now picture this: The God being [who might even be involved in judging the person whom he had killed in this day and age] will still need to explain that he or she had repented of the sin of murder and that God forgave the sin, and that the murdered person must learn to forgive as well. Punishment, which the God being received for the sin in his or her physical life, as a human being, might very well help the victim to accept the fact that he or she must extend forgiveness as well.

In this light, the warning of Paul takes on important additional

meaning for us, when he said: “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). He added in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “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 had done, whether good or bad.”

Paul refers to the reward, which we will receive, as we explain in our free booklet, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*. But we can also see now that more is involved, and that Paul might include here our appearance as God beings (!) before the Great White Throne Judgment Seat of Christ in the Second Resurrection.

## **TRUE RECONCILIATION**

It is obvious that true reconciliation will have to be achieved in the Second Resurrection even between an immortal saint and his or her prior victim, because it is the potential of the victim to enter the Family of God as well. These conversations might even include “stripes” for the immortal saint perhaps in the form of uncomfortable feelings of embarrassment—as unbelievable as this might sound at first—in that the saint will need one more time to focus on his or her prior wrong conduct and explain this to his or her victim, adding that because of the Supreme Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his or her sins were forgiven upon repentance, and that the victim can obtain forgiveness as well for his or her sins, and that he or she needs to forgive in return (Matthew 6:14–15). THAT is how total reconciliation will be achieved! If Uriah will be in the Second Resurrection and not in the First, David will need to talk to him at that time about his adultery and murder, bringing about total reconciliation with him. One can only imagine the conversation which will take place then.

Of course, similar conversations will take place even in the *First Resurrection*. Imagine the scenario when Paul meets the Christians whom he persecuted and whom he had killed before his conversion. All of them, including Paul and his converted victims, will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ as immortal saints. They will talk to each other. Picture Stephen’s first meeting with Paul in the First Resurrection. Remember that Paul, as Saul, had delighted in Stephen’s death. Certainly, Stephen had asked God to forgive his murderers, including Saul, but when they meet each other in the First Resurrection, standing

before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they will undoubtedly talk to each other about their prior lives.

Knowing all of this, it is important, as we have opportunity, to strive in this life for peace, forgiveness and reconciliation with everyone whom we might have wronged. Christ said that we have to give account for every idle word which we have spoken against someone else (Matthew 12:36–37)... how much more for every wicked and evil deed. Both forgiveness for our sins AND reconciliation with our fellow man must be achieved... either in this life (Matthew 5:21–24) or in the life to come.

# Chapter 7

## Punishment in the Third Resurrection

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In previous chapters, we discussed the concept of godly punishment in this day and age, in the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, for the purpose of betterment, as well as for the purpose of leading a person to repentance and conversion, while helping the person so that he or she does not fall away.

But there is another aspect of godly punishment, which we have also alluded to in previous chapters. This aspect is very important and finds its full application in the Third Resurrection.

Sadly, there are those who have had their opportunity for repentance, but instead have committed the “unpardonable sin.” They knew and understood perfectly well that they had to submit to Christ, but they REFUSED to do so. They became bitter, hateful, resentful and malicious. They made the unchangeable decision NEVER to repent! If a person has reached the stage where he CANNOT repent, because he has made the final decision to NOT WANT to repent, then God will not force repentance on such a person. God grants repentance, but a person must WANT to receive it! A person who maliciously rejects Christ would only continue to live in misery and pain, which is why God will save such a person from eternal misery, by DESTROYING him or her in the lake of fire.

The Third Resurrection describes those sinners who have made the final and irrevocable decision to rebel against God. They have refused to ever obey God, and they have developed a hostile attitude toward Him, filled with hatred and contempt, which prevents them from ever repenting of their terrible sinful conduct and nature. They will be raised to physical life to be burned up and destroyed in the lake of fire.

The Bible does not teach the concept of an ever-burning hell fire in which “immortal souls” of the wicked will be tortured forever and ever. The Bible does not teach the concept of a purgatory either, in

which “immortal souls” will be tortured for a while to obtain purification so that they can ultimately leave purgatory and ascend to heaven.

On the other hand, the Bible does not negate the fact that the incorrigible sinner has to pay for his evil conduct. He or she will be punished in the Third Resurrection, before being destroyed and annihilated in the Gehenna fire. Otherwise, sins would go unpunished, which is not in accordance with God’s righteous judgments.

## **WHY A THIRD RESURRECTION?**

Some have wondered why there should be a Third Resurrection if their fate was already sealed at the time of their death. Why wouldn’t God just throw those incorrigible sinners into the lake of fire who are still alive at the end of the Great White Throne Judgment period, and why wouldn’t He leave the others of times past in their graves—rather than resurrecting them again to physical life to destroy them forever?

We address the concept of a Third Resurrection in chapter 12 of our free booklet, *Biblical Prophecy—From Now until Forever*.

We explain in detail that every human being has a spirit that goes to God in heaven when man dies. This spirit is not the person, nor is it immortal or eternal, nor does it have a conscious existence when the person dies. Man’s spirit does not continue to live consciously apart from the body. Rather, God “stores” it, so to speak, in heaven, until He unites it at the time of the resurrection of man with a new spiritual or physical body.

## **THE SPIRIT IN MAN**

The spirit in man records all of the human characteristics of the person, as well as his or her outward appearance. At the time of the resurrection, the spirit of the dead person is combined with a newly created body of the dead person. This means, all of the experiences, memories and ideas of the former life are back in the resurrected individual, and the resurrected person will also look the same way he or she did in their former life. There must be a final Third Resurrection to everlasting condemnation when the spirit in man is placed back in the (newly created) physical body of the person here on earth; otherwise, the spirit in man would remain in heaven and with it, the recording of the personalities, thoughts and memories.



But somehow, everything that was recorded by the spirit in man must be erased. Then it will be as if the incorrigible sinners had never existed (Obadiah 16).

In order to destroy the entire human being, the spirit in man must be destroyed as well. This will be accomplished in the Third Resurrection when the human spirit, combined with the (newly created) physical body, will be thrown into the lake of fire. Realize that the human spirit of the incorrigible sinners will still be in heaven at the time just prior to the Third Resurrection. Therefore, THERE MUST BE a Third Resurrection; otherwise, their spirit would remain in heaven, while those incorrigible sinners would stay buried in their graves.

However, Christ said in John 5:28–29 that ALL who are in their graves will come forward when they hear the voice of the Son of Man, and we read in Daniel 12:2 that some who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. We also read in 1 Corinthians 15:22 that all who died in Adam will be made alive in (or by) Jesus Christ.

## **GOD IS A GOD OF JUSTICE**

But there is another all-important reason why there MUST BE a Third Resurrection.

We explain in our aforementioned booklet on biblical prophecy that “God is a God of JUSTICE. In raising those who have committed the unpardonable sin to physical life, their attitude will become manifest to all alive at that time. When they witness their conduct, they will never be able to question God’s compassionate and uncompromising justice; as well as His merciful wisdom to free those hateful human beings from their emotional misery and pain.”

God’s justice requires punishment for sin, and the Bible confirms that those who are raised to physical life will be punished before being destroyed in the lake of fire. This punishment is psychological as well as physical. Even though many do not seem to grasp this, it should be obvious that the very act of being burned up in a lake of fire involves physical pain. But it also involves psychological pain when the sinner is faced with his or her immediate fate, after their judgment and condemnation have been pronounced.

## ***Psychological Punishment***

The psychological punishment of the unrepentant incorrigible sinner is vividly portrayed by Jesus Christ in His parable about Lazarus and the rich man, in Luke 16:19–31. While Lazarus is resurrected in the First Resurrection, the rich man faces his fate in the Third Resurrection. We discuss this parable at great length on pages 29–32 of our free booklet, *Do We Have an Immortal Soul?*

To briefly summarize the relevant points in the context of this chapter, “Luke 16:22... tells us that the rich man died and was buried... Luke 16:23 explains that the rich man lifted up his eyes in ‘hell,’ ‘being in torments,’ and seeing Abraham ‘afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.’ Verse 24 goes on to tell us that the rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus ‘that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool’ the tongue of the rich man, as he is ‘tormented in this flame.’... The word ‘hell’ is a translation of the Greek word ‘hades.’ ‘Hades’ ... describes the grave or death.

“What Christ is saying here is that the rich man lifted up his eyes, while in the grave—in other words, he is being resurrected from the dead. And when he opens his eyes from his ‘sleep’ of death, he sees Abraham and Lazarus ‘afar off,’ and he notices that flames are awaiting him. He is actually seeing the flames of the ‘lake of fire,’ referred to in Revelation 20:14. He is close enough to experience some physical pain from the flames—but his real anguish and torment is one of a psychological nature. That is, he knows that he had committed the unpardonable sin and that he will now have to face the eternal consequences—a death from which there will be no resurrection.

“What is being described here is the [T]hird [R]esurrection. We read in Revelation 20:13–14 that ‘death and hell [‘hades’ in the Greek] delivered up the dead’ (which would include the rich man), and that ‘death and hell [‘hades’ in the Greek] were cast into the lake of fire.’ The rich man was resurrected to physical life to be cast into the lake of fire. And those who are to be cast into the lake of fire will suffer psychological torment when they face that moment. They will face ‘everlasting punishment’ [compare Matthew 25:46]—that is, a punishment with everlasting consequences for all eternity—their existence will end forever... Their psychological torment is described in Matthew 13:42: They will be ‘cast...into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.’

“Luke 13:28 adds, ‘There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye... shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets... in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.’...

“In Luke 16:27–28, the rich man asks that Lazarus be sent to his brothers to warn them about what would await them if they ended up like he [Verse 28: “... lest they also come to this place of torment”]. Abraham denies that request (v. 29) because by that time it is too late. The [T]hird [R]esurrection occurs after everyone, including the rich man’s brothers, have had their chance.”

### **Torment**

The repeated reference in Luke 16 to “torment” in the context of godly punishment can also be found in additional passages.

In Revelation 14:9–11, we read:

“Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast [an end-time political leader, as well as the political system that he represents] and his image [made by an end-time religious system, as well as by a religious leader representing that system] and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand [permitting or preventing him to buy and sell, Revelation 13:16–17], he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb [Jesus Christ]. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

We discuss this passage in detail in chapter 18 of our free booklet, *Is That in the Bible? The Mysteries of the Book of Revelation*.

We explain therein that the term “forever” can mean “age-lasting,” and that the passage in Revelation 14:11 refers to the return of Jesus Christ at a time when people worship the beast and receive its mark.

We stated in particular:

“All of this will occur BEFORE the Millennium. The smoke of their torment will ascend for a while—as long as the necessary conditions exist to allow smoke from burned bodies to ascend. The unrepentant wicked will ultimately be burned up. That will happen AFTER the

Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. However, the passage in Revelation 14:11 does not address that time period. It merely serves as a forerunner and a warning.

“Most people who will worship the false political and religious system of Babylon, as well as its human representatives, won’t fully comprehend what they will be doing—they will not commit the unpardonable sin leading to the second death, from which there will be no resurrection (Revelation 20:14–15; 21:8). Rather, God will bring them back to life in a Second Resurrection when the gravity of their wrong conduct will be revealed to them, and they will then be given an opportunity to repent and accept God’s Way of Life.”

### ***Torment Includes Physical Pain***

Nevertheless, we need to emphasize that even for those who will be punished by Christ when He returns, reference to “torment” is made. The same terminology is used in Revelation 9:5, where a war is described between the beast power and the kings of the east. We read that “they (soldiers of the beast power with military weaponry) were not given authority to kill them (those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads, verse 4), but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.”

So we see that torment does include *physical pain* as well as *psychological pain*. We read in 1 John 4:18 that there is “no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment.”

Torment is caused by the anticipation of punishment for sin (while the sinner is unwilling to repent of his or her sins).

### ***Torment of Demons***

James 2:19 explains that demons believe in God, but they tremble. Satan and his demons are spirit beings. They cannot die.

(Please note, in passing, that Spirit BEINGS cannot die, including God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, saints made immortal, holy angels and fallen angels. This is not true for something which is spiritual, but which is not a Spirit BEING. Nowhere does the Bible say that God cannot will out of existence spiritual *things*, such as heavenly books or scrolls, a heavenly temple, a heavenly altar or heavenly trumpets. The same is true for the “spirit in man,” which is not a spirit *being*.)

Demons cannot experience physical pain either. But they tremble when they think of the psychological torment they will have to endure when God proceeds to punish them. Knowing his ultimate fate, Satan has great wrath, because he knows that his time is short (Revelation 12:12).

We read in Matthew 8:29 that demons asked Christ whether He had come “to torment [them] before the time.” In Mark 5:7 a demon pleaded with Christ not to torment him.

But punishment and torment for Satan and his demons WILL come! Revelation 20:10 reveals that the “devil, who deceived [the people], was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... And they [Satan and his demons] will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” This passage is fully explained in chapter 23 of our aforementioned booklet on the Book of Revelation. In the context of this chapter, we would like to emphasize here the fact that Satan and his demons will be “tormented” in the future. We state:

“We read in Matthew 25:41 that the lake of fire was ‘prepared for the devil *and his angels*.’ Therefore, it will be the devil and his demons who will be tormented in the lake of fire, for as long as that lake exists. Since spirit beings cannot die (compare Luke 20:36), they will be tormented—in a spiritual way—while being confined to the lake of fire, when they come to the realization that they are unable to deceive man anymore, and when they see all their ‘works’ and evil ‘accomplishments’ replaced by the good and prosperous ways of God.”

In addition, the concept of *physical punishment in the Third Resurrection* is clearly revealed in Scripture. Even though some of the following Scriptures may ALSO refer to the disobedient in this day and age and to the time of Christ’s Return, in their ultimate application all of them picture, in vivid detail, the final fate of the incorrigible sinner. We should also note that those who qualify for the Kingdom of God will be considered worthy and “ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:6). They will, under Jesus Christ, punish disobedient and rebellious people (compare Revelation 2:26–27; Psalm 149:5–9).

## **GOD’S VIEW OF REBELLIOUS SINNERS**

First, let us review some passages that describe in general God’s view of rebellious sinners.

Proverbs 12:2 tells us:

“A good man obtains favor from the LORD, But a man of wicked devices He will condemn.”

We read in Psalm 37:28:

“For the LORD loves JUSTICE, And does not forsake His saints; they are preserved FOREVER, but the descendants of the wicked [those who act as the wicked do] shall be CUT OFF.”

Isaiah 41:11–16 states:

“... They shall be as NOTHING. And those who strive with you shall PERISH. You shall seek them and not find them... [they] shall be as NOTHING, As a NONEXISTENT THING... the wind shall carry them away...”

The following passages describe in more detail God’s punishment of rebellious sinners.

Deuteronomy 32:35–43 describes God’s judgment of the wicked in these vivid terms:

“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense... For the day of their calamity is at hand... I will whet My glittering sword [God’s Word is compared with a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 19:15; Isaiah 11:4) which will judge and condemn the wicked], and My hand takes hold on JUDGMENT, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who HATE Me... My sword shall devour FLESH... Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people, For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries...”

Paul makes it very clear that God will take vengeance on those who oppose Him and refuse to obey Him. He states in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9:

“.. it is a RIGHTEOUS thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you... in flaming FIRE taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be PUNISHED with EVERLASTING destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...”

Jude 14–15 adds:

“... Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to EXECUTE JUDGMENT on ALL, to CONVICT ALL who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which UNGODLY

SINNERS have spoken against Him.”

We read in 2 Peter 2:9–21:

“... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to RESERVE the UNJUST under PUNISHMENT for the day of JUDGMENT, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed... and will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness... having eyes of adultery and that CANNOT cease from sin... and are ACCURSED children... These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever... For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

## **DESTRUCTION IN GEHENNA FIRE**

We also read in Hebrews 10:26–31:

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain FEARFUL EXPECTATION OF JUDGMENT and fiery INDIGNATION which will DEVOUR the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of HOW MUCH WORSE PUNISHMENT, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. And again, ‘the LORD will JUDGE His people.’ It is a FEARFUL THING to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Christ echoes this sentiment in Luke 12:5: “I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell [Gehenna fire]; yes, I say to you, fear Him.”

We must respect God and honor Him, but we have every reason to fear Him and be terrified *IF* we choose to willfully sin against Him.

## “CUTTING IN TWO”

A remarkable statement can be found by Christ in one of His parables. Addressing the “evil servant” in Matthew 24:48–51, who beats his fellow servants and eats and drinks with the drunkards, Christ explains that the master of that servant will come “on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This passage explains very clearly the fate of the evil servant in the Third Resurrection. This is further emphasized by the use of the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” which is strictly applied to the time of the Third Resurrection. A parallel account can be found in Luke 12:45–46, where the wicked servant will share the fate of “the unbelievers” (compare Revelation 21:8). The *Broadman Bible Commentary* writes: “... the wicked servant shall be... assigned his proper lot with those accursed forever.”

Both Matthew and Luke use the word *dichotomeo*, which is translated in English as “cut in two” (or “cut asunder” in the *Authorized Version*). These are the only two places in the New Testament where this expression is used.

The meaning of this phrase has been the object of considerable controversy.

*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible* writes that “this kind of punishment was anciently practiced. Sometimes it was done by the sword, sometimes by saws. It was practiced among the Chaldeans [Daniel 2:5; Daniel 3:29], and among the Hebrews [2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Samuel 15:33; 1 Kings 3:25; Hebrews 11:37]. It was also practiced by the Egyptians and Romans. It is not, perhaps, here to be taken literally, but signifies that the wicked servant should be severely punished.”

The *Expositor’s Greek Testament* adds that the “probable meaning is: will cut him in two (so to speak) with a whip = thrash him, the base slave, unmercifully. It is a strong word, selected in sympathy with the master’s rage.”

The *Pulpit Commentary* states: “This mode of death was inflicted in some cases... the difficulty is that the utter destruction of the malefactor implied in his literal cutting asunder is not consistent with his subsequent consignment to the lot of the hypocrites... we may take



the Lord's words as applying first to temporal punishment..."

Some have suggested that the expression refers only to separation from the saints or from spiritual grace or from all blessings promised to the righteous. Even though this is clearly included, more than that is conveyed.

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* gives the following explanation:

"Some take the reference to be the mode of punishment by which criminals and captives were cut in two; others, on account of the fact that in these passages the delinquent is still surviving after the treatment, take the verb to denote to cut up by scourging, to scourge severely, the word being used figuratively. As to [Matthew] 24:51, it has been remarked that the cutting asunder was an appropriate punishment for one who had lived a double life [he will be counted among the hypocrites]. In both passages, the latter part of the sentence applies to retribution beyond this life... In the [Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek,] the verb is used in Exodus 29:17 of the dividing of the ram as a whole burnt offering at the consecration of the priests... The corresponding noun is found in [Genesis] 15:11, 17; [Exodus] 29:17; [Leviticus] 1:8; [Ezekiel] 24:4."

What we can see from these passages is that the wicked servant will receive some kind of physical and psychological punishment before he is thrown into the lake of fire with the hypocrites and the unbelievers. We do not know exactly what that punishment will be, but it is clear from Scripture that the punishment of the incorrigible sinners will include torment and fearful expectation *BEFORE* their existence ends. It will be much more severe than just a fleeting moment of annihilation in the Gehenna fire. They will receive "heavy stripes" or "scourging"... including "stripes" of a psychological nature.

When those who commit the unpardonable sin stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they will be confronted with the terrible deeds, which they had committed, but they will not feel any remorse. They will refuse to repent of their wicked conduct. Filled with wrath and hate, they will hear Jesus Christ's words condemning them to punishment and eternal death, and they will be tormented by the realization that they *ARE* going to receive "stripes" and that they will be subsequently destroyed forever. Because of this, their hate and rage

will even increase. Their wicked nature and conduct will be manifested in front of everyone. There will never be any doubt about God's unfailing justice and just punishment.

# Conclusion

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In this booklet, we have shown that God is not mocked and that man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7). We must not think that sinful deeds today are unimportant and without consequence for the life to come. Man had better live in such a way that he can avoid future embarrassment, stripes, torment and punishment. God is a consuming fire, and it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

On the other hand, God is rich in mercy and compassion, and upon deep and sincere repentance, He will forgive sins and undoubtedly reduce any punishment for a repentant sinner to an absolute necessary minimum.

It is God's desire to save everybody (1 Timothy 2:4). God will see to it that His purpose is accomplished, whatever it takes. Only those who rebelliously and irrevocably REFUSE to submit to God will never be in His Kingdom. Instead, they will end up in the lake of fire, which will devour them permanently.

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