

SPIRIT OF LIFE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL  
BIBLE SCHOOL SECOND EDITION  
SESSION15: - THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRIST PART 9  
ETERNAL JUDGMENT (Final Judgment) PART 1

Final (or eternal) judgment is the sixth and last doctrine of the six foundation doctrines mentioned in **Hebrews 6:1–2**:

1. Repentance from dead works
2. Faith toward God
3. The doctrine of baptisms
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection of the dead
6. Eternal judgment

In our study previous to this one, Resurrection of the Body, we began to move out of the realm of time and on into eternity. Eternity does not merely consist of a very long period of time, it is a totally different realm of being, scarcely within the grasp of our human understanding.

There are two main ways in which God brings judgment on people. ***The first*** is His judgments in history; ***the second*** is His eternal judgments, which is the subject of this lesson. Eternal judgments are those judgments which confront us as we step out of time into eternity.

Distinguishing between the two types of judgments is necessary; otherwise, we might be confused by what seem to be conflicting statements in the Scripture. To clarify the differences, we will begin by considering God's judgments in history.

### **Judgments in History**

The first judgment of God in history involves bringing blessing or punishment on succeeding generations according to the way the former generation has responded to God. In Exodus 20 we have a very clear example of God's historical judgments. In this portion of the Ten Commandments God says:

**Exodus 20:4–6 (NKJV)** ***"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve [worship] them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those***

***who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”***

The sin of idolatry, which is the greatest of all sins, carries with it a judgment that extends to the succeeding three or four generations. These are judgments in history for which there are countless examples in the history of Israel and of other nations that have been involved in idolatry.

Jeremiah also deals with this question of God’s judgment in history. In a prayer that he prayed to the Lord, Jeremiah said:

**Jeremiah 32:18** ***“You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them—the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts.”***

Jeremiah says that God repays the iniquity of the fathers into the succeeding generations. This also is a judgment in history or in time. This same generational principle also applies to God’s blessing on the righteous.

David says in: **Psalm 103:17–18** ***“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.”***

There is a promise of God’s blessing and righteousness to “children’s children”—to succeeding generations. Stop to consider the fact that the way we conduct ourselves and relate to God not only affects us, but it may also affect successive generations. This very significant and important principle needs to be kept in mind. We can, in some way, be answerable for either the blessing or the suffering of succeeding generations.

The principle is an obvious fact of experience. For example, a child born to alcoholic parents starts, as they say, with two strikes against him. It is not the child’s fault, but the judgment of God on those parents will naturally filter down through succeeding generations. It is, of course, the mercy of God that this generational judgment can be nullified when an individual comes to the Lord, because he has become part of a new family with a new Father.

### **Eternal Judgment**

There is another kind of judgment of God that the writer of Hebrews calls “eternal judgment.” This type of judgment affects our destiny in eternity. The principles of eternal judgment are completely different, and these are stated by God to Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 18:1–2 *“The word of the Lord came to me again, saying, ‘What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?’”*

Ezekiel says the children are suffering for the sins of the fathers.

verses 3–4 *“As I live, says the Lord God, you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.”*

God is not talking about historical judgments here, but about the judgment of every individual soul as it steps out of time into eternity. At this point, every soul will bear responsibility only for the life that it has led and the soul that sinned shall die for its own sin.

That is repeated in Ezekiel:18:20, where God is still more emphatic:

*“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”*

When we step out of time into eternity, we are no longer being judged for the sins or blessings of our parents or forebears. We are going to answer to God personally only for what *we did* in life. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon *him*, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon *him*.

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us: *“Where the tree falls, there it shall lie”* (11:3). The condition you are in when you die will determine your condition throughout eternity. *This is eternal judgment, and it is a very solemn thought.*

Whether we like it or not, we must face the reality of eternal judgment because it says in Hebrews 9:27 *“it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”*.

### **Five Principles of God’s Judgment**

We will now consider the five principles of God’s eternal judgment, all of which are stated in Romans 2.

#### **1. Judgment is according to truth.**

The first principle: God’s judgment is based on truth. It is based upon real facts, not hearsay.

**Romans 2:2** *“But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.”*

Consider, for instance, when the Lord wanted to find out the truth about the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. He had heard terrible reports from the angels and others, but He said to Abraham, *“I’ve come down to see for Myself.”* (See **Genesis 18:20–21**.) God never judges by hearsay; He judges according to truth.

## **2. Judgment is according to deeds.**

**Romans 2:6** [He] *“will render to each one according to his deeds.”*

We will be judged for what we have done. That is a basic principle that runs through the Bible, and it applies to believers as well as unbelievers. Peter unfolds this principle as well, applying it specifically to believers:

**1 Peter 1:17** *“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear. . . .”*

This fact is not publicly disseminated in most churches today. Peter tells believers that we must bear in mind that we are going to be judged according to what we have done and that we are to live reverent, godly lives in view of this fact. We must not be rash, proud, or presumptuous—because one day we will have to answer to God for everything we say and do. Bear in mind, this passage is addressed to believers, not to unbelievers.

**Revelation 20** tells us that in the final judgment, all people will be judged according to what was written in the books, because God keeps a record of every life. In the days of the New Testament, books were not like today’s volumes. They were scrolls rolled up like a tape. I am inclined to think that in the judgment every one of us will be confronted with something like a video tape that projects the entire course of our life before us.

God was dealing with a man at one point in his life when he was very sick. He earnestly sought God as to why he was not being healed. One night God woke him up at two A.M. and gave him a review of the life he had been leading. He was a generally well accepted preacher (though sometimes criticized) at about the same level as many other preachers who are comparatively well known. However, God showed him that in many ways he had been extremely carnal.

He had not committed any gross sins like sexual immorality, drunkenness, or the misappropriation of funds. But nevertheless, God showed him there were things in his past that were displeasing to Him.

He brought to him the Scripture in **Malachi** where God says, *“Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated”* (**Malachi 1:2–3**). Esau is a type of the carnal man. There are no gross sins recorded about Esau; he just was a carnally minded man. God said, “I hate that!”

After nearly fifty years in the ministry, God showed him that there were things in his life that He hated. He showed him that he had been careless in some respects. Some of the scenes He showed him were in restaurants.

You may not realize that God judges you in restaurants, but He does. Somebody once said, “All you Americans can talk about is food.” I have also heard it said, “If you want to find out where the best restaurants are, ask a preacher.”

He began to realize what it means to spend the time of our stay (or sojourning) in this life in fear—not slavish fear, but reverent awe, as before God who will judge everything we say and everything we do.

### **3. Judgment is with no respect of persons.**

**Romans 2:11** states the third principle of God’s judgment, which is judgment without respect of persons:

**Romans 2:11** (NKJV) *“For there is no partiality with God.”*

All the modern translations are worded this way because it is a modern phrase. However, the original King James Version says, *“There is no respect of persons with God.”* It is a much more accurate translation because partiality can be toward any kind of person.

For example, think of a weak, insignificant person—you can be very partial to that person. They are so weak you really want to help them and do everything you can for them. However, “respect of persons” means we are not impressed by what people are in their natural selves.

A man may be a general, a president, or a bishop, but he does not get any special judgment from God. He is treated just like everybody else. That is what is meant by the

phrase “no respect of persons.” It is particularly aimed at people who occupy positions of prominence in the world today.

#### **4. Judgment is according to the measure of light.**

The fourth principle of God’s judgment is according to the measure of light.

**Romans 2:12** *“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.”*

If you have the law, you will be judged by it. If you do not have the law, you will not be judged by it, but you will still be judged for what you have done based **on what you knew**.

This principle is also illustrated by Jesus in **Matthew 11** when He spoke to some of the major cities of His day who had not responded to His preaching.

**Matthew 11:20–22** *“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.”*

Jesus said it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment because they had less light. Bethsaida and Chorazin had the greatest light, and they would be more severely judged. You and I will be judged according to the light that is available to us.

Generally speaking, for people in the English-speaking world, there is a greater measure of light available today than has ever been available to any previous generation in history. We have masses of Bibles, endless books, CDs, DVDs, and preachers. We are going to be judged by the light that has been made available to us. Bear in mind that God’s standards of judgment for this generation will be the most severe because we have had the most light.

Jesus goes on in the next verse: verses **23–24**:

*“And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, 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.”*

Judgment is according to light; the more light we have, the stricter will be our judgment. There probably has never been a generation of Christians that have had the measure of light available that we have today. That is going to be the standard of our judgment and it is a sobering thought.

## **5. Judgment includes secret thoughts and motives.**

The fifth and final principle of God's judgment is found in **Romans 2:16**

***"In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."***

God is not only going to judge our open acts, but He is also going to judge our secret, innermost thoughts, motives, and attitudes. God is very concerned about our motives. Two people may perform the same outward action, but their motives may be entirely different. When God judges them, He will take into account their motives.

### **Successive Scenes of Judgment**

As I understand the judgments of God as they are presented in the New Testament, there are going to be four major, successive scenes of judgment.

#### **1. The Judgment Seat of Christ**

The first will be before the judgment seat of Christ. The Greek word for "judgment seat" is bema which means a platform on which a Roman official sat to execute judgment. Pontius Pilate sat on his bema when Jesus appeared before him for judgment. The judgment seat of Christ will be an eternal judgment for believers only. Remember Peter's admonition:

**1 Peter 1:17** ***"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear."***

This verse is written to us as Christians, who call on the Father. Later, Peter says:

**1 Peter 4:17** ***"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"***

Judgment always begins with the house of God, always with the people who have the most truth. When judgment starts, the first people to be judged will be the Christians, and we will have a special judgment.

**Romans 14:10–12** *“But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we [Christians] shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ [the bema]. For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So, then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”*

There is only one person you must give account of—yourself. You will not have to give account of your spouse or your pastor, and you may waste a lot of time judging others when you should be judging yourself. The only person you are going to have to give account for is yourself. Paul says that all of us, as Christians, will have to give account of ourselves to God, a theme which he returns to in **2 Corinthians**:

**2 Corinthians 5:10** *“For we [Christians] 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.”*

The New King James Version says, *“We must all appear,”* but the Greek says, *“We must all be made manifest.”* Before Christ’s judgment seat there will be no secrets. Everything will be totally exposed. Nothing will be hidden.

We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the way we have lived in the body. And there are only two categories of deeds: good or bad. There is nothing in between. Everything that is not good is bad. Jesus said very clearly,

*“He who is not with Me is against Me”* (**Matthew 12:30**).

There is no neutrality. Jesus has excluded it. Many people in church are sitting on the fence, unwilling to make a commitment. They are not on one side, nor are they on the other. They are not doing good, but neither would they admit to doing bad. A man once said, “When the Holy Spirit comes to a church, one of the first things He does is to electrify the fence! You have to jump off on one side or the other.” That is why a lot of people don’t welcome the Holy Spirit—because He abolishes their neutrality. There is no neutrality with the Holy Spirit.

#### **A. There are five main features of the judgment seat of Christ:**

1. It is individual; each one will answer for himself.

2. It is for the things done in the body; the way we have lived while we were in this body.
3. There are only two categories: good or bad. ***“All unrighteousness is sin”*** (1 John 5:17), anything that is not righteous is sinful. A third category of neutrality seems to have slipped into people’s thinking and it deceives many. However, there is no neutrality.
4. This judgment is not for condemnation. This is very important. We are going to be judged, but we are not going to be condemned if we are true, sincere believers in Jesus.
5. This judgment is for assessment of service.

Some of you may be a little concerned about this judgment because we often think of condemnation when we think of judgment. There are three Scriptures which may comfort you at this point. First, Jesus says:

**John 3:18** ***“He who believes in Him [the Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already.”***

If we are truly believers in Jesus, we will be judged, but we will not be condemned. Jesus says again in the most emphatic way He can:

**John 5:24** ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment [or condemnation] but has passed from death into life.”***

**Romans 8:1** ***“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”***

We are not talking about a judgment of condemnation but a judgment that will assess the service we have offered to Jesus during our lifetime. This judgment is described clearly in **1 Corinthians 3**, where Paul is speaking about building:

**1 Corinthians 3:11–15** ***“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 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."*

The New International Version translates the last phrase, "*Like one escaping from the flames.*" This passage is the essence of the judgment of Christians.

First, we must be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ; there is no other foundation. By building on the foundation of Jesus Christ we are not building upon our own works or our own righteousness, but upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

**B. Second, the value, or quality, of the service we have offered will be determined.**

Paul places the believers' works in one of two categories:

1. gold, silver, precious stones.
2. or wood, hay, stubble.

Remember that things that are easy to acquire can be offered in large quantities: wood, hay, and stubble, but they will all be burned up. The things that are valuable are not obtained in large quantities: gold, silver, precious stones. Some people assess the quantity of their service, but that is not the way God assesses it. God looks for quality.

We must examine ourselves continually. Am I just producing wood, hay or stubble that will be burned up? Or am I producing something of eternal value? What a tragedy it would be, having worked all your life for something, piled it all up, to then see fire sweep through it in the day of judgment and finish it all off. There is nothing left, but you are as a naked soul that is spared, like one escaping through the flames. What a solemn thought!

**C. How to Withstand the Fire**

How might we assess our service for Christ to know whether or not it will stand the fire of judgment? I suggest three ways to assess your own service.

**1. Motive**

The only motive acceptable to God is ***for God's glory.*** Much of what is done in the Church today is done by men and women for their own glory. It is my observation that the greatest problem in the Church today is personal ambition

on the part of ministers. Who has the largest church, the longest mailing list, or the most miracles? That will all be burned up because it is the wrong motive.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 10:31**: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

There is only one acceptable motive for our service and that is the glory of God. Pause for a moment as you are reading this and consider what has been motivating you in your service for the Lord.

In Romans **12:1**, Paul said we need to be renewed in our minds. The difference between the renewed mind and the unrenewed mind is clear: The unrenewed mind says, "What's in this for me?" The renewed mind says, "Will God get the glory?" It is a total change of motivation.

This same principle applies to marriage. Many marriages are unhappy because the people approach them with an unrenewed mind. The attitude of each spouse is, "What will I get out of this? Will it make me happy?" This is almost a certain recipe for an unhappy marriage. The right motive is, "What can I give?" When a man and a woman come together with the intention of giving to one another, they will have a happy and successful marriage. The whole issue of motivation is far more important than most people realize.

## **2. Obedience**

Second, if your work is to stand the test of fire, it must be done in obedience to the Word of God; it is the only acceptable basis. In **Matthew 7**, Jesus spoke very plainly about obedience.

**Matthew 7:21** *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*

The only acceptable motive is to do the will of God the Father. Then Jesus goes on with a statement that offends some people:

**Matthew 7:22–23** *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

By the grace of God, I have been privileged to cast out many demons. I have seen a number of very definite miracles take place. Frequently, I have prophesied. However, I do not base my hope of reward on any of that, and anybody who does is in danger. There is only one essential requirement for reward in heaven. It is doing the will of the Father who is in heaven.

Jesus says to these miracle workers,

***“Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”***

In reality, many miracle workers are a law to themselves. They do basically whatever they feel like, take whatever they can get, and ignore the great central principles of the Word of God. Jesus concludes His sermon in **Matthew 7** with these words:

**verses 24–27** ***“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”***

The difference between the man who built upon the rock and the one who built upon the sand is clearly stated by Jesus. It is the one who does not merely hear His words, but also “does them.”

A man once wrote a teaching about Balaam because he was so impressed with his story. Here was a man with miraculous prophetic gifts, words of knowledge and words of wisdom. In **Numbers 22–24**, he gave forth prophecies as beautiful as any that are uttered in the Bible concerning the destiny of Israel. Yet he perished. He was executed by the people of Israel. Do you know what Balaam’s problem was? He is mentioned three times in the New Testament, and each mention states very clearly that Balaam’s motivation was love of money. That cost him his soul.

**II Corinthians 2:17** says, ***“Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit”*** (NIV).

That is a startling statement Paul made concerning the time in which he lived. Paul said there were many people motivated by making profit out of the gospel. In today's church, we need to ask ourselves if we are motivated by the love of money or if we are motivated by the glory of God and obedience to His Word. It is our motives and obedience that God searches.

### **3. In the Power of the Holy Spirit**

The third way of assessing our service is the power in which we operate. Paul says:

**Romans 15:18–19** *“For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.”*

**There are, then, three requirements for our work to stand the test of fire.**

1. What is our motive? Is it for God's glory?
2. Are we working in obedience to the Word of God? Or are we doing our own thing or making our own rules?
3. Are we working in the power of the Holy Spirit or in our own fleshly ability?