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Messianic Perspectives®

God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.

THE EIGHT JUDGMENTS OF THE LAST DAYS

PART THREE

BY GARY HEDRICK

In this study, we've been looking at the "last days" judgments—that is, the eschatological judgments. "Judgment" is about accountability to God—and no one is exempt. There are at least eight of these judgment events, including one that occurred two thousand years ago and seven others that are yet in the future. They are often overlooked when Christians study prophecy—and that's unfortunate because the judgments are an integral part of God's plan for the end times. In fact, virtually every future, prophetic event is associated, either directly or indirectly, with one or more of these divine judgments.

5. THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31–32).

Matthew's gospel is sometimes referred to as "the Gospel of Judgment" because it has so much to say about judgment.¹ This Judgment of the Nations in Matthew 25 is also known as the "Judgment of the Gentiles" because the Greek and Hebrew words for "nations" (*ethnei* and *goyim*, respectively) can also mean "gentile" (i.e., non-Jew). Sometimes the Judgment of the Nations is referred to as the "Sheep and Goat Judgment" (see 25:32–33). However, all three of these terms—Judgment of the Nations, Judgment of the Gentiles, and Sheep and Goat Judgment—refer to the same event.

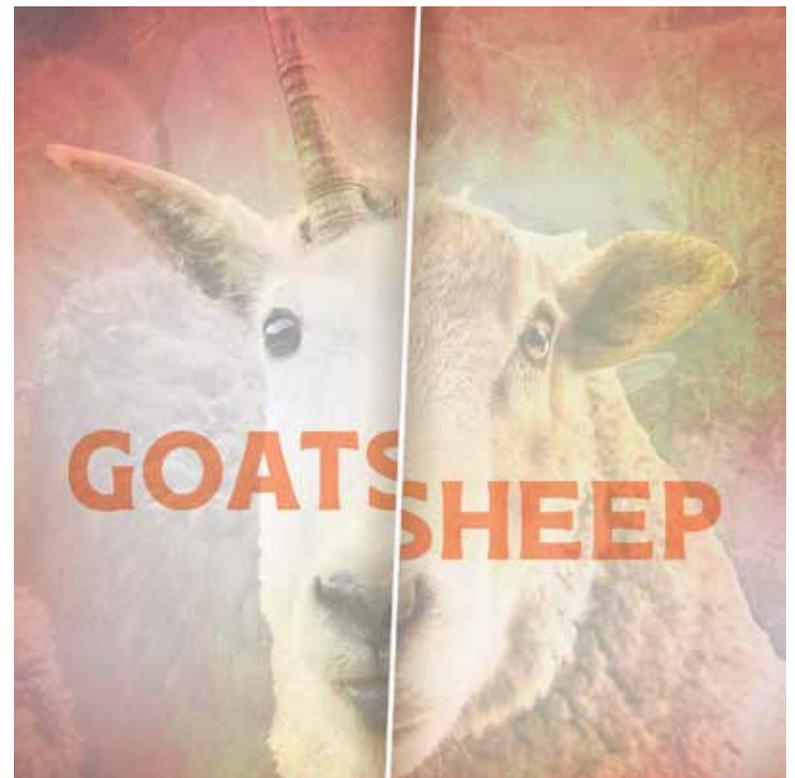
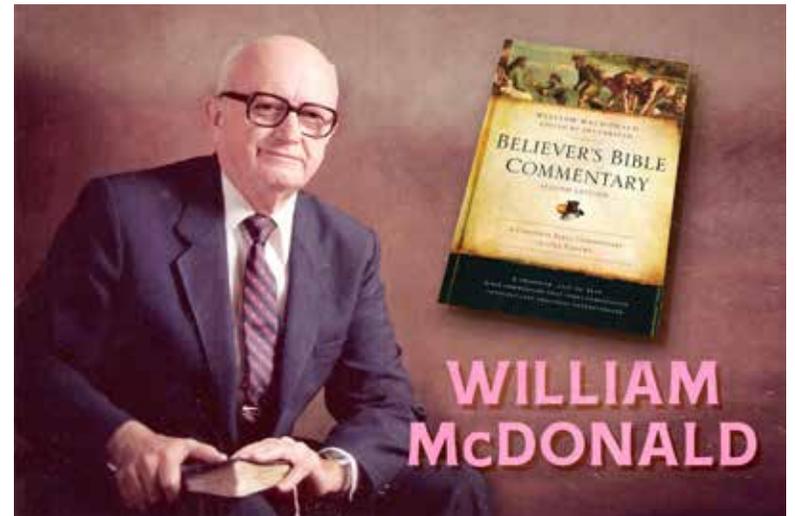
The People of the Judgment

Other eschatological judgments are judgments of *individuals*; however, this one is depicted as a judgment of *nations*. Only the nations that are in existence at the time of the Lord's return are subject to this judgment—not the nations of all the past ages.²

Addressing nations collectively like this emphasizes their corporate responsibility for the anti-Semitic policies of their governments. The end-times context points to nations that will systematically persecute Israel and the Jewish people as a matter of state policy during the future Great Tribulation.³ Nonetheless, note that the verdicts handed down by "the King" in Chapter 25 are not addressed to the nations collectively but to the individuals who comprise those nations—specifically, their representative leaders. When these nations are brought to judgment, their national leaders respond as individuals to the Judge's specific inquiries. They plead ignorance: "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" (v. 44). He responds by telling them that when they withheld help from their Jewish victims, they were withholding it from *Him* (vv. 45–46). So, it's a conversation between individuals, including the King, Who is their Judge. It's clear, then, that the corporate responsibility for national anti-Semitism trickles down to the individual leaders of those nations.

William McDonald explains that it is not unusual in Scripture for individuals to be judged as members of a collective:

OT history abounds with instances of nations punished because of their sin (Isa. 10:12–19; 47:5–15; Ezek. 25:6, 7; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Obad. 10; Zech. 14:1–5). It is not unreasonable to believe that nations will continue to experience divine retribution. This does not mean that every single individual in the nation will be involved in the outcome, but that the principles of divine justice will be applied on a national, as well as an individual basis.⁴



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The Purpose of the Judgment

One of MacDonald's "principles of divine justice" confirms that national entities will be held accountable for the way they treated Israel during the Great Tribulation (Matt. 25:35–40, 42–45; cp. Matt. 24:21).⁵ Another theologian, Robert Gundry, concurs:

The main indictment in the judgment of the nations will be their treatment of Israel (Joel 3:2), but . . . it must be emphasized that premillennialists understand this as a final judgment of the living nations when Christ returns to earth. The unrighteous living (the goats) go to eternal punishment; the righteous (sheep) who have treated Israel well and who submit to the messianic King enter the earthly millennial kingdom (cf. Isa. 60:13).⁶



Most premillennialists believe this Judgment of the Nations takes place at the beginning of the thousand-year Millennium.⁷ Its purpose is to determine which national entities will be welcomed into Yeshua's Kingdom (v. 34). Once these nations and their leaders have submitted to the Messianic King, and they have returned to their respective regions of the globe, they and their people will evidently be free to inhabit and govern their geographical territories as vassals of Messiah's worldwide government (Isa. 9:6–7).⁸

Joel 3:1–2 also mentions this future judgment of the gentile nations:

"For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,

"I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;

"And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land."

We can easily see today how so much of the Land has been "divided up" and absorbed by surrounding nations. Lebanon and Syria currently occupy northern portions of Greater Israel. Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia occupy huge swaths of its eastern territory. In the south, of course, the current tenants are the Egyptians. However, this arrangement is only temporary. Messiah Yeshua will restore normalcy when He comes.

In Joel 3:1, the Hebrew formula "in those days" (*bay Yamim haHimma*; בימים ההמה) points to the Eschaton and what the ancient Jewish sages referred to as the great, epoch-ending "final redemption" of Israel when Messiah comes.⁹



"Greater Israel" is a designation for the Land in the Middle East that God promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 23:31). It covers roughly 300,000 square miles, making it slightly larger than the State of Texas. Israel today, however, consists of only 13,000 square miles, a small fraction of what God promised. Many Zionists, including pro-Israel, Christian evangelicals, acknowledge that Israel will not acquire the full extent of her territory until Messiah arrives.



The Place of the Judgment

Joel 3 says this Judgment of the Nations will take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (v. 2). No one knows for sure where this valley is. Many scholars believe it's another name for the Kidron Valley which runs between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

In Hebrew, *Jehoshaphat* literally means "the LORD has judged," so it is an appropriate name for the site of this judgment where the nations of the world will be held accountable for whatever their role may have been in the Holocaust-like persecution of Israel and the Jewish people during the Great Tribulation.

The Potentate of the Judgment

The Judge in the Valley of Jehoshaphat will be none other than Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah—King of kings and Lord of lords. “As in [Matthew] 7:21–23, Jesus identifies Himself as the final Judge, a role that the Jews expected Yahweh [*HaShem*] to fulfill.”¹⁰

Notice the emphasis in our text on Yeshua’s Messianic glory: “*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory*” (Matt. 25:31, emphasis added). “The Son of Man” emphasizes the Lord’s humanity and was His favorite designation for Himself. Matthew identifies Yeshua of Nazareth as the One Daniel saw “coming,” the subject of one of the clearest and most powerful Messianic prophecies in the Book of Daniel:

“I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, One like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.

“Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13–14).¹¹



Nazi leaders were tried at Nuremberg, Germany, from November 20, 1945, to October 1, 1946. Here some of the defendants are seen under heavy guard in the courtroom. Most were subsequently convicted and hanged for their crimes, while others committed suicide before their sentences could be carried out.

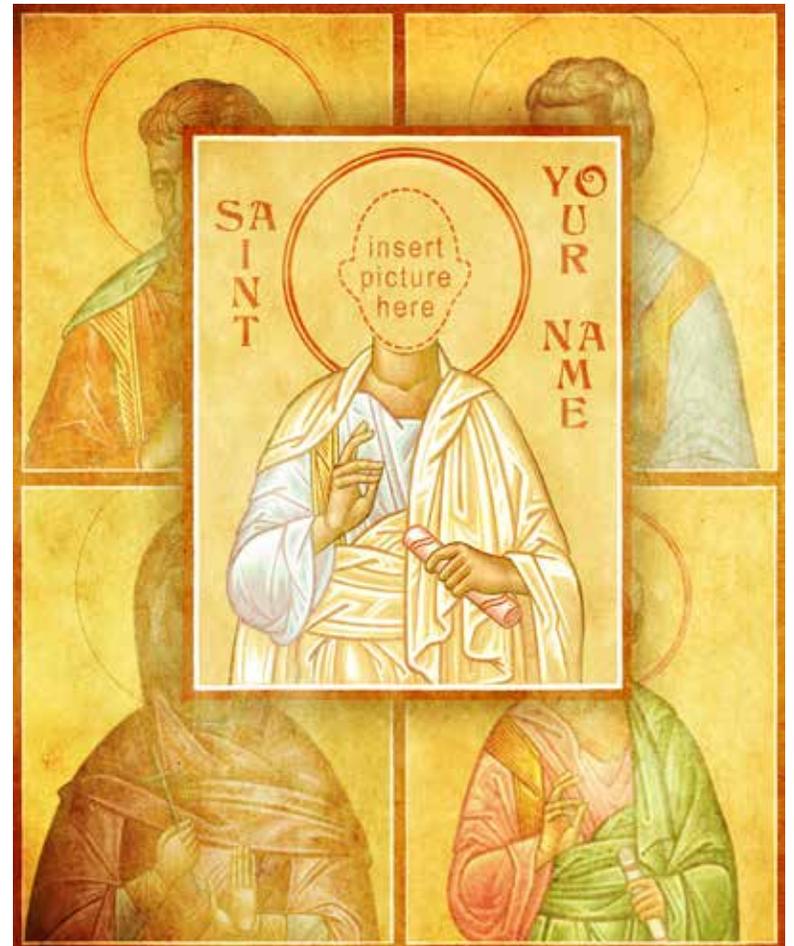
Raymond D'Addario

Can you imagine what a rude awakening it will be for an anti-Semitic dictator who has been responsible for perhaps hundreds of thousands of Jewish deaths during the Great Tribulation to suddenly find himself standing in final judgment before a resurrected and glorified Jewish Rabbi (and an angry one, at that!) named Yeshua? Very likely, the writer of Hebrews had instances like this in mind when he wrote, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (10:31).

6. BELIEVERS JUDGING THE WORLD

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (1 Cor. 6:2).

Paul says here that “saints” are destined to “judge the world.” The Greek verb for “judge” (*krino*; κρίνω) can mean (1) to hand down a ruling or legal decision, or (2) to rule or govern, among other possible nuances of meaning.¹² Those two concepts—that is, making judicial decisions and governing—are related because a *ruler* (governor) is someone who routinely makes *rulings* (decisions) that affect the people under his care. So, who are these “saints” who will be ruling the world someday? Are they familiar all-stars like Saint Christopher, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint Theresa, or Saint Jude? No, they’re not. So, who are they?



In a word, the saints are *us*. Anyone who has placed his/her faith in the Son of God is a saint (e.g., see Rom. 1:7). The Greek word for “saints” is *hagioi* (ἅγιοι). It literally means “holy ones.” So, then, a saint is someone who is being made holy. Now how does this happen? How, exactly, does one become holy?

This gradual, day-by-day process of being made more holy is known as “sanctification”—and it’s a journey that every Christian travels.¹³ Every step of the way, we are “being made holy” (i.e., sanctified) by the empowering and indwelling Holy Spirit.¹⁴ It’s an ongoing, gradual process that continues until we reach our home in Heaven. Little by little, our daily *practice* becomes more like our heavenly *position*. I’m not perfect yet because I’m still a work in progress. I may not be Mother Theresa, Saint Christopher, or Saint Peter, but I’m a saint because I’m saved, and God is at work in me. And if you have placed your trust in Him, He’s at work in you, too!¹⁵

Struggling Christians

Sometimes believers who are struggling will say, “Well, I sure don’t feel like a saint.” I can relate to that! Fortunately, however, feelings and emotions have little to do with it. What matters is not what we *feel*, but what God *says*—and He has told us in His Word that He imputes (or attributes) Yeshua’s righteousness to us when we believe in Him. This makes us *positionally* holy—even when we’re struggling with the *practical* aspects of holiness. Romans 4:24, for example, says that God’s perfect righteousness is imputed “to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Our position as saints is established not by our ability to perform, but by the righteousness of Yeshua, Who lived a perfect life and then died in our place.

The fact that Paul addressed this passage (about believers judging the world) to the congregation at Corinth is instructive. The Corinthian Church was arguably the most carnal, schismatic, and problematic congregation in the known world. Those believers at Corinth had some serious problems! Yet Paul loved them and addressed them as saints, which should tell us something about the depth and breadth of God’s love for (and His patience with) His children, despite their immaturity and other obvious deficiencies. The Corinthians were flawed, but God loved them too much to let them remain that way! That’s why this epistle has such a strong emphasis on sanctification and spiritual transformation.



Rulership in God’s Kingdom

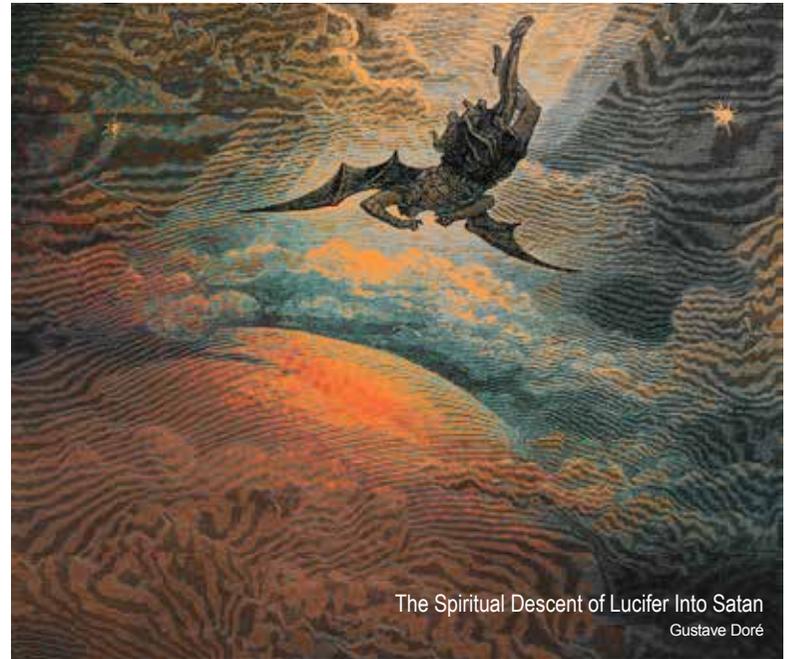
So, when Paul talks about saints being destined to “judge the world,” he’s talking about you and me! It’s all about our serving as co-regents with our King-Messiah in the future Kingdom of God.

After all, the Lord’s stewardship teachings certainly reflect this principle. In one of those passages, for instance, we read, “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord’” (Matt. 25:23). In another teaching, He said, “And [the master said to his servant], ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ . . . Likewise he said to [another servant], ‘You also be over five cities’” (Luke 19:17, 19).

So, Yeshua was making the point that a servant who is faithful in *Olam HaZeh* (Heb., “this [present] world”) will be rewarded with rulership and responsibility in *Olam HaBa* (“the world to come”).

In 1 Corinthians 6, the Apostle Paul is concerned about the optics of Yeshua believers (Christians) suing each other in secular courts. What a poor testimony (v. 6)! Paul’s solution was that cases of this kind should be adjudicated “before the saints” (v. 1)—that is, they should be handled internally within the leadership structure of the local congregation (that is, pastors, elders, and/or deacons).

This is the context in which we find Paul reminding the Corinthian believers that someday, they “will judge the world” (v. 2). Running the universe is going to be a huge undertaking once the King is on His throne in Jerusalem!



7. BELIEVERS JUDGING ANGELS

Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Cor. 6:3).

This one seems a bit odd, does it not? What role could we possibly have in judging angels in the next world? Why do angels even need to be judged? Well, believe it or not, there is a longstanding tradition in ancient Jewish sources about God’s people judging angels in the next life. Amy-Jill Levine, a well-regarded, traditional Jewish scholar, notes: “Angels are [to be] judged by the saints, or the righteous (Dan. 4:14; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6–15; 1 Enoch 14:21–24, 15; 19; 21; 41:9; 46:7; y. Shabbat 6.10 [8d]; b. Sanhedrin 38b).”¹⁶

Who Are These Angels?

At some point in the dateless past, God created the angels to serve Him as messengers and in various other capacities. They were created with a degree of free will and most of them have chosen to remain faithful to Him. However, evidence suggests that a vast host of the angels—perhaps as many as a third of the total—rebelled and followed Lucifer, “Son of the Morning,” and were eventually cast out of Heaven. Yeshua said He was there on the scene when the expulsion occurred and He “saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18).¹⁷ That ancient rebellion continues even to the present day and will culminate in a final war in the heavenlies between God’s angels (led by the archangel Michael) and Lucifer’s horde (Rev. 12:7–9).

So, then, which angels are in view here in 1 Corinthians 6:3—good ones or bad (fallen) ones? Or maybe both? In the Christian world, this has been the subject of much debate between scholars.¹⁸ It may be best to assume that the Apostle has both in mind here. That is, in the next world, we will “judge” angels in both a judicial and administrative sense. Administratively, angels will serve under our direction. John MacArthur takes this position:

The Greek word [in 1 Corinthians 6:3] can mean “rule” or “govern.” Since the Lord Himself will judge fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), it is likely this means we will have some rule in eternity over holy angels. Since angels are “ministering spirits” to serve the saints (Heb. 1:14), it seems reasonable that they will serve us in glory.¹⁹

Hebrews 2:5–8 may shed further light on this since it suggests that the Lord will transfer governing authority from angels to humans at the beginning of the Millennium. The passage begins with these words: “*For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels*” (v. 5, emphasis added). Then the writer quotes from Psalm 8, which talks about the future dominion of man: “You have put all things in subjection under his [i.e., man’s] feet” (Heb. 2:8).

So, angels will not govern “the world to come” (*Olam HaBa*). Instead, the angels will be in subjection to us. But that’s not necessarily where our responsibility ends. Our role in the judgment of angels may be more than merely a matter of administration or governance. We may also play a judicial role, when the time comes, in determining how severe the sentences of various fallen angels will be. Since we experience oppression and opposition in our

lives by the enemy’s minions,²⁰ we may meet those same fallen angels (i.e., demonic agents) at the judgment and have a voice in the determination of their sentence.

If this is the case, it means that not all fallen angels will be punished equally and that some of the ringleaders (including Lucifer himself) will be punished more severely than others who were merely their dupes and underlings. Some conservative scholars believe the “sons of God” (a term sometimes used for angels) in Genesis 6 were particularly evil fallen angels who were guilty of some extreme offense against God.

Conclusion

What, then, was the endgame for these fallen angels in Genesis 6? What were they trying to accomplish? Perhaps their wicked purpose was to produce hybrid offspring with human mothers, thereby corrupting the human gene pool so the Messianic prophecy about the coming “Seed” of Eve—who would finally defeat the devil—would never be fulfilled. In the Garden of Eden, the Lord addressed the Serpent (representing Satan), saying: “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*” (Gen. 3:15). Michael Heiser observes:

As concepts like divine sonship began to appear in the Bible with respect to Yahweh’s people Israel (Ex. 4:23), the Israelite king (Psalm 2:7), and, ultimately, the Messiah, the theological messaging became important. Noah is in the line of Christ (Luke 3:36; cf. 3:38). At no point could it be claimed that the ultimate seed of Eve, the Messianic deliverer, was the son of any *elohim* besides Yahweh.²¹



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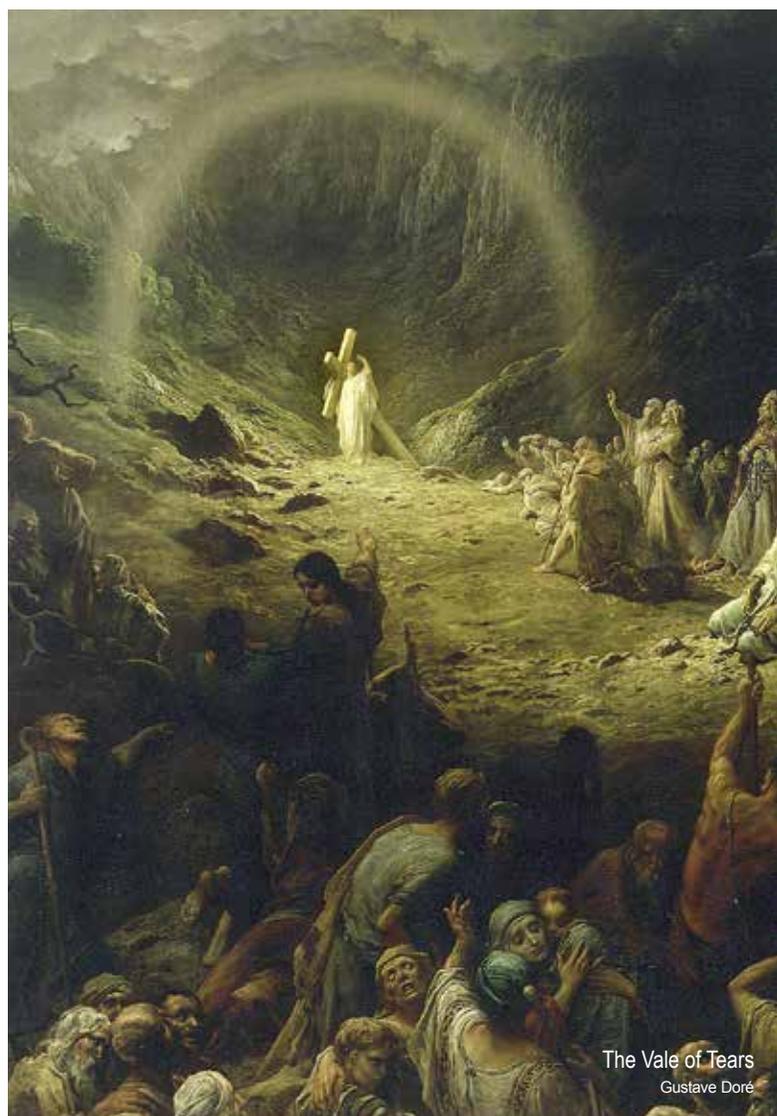
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Since the fallen angels who carried out this evil conspiracy were later imprisoned in Tartarus (i.e., the lowest and most isolated area of Hades/Sheol; 2 Peter 2:4), some interpreters suggest that this is why Yeshua, the Son of God, descended into Hades after He died on the Cross (Eph. 4:9). In this descent, the Lord “went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19b). He proclaimed his victory on the Cross in the deepest, darkest, most cavernous region of Hades/Sheol—that is, Tartarus. If this is indeed what happened, it means He was preaching to the very fallen angels who had attempted to derail God’s plan in Genesis 6. MacArthur elucidates:

The Jews eventually came to use this term [Tartarus] to describe the place where fallen angels were sent. It defined for them the lowest hell, the deepest pit, and the most terrible place of torture and eternal suffering. Jesus, in spirit, entered that place when His body was in the grave, and proclaimed triumph over the demons during the time between His death and resurrection.²²



The Vale of Tears
Gustave Doré

One of our responsibilities as co-regents with Yeshua in the next world, then, may well be to participate in His judgment of these fallen angels. Their devilish plan failed. Yeshua fulfilled the Genesis 3:15 prophecy, in spite of their best efforts to prevent it. He was born of the Virgin Mary, died on Calvary for our sins, was resurrected on the third day as “Victor from the dark domain, and He lives forever with His saints to reign!”²³ This may have indeed been His message when He preached to the prisoners in Tartarus.

8. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them (Rev. 20:11).

Now, finally, we’ve come to the last of the eight eschatological judgments—the one that takes place at God’s Great White Throne (GWT).

When Will This Final Judgment Take Place?

The GWT Judgment occurs at the conclusion of the Millennium. It follows the war to end all wars, the biblical Battle of Gog and Magog Two (v. 8).²⁴ In this, the world’s final war, the Adversary (*haSatan*), recently released from his thousand-year confinement, will regroup his forces and lead them to encircle the New Jerusalem (“the beloved city,” v. 9a). Before they can strike, however, the rebels are quickly devoured and destroyed by “fire” coming down from God in Heaven (v. 9b).

Hollywood writers and directors could no doubt make this final showdown much more dramatic. They would prolong the conflict and describe it in great detail. The special effects would be spectacular. The pyrotechnics would show huge explosions around the perimeter of the Holy City as the anti-God forces make their advance. But not in the Book of Revelation! Here, the battle occupies only one verse (v. 9). It’s over almost before it has a chance to begin. It appears that the battle itself will be nearly as brief as John’s description of it.



Who Will Be the Judge at the GWT?

This radiant throne is “great” (Gk. *megan*; μέγαν) because it belongs only to Messiah Yeshua, the great Judge of the universe. He is the matchless One, “very God of very God,” “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

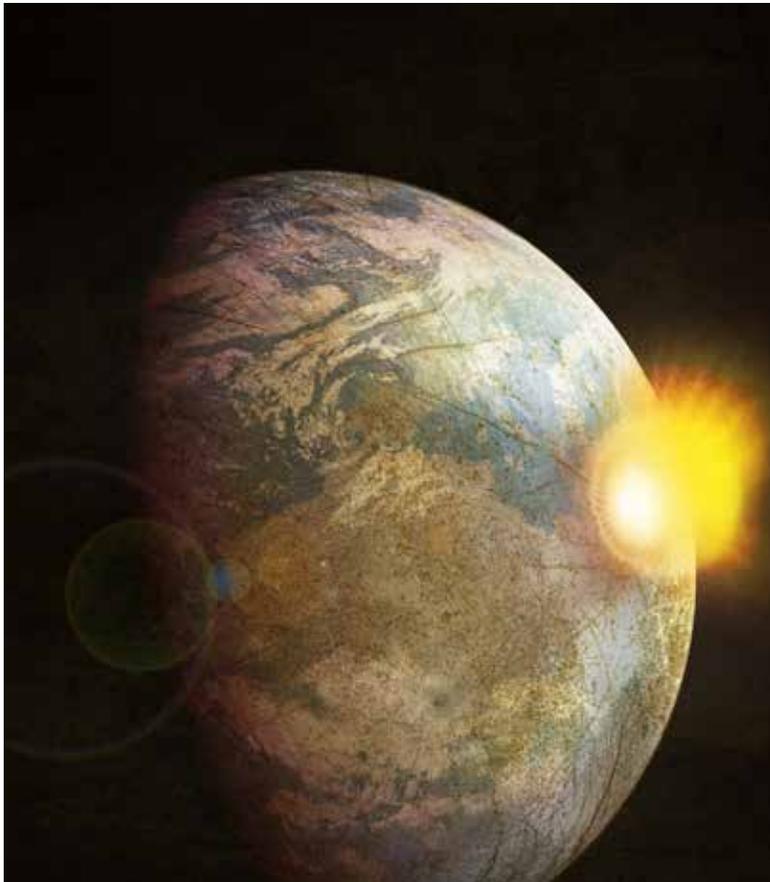
The Apostle Peter recalled that Yeshua the Messiah “commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be **Judge of the living and the dead**” (Acts 10:42, emphasis added).

So even though there are other “thrones” in Heaven (that is, seats for saints possessing varying degrees of authority; Rev. 4:4; 11:16; 20:4), there is only one “great” throne—and that is His. Just before the Lord ascended back to Heaven in AD 30 or so, He affirmed His supreme authority: *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”* (Matt. 28:18).

Who Will Be Judged at the GWT?

The lost people of all the ages, from the Creation until the close of the Millennium, will face judgment at the GWT. Their bodies will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits that have been languishing in Gehenna up until this point. They are “lost” because they have rejected God’s love and grace as embodied in His Son, Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ): *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily* (Col. 2:9). Rejecting the Son is tantamount to rejecting God himself.

This judgment, then, will be for Yeshua-rejecters. Yeshua-believers aren’t included because they will have already been evaluated (and appropriately recompensed) at the Bema Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

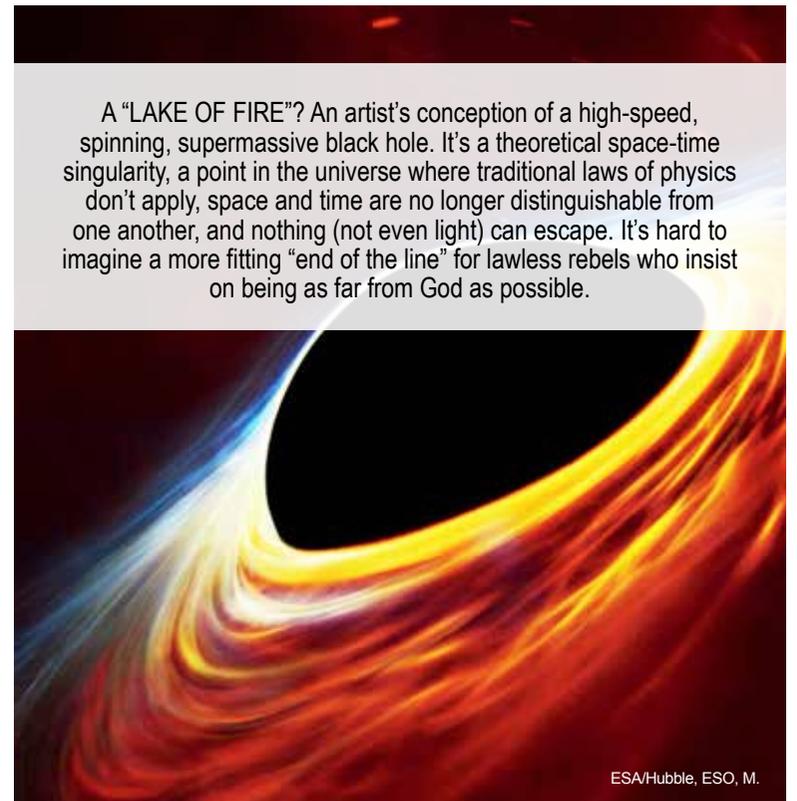


The Book of Revelation says the armies surrounding and preparing to assault the New Jerusalem will be expeditiously destroyed by “fire” sent down from heaven by God (20:9).

The Criteria for Judgment at the GWT

Two “books” (i.e., heavenly records or databases) will be consulted for everyone who comes before the GWT. The first one is the Book of Life (Rev. 20:12). The second one is the book where people’s “works” (that is, deeds, both good and bad) are chronicled. The Book of Life is consulted because it shows why they have come before the GWT Judgment. The reason is that their names are not registered in this all-important book because they never received the Lord’s free gift of salvation through faith in His Son. Their lack of faith is what has condemned them: *“He who believes in [Yeshua] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:18).

The second book, the one where their works are recorded, is consulted to determine the severity of their punishment in the Lake of Fire. Revelation 20 tells us that the unsaved dead will be judged at the GWT “according to their works, by the things that were written in the books” (v. 12). This is consistent with the teaching that there will be degrees of punishment in Hell, much like we believe there will be degrees of reward in Heaven. All suffering in Hell, it appears, will not be the same. Quantitatively, all sentences in the Lake of Fire are forever; however, qualitatively, the degree of punishment will vary according to “their works.”



A “LAKE OF FIRE”? An artist’s conception of a high-speed, spinning, supermassive black hole. It’s a theoretical space-time singularity, a point in the universe where traditional laws of physics don’t apply, space and time are no longer distinguishable from one another, and nothing (not even light) can escape. It’s hard to imagine a more fitting “end of the line” for lawless rebels who insist on being as far from God as possible.

Again, works do not result in salvation. Remember the cart and the horse? Salvation results in works—not vice versa. When it comes to salvation, the only “work” God wants from us is our faith: *Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent”* (John 6:29).

Why Will People Be Judged at the GWT?

The purpose of the GWT Judgment will not be to determine whether people are saved. We already know they’re not saved because they’ve been called up from Gehenna, the holding area in Hades/Sheol for lost souls. They have rejected God’s gracious offer of salvation through His Son, so their destiny is sealed. Following this final judgment, they “will be cast into the Lake of Fire” (20:14).

We don’t know much about this frightening place John calls “the Lake of Fire” (Gk., *tein limnein tou puros*; τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός), other than the fact that it’s the final, eternal abode of the lost. Could it be something like a black hole in a remote part of the universe—a singularity of desolate nothingness where lost souls are trapped forever by its inescapable gravity? It’s a possibility; however, the Scriptures provide scant details about it. One thing we know for sure, though, is that this miserable, God-forsaken place was never meant for humans. According to Yeshua, it was “prepared for the devil and his angels,” not for people (Matt. 25:41). However, humans who reject God’s love will join the dark legions in that horrific place.

Many liberal religionists reject Hell as a real, literal place. To them, it's more of a metaphor, something unreal that's the butt of jokes or a figure of speech. Strangely enough, though, these same skeptics who doubt the reality of Hell have no difficulty with the reality of Heaven. But how can Heaven be real if Hell isn't? Yeshua talked about both places; in fact, He mentioned Hell more often than He did Heaven! So, if one is a literal reality, the other must be real, too. Does this mean the "fire" is also literal, like a forest fire or a burning building? Not necessarily. But even if it's not literal combustion, let's not make the mistake of thinking it makes Hell any less horrifying. Norval Geldenhuys (1918–1964), the famous Dutch Reformed theologian from South Africa, made this point effectively in his commentary on Luke:

That the "flame" should not be taken literally but in a symbolical sense, appears from the fact that in the Bible mention is often made in connection with the unsaved (in the realm of the dead as well as in Gehenna) of the darkness and utter gloom which encompasses them. Flaming fire and darkness, of course, exclude each other. Thus in such biblical expressions we have the symbolical description of the hapless plight of the lost. Schilder, however, was right in declaring: "Let nobody say: it is only symbolical and therefore not so terrible. By mere inversion one could say: if the symbol, the mere picture, is already awe-inspiring, how horrible must the original (the actual) be!" (translated from *Wat is de hel?*, 2nd ed., p. 40).²⁵



David Howard Hitchcock

We saw earlier in this study that some of our amillennial friends believe the GWT Judgment is for both believers and unbelievers. They draw this conclusion, in part, from Revelation 20:12, which says "the Book of Life" (containing the names of believers) will be opened at the GWT. To them, this means that believers will be present, as well as the lost. However, this is a misunderstanding. The reason the Book of Life is opened at the GWT is not to show whose names are there on its pages. Rather, it's to show whose names are *missing*.²⁶ In fact, this is precisely what the text says: *And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire* (v. 15, emphasis added).

Therefore, the purpose of bringing lost people before the GWT Judgment is to confirm that their names do not appear in the Lamb's Book of Life. A secondary purpose is to determine the severity and extent of their punishment by reviewing their works. In their helpful essay on The Gospel Coalition website, Albert Martin and Fred Zaspel explain:

Although the suffering will be severe and everlasting for all those in hell, the specific degrees of punishment and suffering will differ in accordance with the measure of sin in one's life, the extent of one's sinful influence on others, and the amount of gospel-light that was rejected.²⁷



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Preparing for Judgment

We have learned in this study that judgment is certain for all of us. No one is exempt. But there's no need to worry because we can prepare for it ahead of time. Two questions come into play here:

1. Have you received the Lord Yeshua (Jesus) as your Savior from sin? If so, you will never experience the Great White Throne Judgment. If not, you will. But you can take care of that matter right now. If you sense the Lord working in your heart, just respond by praying and asking Him to save you by His grace—and if you do, He will (Rom. 10:9–10)!
2. If you already believe in Yeshua, the question is one of lordship—and being prepared for the Bema Judgment. Does your life truly reflect His lordship? *If you were ever arrested and charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?* At the end of your earthly journey, will it be "reward" or "loss" for you? Are you living for Eternity ("gold, silver, precious stones"), or is most of your energy expended on indulgent, self-centered, temporary pursuits ("wood, hay, and straw")? These are the questions the Apostle Paul directs our way in 1 Corinthians 3:12–15:

Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear;

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

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

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



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¹ Themes of judgment, for example, are found in Matthew 3:12; 6:2, 5, 16; 7:24–27; 13:30, 48–49; 18:23–34; 20:1–16; 21:33–41; 22:1–14; 24:45–51; and 25:1–12, 14–46. With the exception of the Book of Revelation, the Gospel of Matthew deals with judgment more extensively than any other book in the New Testament.

² Just because the Judgment of the Nations only involves nations currently in existence doesn't mean that anti-Semites from past ages will get off the hook. On the contrary, they will answer on an individual basis for their cruelty toward Israel and the Jewish people—as well as all their other sins. This will take place at the Great White Throne, the eighth of the eschatological judgments (Rev. 20:11–15).

³ Daniel 9 identifies a seventieth “week” (i.e., seven years) in Israel's history that follows a long interval (i.e., the two-thousand-year church age) and is yet in the future (vv. 24–27). The Apostle John sees this seven-year period at the end of the age as consisting of two equal segments of 42 months (or, three-and-a-half years) each (Rev. 11:2–3; 12:14; 13:5). At the halfway point of this seven-year period, the Anti-messiah will break his peace-agreement (“covenant”) with Israel and disrupt worship in the newly rebuilt Temple (Dan. 9:27). This event will mark the commencement of a 42-month period of intense persecution reminiscent of the tragic events of AD 70. Yeshua referred to this final three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation as the “Great Tribulation” (Matt. 24:21)—a final period of vicious, anti-Semitic persecution just before the Second Coming.

⁴ William McDonald, “Matthew” in *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2016), 1776. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Some interpreters say that the nations will be judged not only upon the basis of how they treated Israel and the Jewish people during the Tribulation, but also upon the basis of other criteria, as well. Gundry, for example, writes: “The main indictment in the judgment of the nations will be their treatment of Israel (Joel 3:2), but Isaiah 2:4 could imply that other wrongs will also be brought to judgment” (Stanley N. Gundry, “Judgment of Nations” in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 640).

⁶ Gundry, *Ibid.*

⁷ Non-millennarians (that is, people who don't believe in the future Millennium), as well as some nineteenth-century premillennialists, equate the Judgment of the Nations with the Great White Throne Judgment mentioned in Revelation 20. Even Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers, who was not dispensational but was premillennial, seems to have taken this position.

⁸ Passages like Isaiah 19:23 tell us that Egypt and Syria/Assyria will ultimately acknowledge Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah, as Lord and be welcomed into the Messianic Kingdom. In fact, an innumerable throng from “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” will come to faith during the seven-year Tribulation (Rev. 7:9–17). They will survive the horrific forces unleashed on the earth during that time. For our take on how millions of living mortals will enter the Kingdom, see “Seven Things Every Christian Should Know about the 144,000” in the September–October 2019 issue of *Messianic Perspectives*, available in our archives at cjfm.org.

⁹ Eliezer Segal, *Reading Jewish Religious Texts* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 25.

¹⁰ *HCSB Study Bible*, Jeremy Royal Howard, gen. ed. (Nashville: Holman Publishers, 2009), 1664.

¹¹ Michael Rydelnik explains the Messianic import of this passage in Daniel 7:13–14: “Jesus understood [the title ‘Son of Man’] to be a messianic title (see the comments on Mt 8:18–22; Mk 14:61–62) and used it to speak of Himself. The high priest considered Jesus' usage of the title to be blasphemy (Mk 14:64), demonstrating that it was a term for deity. Later Rabbis saw it as one of the names of the Messiah (b. Sanhedrin 98a). The phrase Son of Man is used of the Messiah because He will fulfill the destiny of humanity (Ps 8; Heb 2:5–18) while at the same time being deity” (Michael Rydelnik, “Daniel” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, M. Rydelnik and M. Vanlaningham, gen. eds. [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014], 1299–1300).

¹² See Thayer's Greek Lexicon under the entry for the verb κρίνω (“I judge”). The noun form for “judgment” is *krima* (κρίμα). The Greek noun for a person who is a “judge” is *kriteis* (κρίτης).

¹³ The Greek noun for “sanctification” is *hagiosmos* (ἁγιασμός), which literally means “holy-izing,” or making someone or something holy. The term “holy,” in turn, denotes someone or something that is “set apart” for God's use.

¹⁴ The Greek word here is a present passive participle. In this form, it signifies present, continuous action that is being performed *on us* by someone else (that is, God). We are the passive party, and He is the One performing the action.

¹⁵ Again, there are *positional* truths and there are *practical* truths about our spiritual journey. A positional truth is something that is true about us by virtue of our position “in the heavenly places in Messiah” (Eph. 1:3), where God sees only His Son's perfect righteousness rather than our sins and rough edges. A practical (or experiential) truth, on the other hand, reflects reality down here on earth as He continues His work in us (Heb. 13:21). In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul says we “are being transformed” (present tense, continuous action) by the Holy Spirit. We are all a work in progress—and the work will continue, non-stop, until we get to Heaven.

¹⁶ *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 636. Note that this resource cites both traditional and Messianic (NT) sources.

¹⁷ Another way of translating Luke 10:18 is: “I was watching Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Some scholars doubt that Isaiah (where he addresses the King of Babylon with “O Lucifer, Son of the Morning” in 14:12) and Ezekiel (addressing the King of Tyre with “O covering cherub” in 28:16) are really referring to Satan. They say these allusions are rooted in medieval theology—and more specifically, in the writings of Milton (*Paradise Lost*). Nonetheless, others of us believe those two earthly kings serve as shadows of something that happened in cosmic pre-history. One can't help noticing that Yeshua's statement about Lucifer falling from Heaven bears a striking correspondence to Isaiah 14:12: “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!”

¹⁸ Ronald Trail, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Corinthians 1–9* (Dallas: SIL International, 2008), 224.

¹⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 1736. (Kindle Edition).

²⁰ See Ephesians 6:11, for instance, where Paul mentions the “wiles [or strategies] of the devil.” This suggests that the powers of darkness are conniving and execute their plans with some degree of precision and coordination. C.S. Lewis had some fun with this concept in his classic *The Screwtape Letters*, a fictional account of correspondence between a senior demon named Screwtape and his greenhorn nephew, Wormwood. Lewis dedicated *The Screwtape Letters* to his longtime friend J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the famous *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

²¹ Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 109.

²² MacArthur, *Ibid.*

²³ Lyrics are from the hymn “Low in the Grave He Lay” by Robert Lowry (b. 1826).

²⁴ Scripture mentions another battle (a thousand or so years earlier, during the Tribulation), by the same name (Ezek. 38:2–18). So, we refer to the earlier battle as the “Battle of Gog and Magog One” and the one described in Revelation 20:7–10 as the “Battle of Gog and Magog Two.” It is certainly not unprecedented for different battles to share the same name if they involve roughly the same combatants—as in “World War One” (1914–1918) and “World War Two” (1939–1945). Another example is the First and Second Battles of Bull Run (1861 and 1862) during the American Civil War. There are numerous such examples throughout history.

²⁵ Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 350. In the parable in Luke 16, however, the rich man in Hell complains that he is “tormented in this **flame**” (v. 24, emphasis added). In interpreting parables, however, it's important to concentrate on the story's main point and avoid the pitfall of overinterpretation. Thinking about this parable, then, it's extremely doubtful that someone who is literally on fire would be capable of coherent thought and conversation. According to Geldenhuys, the point of Verse 24 is that the man in Hell “yearns for relief from the inexpressible tortures endured by him in the flame of remorse and eternal despair” (425).

²⁶ Another consideration is that the noun for “book” (*biblion*, βιβλίον) is *singular* when it refers to the Book of Life (Rev. 20:12). However, it's a dative *plural* (*bibliois*, βιβλίοις) when it refers to the “books” out of which the wicked dead are judged. It may not be a literal book, but rather some type of massive heavenly database where the works of the wicked have been meticulously documented by God and His observing/recording angels. The judgment at the GWT is based, then, on two things: (1) what appears *in* “the books” (plural, i.e., the records of peoples' deeds) and (2) what is missing *from* “the Book” (singular, the Book of Life)—that is, their names.

²⁷ Martin and Zaspel, “Degrees of Punishment in Hell” in *TGC U.S. Edition* accessed at thegospelcoalition.org. They point out that passages like Matthew 10:15 and 11:22, 24 provide strong evidence for degrees of punishment in Hell that are commensurate with the individual's offenses and culpability.

Fruit from the Harvest



by Violette Berger



A God Thing

I, **Violette Berger, CJFM representative (Phoenix)**, was recently hospitalized for four days with a severe case of the flu and pneumonia. My room was cleaned daily, and on one of those days when I was in my room (and not out undergoing tests) I engaged the woman, who is black, in a conversation. I was surprised when she told me that she is Jewish and was born in Samaria. She had moved to Phoenix from Canada years ago and had just become an American citizen. I asked her some questions about her faith, and she told me she only reads the Torah. I shared the Gospel message with her: the messiahship of Yeshua, Isaiah 53, and encouraged her to read the New Testament, as she had said earlier that she had never read it because she was afraid to. She listened intently and said that she would like to come back and continue talking with me. She gave me her employer's number to call to request that she return the next day to clean my room. However, I was informed that I would be discharged later that day and had no way of getting in touch with her (numbers are not released). Please pray for "Hannah's" salvation. What a blessing it was to meet her on my last day in the hospital. Truly a God thing!

Apologetics on Campus

Eric Chabot, CJFM representative (Columbus, OH), leads his *Ratio Christi* campus ministries at Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College and is blessed to report the following: In the month of May, alone, he and his volunteers had the opportunity to share the Gospel with more than 130 students, of which eight of those individuals made first-time commitments to the Lord. Conversations are encouraged by students responding to a question Eric writes on a whiteboard, such as "Does God Exist?" or "Are You a Good Person?" with choices of "Yes," "No," or "IDK" (I Don't Know). It attracted two male Jewish students who are devout atheists. Eric and his team engaged in a two-hour conversation with them. Please pray for their salvation, for the seeds that were planted, as this is the second time they have stopped by Eric's table. Also visiting the table again was a student who said he was an atheist but was seeking the truth and had started attending a Bible study when Eric had spoken with him the previous year. This time he told Eric that he had committed his life to the Lord and was attending a church on campus. PTL!

Eric also writes that they have been working hard to solidify an event called, **C. S. Lewis: The Reluctant Convert** to be hosted as a stage production at Ohio State University in September. He asks that we please pray this comes to pass.

God is Sovereign

Michael Campo, Jr, CJFM representative (Chicago), believes that God is sovereign, evangelistically speaking, and places us where He wants us to be. He shares a story about his vacation in Florida. When he and his wife arrived, they were advised that the pool was closed due to necessary repairs. Disappointed, because he loves to swim, Michael reached out to the owner regarding the circumstances of the pool. She was understanding and told Michael that she would refund all of his money and that they could stay in her condo free of charge until they found another place to vacation. The next day, they found a place with a beautiful pool. When Michael and his wife went swimming, there were only three men in the pool. One was a self-proclaimed agnostic, another was a 92-year-old man, and the third was a 69-year-old man who had lost his 17-year-old son in an automobile accident. And where did Michael have the opportunity to witness to them? *In the pool!* Please pray that the seeds planted would come to fruition

A Messenger

Rob Styler, CJFM Director of Missions (Gilbert, AZ), recently, he spoke at a Shavuot (Pentecost) service and picnic in Colorado. On his flight home, while going through TSA security and his bag was being x-rayed, one of the workers told him, "We need to look in your bag." Rob writes, "My carryon travel bag weighs more than my suitcase. If I needed to, I could live out of that bag alone for a week. So when the process of 'going through my bag' began, I settled in for a long wait. As she unpacked my bag, the TSA agent said, 'Your bag is very organized. Are you a creative or an engineer?' 'Neither,' I responded, 'I'm a Bible teacher.' She looked at me and commented, 'Oh, thank you for bringing the message of salvation.' After she repacked my bag, I went on my way rejoicing that I was called to be a messenger."

Testimonies

CJFM representative, Diann Parkas (New Jersey), writes how God recently gave her an opportunity to share her testimony in a unique way. It related to the dress she wore to her son's recent wedding. As people commented on how nice she looked in the dress, she had numerous opportunities to share her testimony and point to God's transforming power. Even following the wedding, while showing photos to a group of unsaved friends, Diann shared her testimony. She comments, "I love to see how God's work in my heart has its outworking in who I am becoming and in interactions with others. It's exciting to realize ways that we can incorporate our testimonies into everyday conversations with unsaved family, friends and acquaintances. It can be a lively adventure to be a witness of Messiah!" 🌿

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